Successful Women in Technology

It was an interest in the IT industry that got Zhu Yunjiao, Zhang Fan, Zhao Lihong and Li Qinru to venture out from China to Singapore to pursue the Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis (GDipSA) programme, a one-year programme offered by the Institute of Systems Science at the National University of Singapore (NUS-ISS).

The GDipSA programme allows graduates from non-IT backgrounds to become IT professionals within one year, and many graduates have seized this opportunity to craft a new career in the IT industry. The full-time programme consists of lectures, workshops, laboratory sessions, projects and a 5-month long internship with an organisation.

In China, IT roles are mostly taken up by males, but this is not the case in Singapore, where females have equal opportunities to further their careers in the IT field. 根据最新的联合国人文发展指数报告，在男女平等的评级中，在 155 个国家中新加坡名列第 13 名，同时在亚洲国家中排名第一。

Zhu Yunjiao, 25, is one of the many students to have travelled from Suzhou, China to Singapore to take up this course. After graduating from GDipSA in 2015, she is currently working as a mobile developer at Oddle, a Singapore-based start-up that allows customers to order food online through a subscription service.

"I chose the GDipSA programme because it provided an opportunity for non-IT graduates to learn programming," says Yunjiao, who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Nanjing Xiaozhuang University. "We worked in teams a lot and I learned a lot from my course mates, who were from different backgrounds and cultures. I also enjoyed communicating with them."

Another alumnus of the GDipSA programme, Zhang Fan, 25, agrees, "I graduated from the South China University of Technology with a Bachelor in Engineering and chose to study at NUS-ISS because it is a good opportunity to begin my studies in IT. This course is suitable for people who have no IT experience."

Originally from Guangzhou, Zhang Fan has also embarked on her IT career in Singapore as a Test Analyst at DBS Bank. She explains further, "Before coming to NUS-ISS, I worked at China Telecom as a Business Analyst. My responsibility was to collect user requirements and analyse the data. However, I found that I was lacking in technical skills and wasn't able to perform as well. That is why I decided to take up the GDipSA course."

The IT industry has always been a predominantly male industry, with iconic male entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg gaining the most recognition for their contributions to the sector. However, more women are entering both regular and high level positions in the tech world, and have played a huge part in contributing to the industry as well.

"There is a misconception that IT means coding. There are lots of other roles like designers, product managers and testers. A good IT product requires people who have a good sense in designing and possess good communication and management skills. By the way, the current Chairman, President and CEO of IBM is Ginni Rometty, who is a very successful career woman," Zhang Fan points out.

Zhao Lihong, 26, who also graduated in 2015 and is now working as a programmer at SIMTech, a research institute for Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR), says, "在我现在工作的地方，并没有出现歧视女性程序员的现象，我们的男女比例也比较协调。在 IT 行业中女性具有专注和细心的优势，也使得女性在未来的大数据时代不至于被时代淘汰。对于 IT 市场而言，有利于促进男女平等，为 IT 市场增加新鲜血液。"

All of the GDipSA graduates took less than two months to find a job upon graduation. "由于新加坡对 GDipSA 的认可度相当高，所以找工作的话，只要努力找还是不难的，" Lihong added.

Li Qinru, 26, who also graduated from the programme in 2015, is currently working as a Business Analyst at Emerio. She says, "IT 是一个大的趋势，就业机会也很多。" With the experience gained during her internship in Singapore, she was able to apply skills that she has learnt into her current role easily, "Internship 的经验对我有很大的帮助，学习到的东西很实用，在以后的求职面试中有可以展示的东西。而且在新的工作中也可以迅速上手。" She plans to move on to become a Project Manager in future.

"Chinese students make up about 30% of each cohort in our GDipSA programme. Some of them face language barriers initially, as our lectures are delivered in English. However, they can overcome this barrier in a few weeks and with a good grasp of English, it proved to be advantageous for their job search after graduation. Our assessment and examinations are also application-oriented, which encourages our students to think critically and apply what they learn to real life, rather than just textbook theory," says Dr Esther Tan, Chief, GDipSA Programme, NUS-ISS.

The next intake for the Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis is in August this year, and applications will close on 15 April. For more information or to apply, please visit http://www.iss.nus.edu.sg/GraduateProgrammes/GraduateDiplomainSystemsAnalysis/HowtoApply.aspx