

Where the Light is Coming From

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Abstract - Newcastle upon Tyne, is a place where my academic career started and is a place that I met my teacher, mentor and friend – Prof. Alex Yakovlev. It was a cold day with plenty of snow covering all the pieces of stones in the college. People who live here are calling themselves Geordies and saying “Aye” instead of “Yes”. It is also a place as the guardian for England with the famous Hadrian wall. Strong, ancient but tough castles can be easily found all along the seaside to defend England from intruders. That was the time when I was almost finished my PhD at Imperial College London. When all my colleagues started to look for jobs in London or looking for academic positions back to their home countries, Prof Alex Yakovlev offered me a lectureship at Newcastle University and that was the beginning of my career as a Lecturer. “Terrence, are you interested to join us?” Alex asked with an enthusiastic smile.

1 Alex as a Teacher

“Terrence, this is Ra’ed, one of my PhD student. I let you two to have chat,” This is the first week when I joint Newcastle. I was struggling where to look for PhD students and where to looking for research assistants. Ra’ed was a guy with Moustache and a bit like Zappa. Not too sure about his age but plenty of smile and can speak fluent English. He began by explaining where he was coming from and what was his research.

It was not easy at all to initiate and maintain a good motivation throughout the PhD, and it was even more difficult to direct the student into a research area that was rough and unclear. However, there was a strange connection between myself, Alex and Ra’ed. The efficiency between myself and Ra’ed was like the speed of light and we began to work out what problems to tackle, to use what kind of tools and techniques. Ra’ed was quickly identified the research topics. One special highlight was that both the descriptions and illustration of research, and drawing and sketching of figures from Ra’ed were totally professional, given the fact that he was at his first year PhD. Especially, he could draw a figure using five to six different colours, in order to make sure everybody knew what he was talking about.

Only within six months, we finished a conference paper submission. Sooner, the great news came back and his paper had been accepted at the DATE’11 (one of the most prestigious conference in the world) and, later on, the paper was awarded the Best Paper Award 2011 in the conference. Need to spell out that this conference had at least 800 submissions and only one paper could obtain this award. Not only a de-

lightful smile was given by Ra'ed, I began to enjoy working with the inspirational teacher, Alex.



Fig. 1. (Left) Both Alex and myself were receiving the Best paper award at DATE'2012. (Right) Ammar, Ra'ed, Alex and myself are visiting Vancouver to attend the networks-on-chip architecture conference in 2013. Yet, we were visiting the famous forrest in Vancouver.

Later on, we had received multiple awards including one highlight, which was called the 2015 IET Computer & Digital Techniques Premium Award. This is a really outstanding award and only one journal paper is selected each year in this top-in-the-field magazine. This prize was based on an IET publication together with our co-supervise student, Dr Nizar Dahir, who was a PhD student and was also co-supervised with with Alex. Together with Alex, we have more than eight PhD students graduated and they are all now working at different exciting places in the world.

2 Alex as a learner

"I am learning," said by Alex. At a quarter past three, if you go to the tea room at level 3 of the Electrical and Electronic Engineering Building, you will find Alex who is there and talking to students, colleagues and may be the waitresses. The tea room in the building is the discussion hotspot. Especially in the afternoon, no one would miss the time to go there and have a chat. Alex is one of the usual customer. "If we can provide an architecture as 3-dimensional structure and spinning like a spiral, the energy saving will be tremendous, yet ...", a group of students were holding their drinks and listening to Alex. In fact, that tea room at level 3 is a scientific and engineering meeting place.



Fig. 2. "Shall we go for a tea?" Alex asked. "Of course, it is time to discuss." I replied.

We discussed a lot and, most of the time, the discussion was not only limited by our research. Diversity from different area and discussion on different religions were in our discussions. Drinking an afternoon tea at level 3, you wouldn't miss the political or even spiritual view from Alex. Commentary on various political groups and leaders in the history were even more fascinating. You could certainly obtain a feeling based on the thought and perspective from Alex. But the most appreciated character that naturally speared with Alex is his inclusiveness. His students are with different ages, from different countries, having different religions and especially with various characters.

Alex said, "My students are my teachers and I can learn a lot from them". Alex is truly a model of researcher, a teacher and a sincere friend.

3 The most important is Happiness

"The most important thing is happiness. Happiness is the bridge between you and your friends, is the mirror of your success and is synchronous to your awards and asynchronous to your learning and experiences", Alex said in his 60's birthday party. We all congratulated Alex's birthday and make unstoppable clapping that evening. Happiness might be something that you are looking for. But to Alex, happiness was naturally rooted in his blood and illuminating in his face. It is not only the emotion, but a strong character or even a naturally instinct to interact with people. This is the most respectful character to learn from experiences. Because, happiness is the reward to someone who never stop learning. This is Alex is my mentor, my teacher and is my very good friend as well.



Fig. 3. With the same hat and jacket, I can sense the power of happiness from Alex.