



## What kind of seeds do you sow? Good seeds that grow into a beautiful garden, or weed that bears thorns?

These are the questions that haunt Richard Mak, ITE West's new Director of Business Studies and Services, when he meets young people today. Many seem busy, lost in their pursuits, while others loiter aimlessly at arcades and shopping centres. "They seem so preoccupied, yet know so little about what adds value to life," laments Richard.

As a new Director, one of Richard's first projects was to propose a programme that would boost students' self-esteem, and help them find bearing in life. His programme consists of a series of messages on the meaning of love and life, communicated through small group discussions, with questions and messages pitched at students' level. Students who are interested in pursuing the subject could access multi-media resources on personal growth and enrichment from the Self-access Centre, and even request for psychometric tests conducted by professionals.

Obviously a pet project close to his heart, this was a personal agenda of the new Director over and above the many tasks and demands on his time. An educationist at heart, Richard, who is married, and has a one-year old daughter, had held several key corporate positions in banking and investment companies, majoring in marketing, finance and strategic management.

His pet topic throughout the interview, was however, on the importance of teachers "delivering value" in front of the class; a subject which he returned to over and over again. "As a training institution, customer satisfaction, and in this case, students' satisfaction with our performance, is primary," he asserts. He should know, because he has been teaching evening classes to professionals since graduating from NUS with a degree in Accountancy. What's more, he is obviously an avid student himself, learning and studying at every opportunity. Today, this RI alumnus holds an MBA from the University of Leeds and a UK professional qualification (Chartered Association of Certified Accountants), with several other graduate diplomas to his name.

"My father played an important role in the formation of my thoughts and character. He used to teach us, when we were young, that life is like a game of chess. Make the right moves and you win, but when you make the wrong moves, you'll have to back track, if not, accept defeat. I believe I made the mid-life change in career because I want to be in a position where I can provide the opportunity and the environment that would help students make moves they'll be proud of later in life. It is also a move, which I believe, is right for me as well, in my own pursuit of meaning in life."