



AGE IS IMMATERIAL

Don't be afraid of your age, it is immaterial... I tell my grandchildren, now you must be like ye ye (grandfather) and dress up like this at your graduation. Who knows, in 10 years we may even wear the robes together if I go back to university again?



DR AW YONG KEONG POH, 72, who has not ruled out furthering his education.

Traditional Chinese medicine physician Aw Yong Keong Poh graduated with a bachelor's degree in Chinese language and literature from the Singapore University of Social Sciences on May 4. PHOTO: COURTESY OF AW YONG KEONG POH

Grandpa fulfils lifelong dream of a local degree

Although a grandfather of four himself, Dr Aw Yong Keong Poh, 72, is still following the advice his own father gave him many years ago.

"He told me that I must help the poor and needy," said Dr Aw Yong, a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) physician for 18 years.

His passion for helping people through TCM has driven him to continue learning.

On May 4, he attended his convocation at the Singapore University of Social Sciences where he was the second-oldest graduating student.

He received his bachelor's degree in Chinese language and litera-

ture, a qualification that he says will help him with his patient case studies and essays on TCM.

Dr Aw Yong enrolled in the course in 2016.

His decision to undertake a degree while working full time meant major sacrifices in terms of free time.

"For me it meant rushing home from work to study, using any free time I had to read and revise. It was not easy," he said.

Dr Aw Yong is no stranger to going back to school.

After more than 30 years in the architectural and structural consultancy industry, he enrolled in uni-

versities in Xiamen and Beijing in China, flying back and forth before he earned a master's degree and doctorate in TCM. He was in his 50s and 60s then.

Dr Aw Yong said this was to fulfil his father's wish for him to aid the poor through healthcare.

"For my whole career in TCM, I've never worked for a commercial organisation, only charitable ones," said the senior attending physician at Singapore Thong Chai Medical Institution.

"Sometimes the pay is not lucrative but it doesn't matter to me."

When asked what he would say to older people thinking about re-

turning to school and finding it hard to decide, he said: "Don't be afraid of your age, it is immaterial. Some people think they cannot make it, so they cannot make it. You must not disqualify yourself."

Although he has now achieved what was a lifelong dream of a local degree, Dr Aw Yong has not ruled out going back for more.

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Ng Wei Kai