

## **Response to Policy Initiatives on Education in the 2006-07 Policy Agenda – Providing teacher training in the Pre-primary sector**

### **Background**

Starting from the 2007-08 school year, the government will provide, in the form of vouchers to parents, an annual subsidy of up to \$13,000 per student, of which at least \$10,000 must be used on fee subsidy, with the remaining money spent on teacher training.

In the Policy Agenda 2006-07, teacher training refers mainly to upgrading the qualifications of principals and teachers. There is no mentioning of the importance of pre-service teacher education programmes, which is an effective measure to enhance the quality of teachers of early childhood education.

Recently, the government has invited more higher institutions to offer pre-primary teacher training programmes from 2007 onwards, while HKIED was not consulted. HKIED has traditionally been a major early childhood teacher education provider in Hong Kong. The Institute launched the territory's first pre-service Certificate in Early Childhood Education (Chinese) Programme and the pre-service Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Early Childhood Education) Programme in April 1998 and September 2005 respectively. Graduates of the pre-service ECE programmes have maintained 100% employment rates since the inception of the programmes.

### **Recommendations:**

1. A thorough investigation is needed to enquire into the impact of the present mode of government subsidy to enhancing quality early childhood education.
2. Provide reasonable salary reward to attract and retain well-qualified teaching staff who are of prime importance in raising the overall standard of early childhood education.
3. Increase the number of initial early childhood teacher training places, and replace the entry level to the teaching profession from QKT to Certificate level. To enhance quality, it is crucial to expand the full-time Bachelor of Education programmes.
4. According to the role statement in the UGC's document entitled "To make a Difference, To Move with the Time" (2004) HKIED is expected to provide early childhood teacher education programmes of all levels, both in-service and pre-service. With the capacity of over 60 full-time academic staff in the Department of Early Childhood Education and taking a leading role in substantial applied research in the field, we will continue to provide quality in-service and pre-service programmes to support the Policy Initiatives.