

## DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION, *honoris causa*

Mr Michael Suen Ming-yeung, GBS, JP

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Mr Pro-Chancellor,

When Yu the Great discussed with the chief minister of state the path of duty and virtue during the time of the Great Flood, he said: 'He who knows men is wise; he who can put men into the posts for which they are fit, and can pacify the people, is benevolent, and the people will cherish him in their hearts. When a man can thus be wise and kind, why should he have anxiety about a man of specious words, bewitchment, and deceitful ways?' 《知人則智，能官人；能安民則惠，黎民懷之。能知能惠……何畏乎巧言善色佞人？》\*<sup>1</sup>

The Great Flood tamed by Yu is a familiar story to us all. At that time, waves and waterspouts billowed over the heavens and mountains, inundating myriads of people. But with perseverance, humility and superb skills, Yu calmed the flood through deepening the canals. The flood must be channelled to other places via canals and not to be blocked with higher and higher dams, according to Yu the Great. People were snatched from the sting of death. Peace returned, and the state was in order again. Today, floods don't cause such fear in us, at least in Hong Kong. But the story about Yu the Great provided Mr Michael Suen Ming-yeung with much wisdom and inspiration for conducting public service. With his experience and leadership in the Government, we have overcome many crises in the choppy waters of Hong Kong, from the colonial era in the 1960s to the first decade of the SAR.

Mr Michael Suen was born in Chongqing in 1944 during the Second World War, when his father felt it his patriotic duty to leave Hong Kong for Chongqing in order to fight against Japanese imperialist aggression. The family moved back to Hong Kong in 1946 when peace

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<sup>1</sup> 《史記·夏本紀》 *Annals of the Xia, Records of the Grand Historian*

returned. It was a time when most ordinary people were suffering from economic hardship. However, in his early days, Mr Suen experienced the transformative power of education, first in his family. His mother, who was a schoolteacher, lit in him the flame of learning and instilled into him respect for education. He was amongst the first batch of pupils to attend the Island Road Government Primary School, which was established in September 1953. Then, in Wah Yan College, the renowned Jesuit education inculcated into him a passion for learning Mathematics. Here, it was sweet serendipity that his private tutor on Mathematics happened to be the former President of The Open University of Hong Kong, Professor Tam Sheung Wai.

Upon receiving his Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics and Physics with First Class Honours at The University of Hong Kong in 1966, he joined the Hong Kong Civil Service as a Cadet Officer, which is now known as an Administrative Officer. Later, he was sponsored by the Government for a one-year training course at the UK's prestigious Oxford University. He still reminisces fondly about the days of rigorous learning at Oxford, with its demanding weekly one-on-one tutorials, essay-writing and discussion. In fact, as he recalled, his background in mathematics was so impressive that he was once invited by his tutor to stay at Oxford for further studies to become an economist. These lines from Robert Frost's poem — 'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and sorry I could not travel both' — summarize well Mr Suen's inner struggle at that time. However, as things turned out, his stay in the Government and Hong Kong still involved contact with education, as a weightier responsibility in the realms of education and the economy lay before him in the years to come.

Mr Michael Suen will undoubtedly leave an indelible mark on our history. His achievements and contributions to the foundations laid for the development of Hong Kong are just too many to be captured in this citation speech. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, he served in the Colonial Secretariat's District Offices in Castle Peak and Yuen Long, the Resettlement Department, and the Hong Kong Housing Authority, and all of these early postings developed his consummate skills in leadership. His career in the Government over the past four decades coincided with the modernization of Hong Kong. In 1974, he was posted to Sha Tin as the first District Officer there, a post which, as he recalls, gave him the greatest sense of achievement in his career. He did not shut himself up in 'the iron cage of bureaucracy', a phrase coined by Weber. Indeed, his experience in Sha Tin offered him the best opportunity to acquire the political skills for building and sustaining relationships

with people from all walks of life in local communities – he met and worked with residents, shop owners and local villagers. Hong Kong in the 1970s was very different from what it is now. The younger generation today would hardly be able to imagine the old days of Sha Tin without the landmarks of Sha Tin Town Hall and the New Town Plaza. Nowadays, we take it for granted that we can easily go cycling with friends from Tai Wai to Tai Po at weekends, and need not worry about amenities, restaurants, schools and transportation. Today, whenever Mr Suen visits Sha Tin, he experiences a deep sense of satisfaction, and old memories flash through his mind. He is a humble person who never claims credit for the great success of the new town project, but he deserves an important place in the history of Sha Tin.

It is impossible within this limited time to embark on an exhaustive listing of thorny policy challenges he overcame, and the crises in which he showed great resource and versatility. In the early 1980s, as Deputy Secretary for Transport, he had one of the most demanding tasks in his career. At that time, the Kowloon Motor Bus and the now defunct China Motor Bus sought the Government's approval for bus fare increases, which would have a major impact on low-income people. It was also the first time for Mr Suen to cross swords with veteran social activists, who later would become his long-time negotiation counterparts in the Legislative Council. Mr Suen worked long and hard to resolve the knotty problems between the bus companies and social activists and strove to reach consensus among all the stakeholders. But in this experience, he learned from Horace's advice: 'Maintain a level head when the road is steep,' as he is admired for keeping a calm presence in even the most trying circumstances. His successful handling of this incident further honed his prowess as a senior leader and policy-maker.

The smooth handover on 1 July 1997 was soon overshadowed by the Asian financial crisis — the modern Great Flood — when stocks were in free fall and housing prices plummeted by nearly 70%, causing many Hong Kong people to face the ordeal of negative equity and bankruptcy. In the midst of a sense of disillusionment and hopelessness, our honorand's ingenuity again proved to be a brilliant success. In 2002, as the Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands, he introduced the famous 'Suen's Nine Measures' as an attempt to resuscitate the sluggish housing market.

With the political and administrative experience he had accumulated, Mr. Michael Suen became the Secretary for Education in 2007. One of his first major decisions was to fine-tune

the medium of instruction policy that the Education Bureau had just accepted based on the recommendation of its advisory committee. Mr Suen conducted educational policy-making by listening sympathetically to the soft lobbying of secondary school principals, which earned him high praise for being a good listener — and yet he was willing to take tough decisions in making the unprecedented move of fine-tuning the medium of instruction policy in secondary schools even before the already endorsed policy was implemented. This served as an excellent starting point for the later successful negotiation with secondary school principals in coming to a consensus to maintain the stability of schools in the midst of a declining student population. In policy circles, Mr Suen has always been praised for the enormous amount of time and energy he is willing to invest in conducting discussions with stakeholders to reach a mutually agreeable solution to intractable political issues. When we look back, we gain insight into the art of leadership in very difficult times. Also, Mr Suen took the initiative to advocate that the Hong Kong SAR Government should provide extra financial resources to support the development of the self-funding tertiary institutions. The Government is now more willing to channel much-needed resources to these institutions, which has allowed them to provide better educational services to their students. Although this sector will face challenges, it is in some measures due to Mr Suen that the self-financing post-secondary education sector is flourishing with a wide diversity of programmes on offer to meet our society's needs.

Among Michael Suen's achievements during his five-year tenure as the Secretary for Education was bringing the New Academic Structure to fruition, which was one of the most important tasks that the Education Bureau had undertaken for many years. The daunting work of curriculum reform required a joint effort by various sectors. It required the secondary schools to change from the old UK model of five years' secondary education and two years of A-level education for only a limited number of students into a new six-year uninterrupted secondary education for all students — followed by the change in undergraduate education from three years to a more comprehensive four-year structure. There were some worries about the pace and scale of this transformation which, apart from school and university curriculum reform, needed also changes in university admission requirements and an extra financial commitment from the Hong Kong Government. To overcome the anxiety and stress felt by the community, all sectors of education were mobilized to work together to ensure that no obstacles would stand in the way, and the transition was a great success. Sometimes silence speaks louder than words and I need not detail the enormous efforts which Mr Suen directed to this task. When he left office in June

2012, he had overseen the successful implementation of a new system and was optimistic about the future of Hong Kong education and the SAR in general.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, in recognition of his outstanding public service and contributions to the development of education in Hong Kong, may I invite our President to present Mr Michael Suen Ming-yeung for the award of Doctor of Education, *honoris causa*.

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*Citation written and to be delivered by Dr Cheung Kwok Wah*

## 榮譽教育博士學位

### 孫明揚先生

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副校監先生：

昔者夏禹治水患，曾與大臣皋陶談及為官者之道，禹曰：「知人則智，能官人；能安民則惠，黎民懷之。能知能惠……何畏乎巧言善色佞人？」

大禹治水之事，人人皆知。昔時洪水儼如猛獸，天地變色，人畜流離，災情異常嚴峻。夏禹以其持恆、謙遜之心及過人之治水本事，將阻塞堤堰清除，疏導河水流走他方，成功解決災患。夏禹此一德政，救活黎民，讓百姓重返故地生活，社會回復正軌。今時今日，洪水災患至少在香港不再威脅民眾安全。然而，夏禹治水的故事卻讓孫明揚先生在政府工作上得到不少啟發。孫先生的豐富管治經驗與英明領導才華，在上世紀 60 年代的殖民時代，乃至特區成立的最初十多年期間，曾帶領香港渡過許多難關。

孫明揚先生父母親於抗戰期間因愛國深厚，不忍捨棄重責，於是遠赴渝都，參與戰事。所以孫先生於 1944 年在中國重慶出生。然而，於 1946 年和平之後，孫先生父親率領舉家重回香江。當時香港經濟困難，一般市民生活非常艱苦。孫先生幼受庭訓，明瞭教育對個人發展之意義。孫先生母親是一名教師，深明教學育人之道，對兒子諄諄善誘，黽勉有加。孫先生聰敏好學，是首批入讀於 1953 年 9 月創立的香島道官立小學之學生。其後，入讀由耶穌會創辦的華仁書院，對數學發生了濃厚興趣，前任香港公開大學校長譚尚渭教授，更曾是啟迪他學習數學的家庭教師。

1966 年，孫明揚獲取香港大學頒授數學及物理學理學士（一級榮譽）學位，隨後加入香港政府出任「官學生」（cadet），即現今的政務主任。其後，孫氏獲薦前往英國牛津大學深造，接受為期一年的培訓課程。回望過去，孫先生清晰記得在牛津艱苦學習的

歲月。那些於教授辦公室一對一討論學術的美好時光，還是歷歷在目。孫先生數學成績非常突出，牛津大學的導師曾力邀留下深造，要培育他為經濟學者。羅勃·佛洛斯特詩句說：「黃金樹林裡兩條路清晰可見，可惜我不能同時涉足」，正好是孫氏當時的最佳寫照。不久，孫先生回歸香江，繼續其為民服務重任，他後來領導經濟及教育事務，恰好呼應了他早年訂下之人生志向。

孫明揚先生對香港各方各面皆貢獻殊多，他的各項功績為本港的繁榮奠定了堅實基礎，本讚辭委實未能一一盡錄。在上世紀 60-70 年代，孫先生曾任職元朗理民府、徙置事務處及香港房屋委員會，領導才能得以發揮，日益精進，光芒四射。孫氏服務政府四十年，期間正值香港經濟起飛。在 1974 年，他出任沙田首任理民府，後來回顧此職位之成就感最大。社會學大師韋柏認為：科層官僚制是一個「鐵的牢籠」，但孫明揚並不認為如此。相反，他在沙田任職期間，管治方式日益圓融練達，與當地社區各方人士建立了緊密關係，不論是店舖老闆、村民坊眾，均能通力合作，和衷共濟。上世紀 70 年代的香江與今天的景況大有分別。現今年輕一輩難以想像昔日的沙田：沙田大會堂、新城市廣場尚未興建，從大圍至大埔一帶人跡罕見，遑論有餐廳、學校，甚至港鐵或基建設施。孫先生說，每當他重遊沙田，往昔生活片段就仿如在目，記憶猶新。他非常謙虛，並不認為沙田新市鎮的成功是一己功勞。但毫無疑問，他對香港的繁榮與發展，居功至偉。

面對仕途上眾多的政策挑戰，孫明揚先生皆能從容面對。在上世紀 80 年代期間出任副運輸司時，孫先生遇上了事業生涯上的重大挑戰。當時九巴及中巴申請加價，對基層市民而言，委實百上加斤。孫先生需要應對眾多社運活躍份子，當中不少人士後來還加入議會。他處事認真，努力不懈，化解許多棘手難題，於巴士公司與反對人士之間調停糾紛，最後達致各方都能接受的方案。孫氏深信，面對難題，首先要有清晰頭腦。許多人都認為孫明揚先生能在逆境下淡然面對，毫無懼色，正是其過人之處中的一個強項。他能在有關事件裏，順利化解紛爭，正好體現出其超卓的領導風範。

九七回歸後不久，亞洲金融風暴爆發，勢如昔日洪水，禍及香江，股市大跌，樓價下滑幾近七成。許多香港人陷入破產境地，負資產個案急劇增加。在香港人處於幻滅、無助之際，孫氏以其聰慧巧思，獻出奇謀良策，再次受人稱頌。在 2002 年職任房屋及規劃地政局局長期間，他推出「孫九招」，力挽疲憊不振的樓市。

孫明揚先生以其政治及行政豐富經驗，於 2007 年出任教育局局長。上任不久，他已作出了一項重大決定，推出微調教學語言政策。其時，教育局剛接納顧問委員會有關報告，並準備實施。上任初期，孫氏細心聆聽各方訴求，尤其重視中學校長的意見。他以大局利益為前提，果斷的修改教育局原已接受並準備推出的教學語言方案，並稱之為微調教學語言政策。基於此互信基礎，孫明揚先生後期順利與中學校長就適齡學童人口下跌而需調整學校班級數目問題達成共識。社會大眾對孫氏的評價極高，因為他從不吝嗇時間與各持份者討論，結果往往能將棘手問題化解，達成各方可接受的方案。回顧這些事件，大家都對孫氏處理棘手問題所展現的領袖藝術擊節讚賞。

此外，孫明揚先生又積極支持香港特區政府投入更多財政資源，去扶持自資專上院校的發展。現時政府已增多撥款支持此等自資高等院校，讓莘莘學子可以得到更好質素之教育服務。雖然自資院校仍面對不少挑戰，但多得孫先生推出的多項極具前瞻性舉措，有關院校能夠就此提供多元化課程，為社會未來培育更多人才。

在孫先生出任教育局局長的五年期間，他促成了 334 學制的開花結果。新學制籌備多年，是教育局之心血結晶。推行過程中得到多方支持，課程改革得以成功落實。中等教育不再是英式五年制中學、兩年制預科，改革讓更多學生能夠接受六年中學教育，增進所學知識。此外，大學本科亦由三年制轉為四年制，從而邁向全人教育的理想。

新學制的推行速度和覆蓋圍疇，初時令人頗感憂慮。除了中學及大學的課程需要變改加以配合外，大學的入學要求也須相應作出調整，而政府必須投入更多財政資源。為釋除大眾疑慮，孫明揚先生耗用了不少心血與精神，確保教育界各方面都能緊密配合，以及改革能夠順利推展。2012 年 6 月，孫先生離任教育局局長。此時新學制的推行已漸上軌道，大家都和孫先生一樣，樂觀盼望着香港的教育以至特區的豐盛未來。

副校監先生，為表揚孫明揚先生對公共事務及香港教育發展的超卓建樹，在此本人謹恭請校長引介孫先生接受本大學的榮譽教育博士學位。

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