

Preface

This book, together with the previous published volume (Tan et al. 2015) form a complete compilation of the annual Ruth Wong memorial lectures from 1983 to 2008. The chronological order in which the lectures were given is recorded in the Appendix.



Ruth Wong Hie King 1918–1982 (Ruth Wong: educationist and teacher extraordinaire, 2013, with permission from Strategic Information and Research Development Centre)

The decision to compile the lectures for publication as a memoir for posterity took root with the discovery of transcripts left behind by the late Dr. Wong Poi Kwong, brother of Ruth Wong. These transcripts were those of the Memorial Lectures instituted to commemorate the missionary zeal and rich legacy left by the founding Director of the Institute of Education, Dr. Ruth Wong, a trail blazer in the field of education (Wong 2013). Internationally renowned professors and leading experts in education were invited as orators. The educational themes dealt with in these lectures were that on teaching and learning, children and learning and education as a profession. They represent the many ways Ruth's vision, ideas and innovation elevated the training and education of teachers, and improved the learning experiences and education of children in Singapore's journey to a world class education system.

In compiling these lectures the first difficulty encountered was to trace the missing transcripts. After many attempts and great patience, Dr. Seng Seok Hoon, the chief organizer of the lectures was contacted. We soon discovered that the transcripts were kept in one of 40 boxes! Although help was at hand to open the boxes one by one; by divine guidance the fifth box she opened, much to our delight, contained majority of the transcripts. However, miraculously (one was discovered in a library and another fell out from a dust laden cover) we were able to trace all. It was with much faith that this task was undertaken to its completion—the search for original transcripts, contacting the speakers for permission to publish, the choice of publisher, the permission for reproduction from publishers, and the editing of scripts. The synopsis of Julian Elliott's lecture was compiled from a slide presentation.

It is amazing how the three co-editors came together each time to reflect on the influence of Dr. Ruth Wong. We actually span some two generations. Hee Ong is Ruth's sister whom she impacted as a family member, role model and mentor. Seok Hoon was Ruth's protégé and associate. Oon Seng was a teenager and undergraduate who was deeply inspired by Dr. Ruth Wong's philosophy of life and call. Despite all our tight schedules, there was much enthusiasm and passion amongst us for the simple reason that we have been touched by the faith, vision and commitment of Dr. Ruth Wong and the fruits of her labour for education and humanity.

For Prof. Tan Oon Seng, Director of National Institute of Education (NIE), Dr. Ruth Wong's work continues to influence teacher education till this day. The seeds of her ideals see fruition at NIE in the influence of preparing all teachers and school leaders in Singapore. NIE's teacher education has been a global influence today in terms of policies, programmes, practices and research in education. In his first and several investitures of graduating cohorts of teachers, Prof. Tan repeatedly mentioned and quoted Dr. Ruth Wong to illustrate the call and care of the teacher. In the Foreword of *Ruth Wong: Educationist and Teacher Extraordinaire*, Prof. Tan wrote that one key lesson he learned from Ruth was that "God has a calling for each of us in a vocation where He will make us a blessing to others" (Tan 2013, p. xi). He recalled vividly how Dr. Ruth Wong exclaimed the day he told her he was going into teaching: "Wow, you are going to be a teacher... and a math teacher" (Tan 2013, p. xii). And how in that one afternoon she shared

passionately what it meant to be a true educator with the love and concern for the children of generations to come. Dr. Ruth Wong indeed sowed the seeds of almost all the important aspects of education from the holistic care for the learner and preparing teachers grounded in values and competencies to building teacher education informed by research and investing in every child in education.

Seok Hoon was Oon Seng's teacher and mentor when he was pursuing his Master and Ph.D. studies. Their professional relationship reflect very much the relationship between Seok Hoon and her mentor Dr. Ruth Wong. Both mentor and mentee understand how important this link is between the teacher and the learner. Seok Hoon's professional career was very much influenced by Dr. Ruth Wong's foresight in her quest to improve the academic standing of the academic staff in NIE; under her tutelage and guidance, many NIE staff were sent overseas for doctoral studies.

Educators, education leaders and policy makers interested in uplifting and flourishing education for their next generation of learners reading these two volumes, should feel the inspiration, as well as find benefit and challenges from the experiences of global renowned educators.

The editors are also delighted to share that all the royalties of this volume will go to fund the Ruth Wong Professorship inaugurated in June 2015.

Singapore

Oon Seng Tan
Hee Ong Wong
Seok Hoon Seng

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