

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

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## **Panel on Education**

### **Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 16 April 2009**

#### **Retitling of The Hong Kong Institute of Education as a university**

#### **Purpose**

This paper summarizes the areas of concern raised by Members concerning the retitling of The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) as a university.

#### **Background**

2. HKIEd was formally established in 1994 by merging the four former Colleges of Education (i.e. Grantham, Northcote, Sir Robert Black and the Hong Kong Technical Teachers' College) and the Institute of Language in Education, offering sub-degree teacher education programmes at the initial stage. In September 1998, HKIEd began to offer programmes at degree and above levels. Over the years, the Institute had established three faculties (Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Education Studies and Education of Languages) and eight academic departments. In March 2004, HKIEd was granted self-accrediting status in respect of its teacher education programmes at degree and above levels. Currently, the Institute provides doctoral, master and undergraduate degree, post-graduate diploma, certificate and other in-service teacher education programmes. About 80% and 25% of new primary and secondary school teachers are graduates of HKIEd respectively. .

#### **Members' concerns**

3. The Panel on Education discussed issues relating to the retitling of HKIEd as a university and received views of the management, staff association and student union of HKIEd at its meeting on 22 March 2007. Two questions had been raised in the Third Legislative Council in this regard. The concerns raised by Members are summarized in the following paragraphs.

#### Relationship between self-accreditation and university title

4. Members noted that HKIED was granted self-accrediting status in respect of its teacher education programmes at degree and above levels in March 2004. They sought information on the relationship between self-accreditation and university title of an institution.

5. According to the Administration, to be granted self-accrediting status, a higher education institution must have an enduring commitment to quality, and the capability to do so with sound internal quality assurance mechanisms and improvement processes to ensure the quality and standards of its programmes and graduates. When considering whether an institution could be granted self-accrediting status, the University Grants Committee (UGC) or the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications would conduct an institutional review to assess the institution's readiness to take responsibility for the quality and standards of its own programmes. Taking into account the result of the institutional review, the Administration would submit its recommendation to Chief Executive in Council for consideration. The Administration pointed out that self-accreditation and university title were two separate issues. An institution awarded self-accrediting status would not be granted automatically the title of a university.

#### Criteria for the award of a university title

6. According to the UGC Quadrennial Report 1991-95, the award of a university title was subject to three basic criteria, namely, the adoption of a common salary scale, the fulfilment of the institution's role in higher education, and the acquisition of self-accrediting status. Members noted with concern the imposition by the Administration of additional criteria for granting a university title. The factors to be considered by the Administration included the objectives of establishing the university; the quality and standard of the institution's academic and research programmes; the range of programmes; the effectiveness of its teaching and learning; the institution's internal governance structure; the quality of leadership of its management; the financial position of the institutions; its sustainability; and the public interest, etc.

7. The Administration explained that apart from the three basic criteria mentioned in the UGC's Report, the other factors had been quoted for consideration of granting a university title to an institution in the past. The Administration had no preconceived view on whether HKIED should acquire a university title. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, a university was an "*institution of higher education, usually comprising a liberal arts and sciences college and graduate and professional schools that confer degrees in various fields*", which meant that universities, by nature and design, should not be monoteknic.

8. In the views of members, the Administration claimed on the one hand that the prevailing international trend was to develop comprehensive universities offering a range of degree programmes in various disciplines. On the other hand, it had taken a number of measures to reduce the variety of programmes provided by HKIED in

recent years. With reduced funding, HKIEd had been compelled to reduce its number of faculties from four to two and departments from 12 to eight. Although HKIEd had been recognised by the Research Grants Council as being qualified for the provision of postgraduate programmes, it was the only UGC-funded institution that had not been allocated any places from the 450 additional research postgraduate places in the 2005-2008 triennium. Furthermore, the Administration had allocated resources for other institutions to operate pre-primary teacher education programmes, which were conventionally offered only by HKIEd. Under these circumstances, it would be difficult for HKIEd to develop into a comprehensive university, which in turn affected its status.

9. The Administration stressed that it remained open as to whether HKIEd should be retitled as a university, although the prevailing international trend was to develop comprehensive universities. As at March 2007, HKIEd had not made an application for retitling as a university. Under the funding mechanism for the UGC-funded institutions, the Education Bureau was responsible for planning the overall teacher education places while UGC allocated places and resources to teacher education providers for the purpose. Historically, HKIEd had been the sole provider of pre-primary teacher education programmes. The Administration considered it appropriate to have more programme providers in order to create more capacity and diversity in the provision of pre-primary teacher education to meet the emerging demand.

10. As to whether the lack of a university title had affected the public image of HKIEd and its ability to compete for intake of students with good academic results, the Administration's view was that HKIEd was established in 1994 as a post-secondary institution for providing professional training to teachers. Its role had been well understood and appreciated by the community. There was no evidence to substantiate the concern that the development of HKIEd had been adversely affected by the lack of a university title. The Administration considered that the granting of a university title did not necessarily help improve the quality of student intake. Quite a number of outstanding higher education institutions overseas, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and California Institute of Technology in the United States, did not carry a university title.

### **Latest development**

11. HKIEd submitted the "Development Blueprint : Becoming a University of Education " (the Blueprint) to the Government on 28 June 2007. In response to the Government's request for expert advice, the UGC set up a Review Group in August 2007 to consider the Blueprint. The UGC released the Report of the Review Group on Hong Kong Institute of Education's Development Blueprint ("the Report") in February 2009.

12. The Review Group put forward the following recommendations -

- (a) that a university of education, particularly one of a monotchnic

character, should not be established in the UGC sector, and that other strategies be followed to lift the capacity of HKIEd to best enhance teacher education and promote excellence in the Hong Kong higher education sector;

- (b) that HKIEd should give priority to :
- the strategic development of teacher education in Hong Kong;
  - the development of additional disciplines that are complementary to education; and
  - the development of a research and research training environment;
- (c) that HKIEd should seek to implement the proposals set out in the Report by one of two options :
- develop into a multidisciplinary institution with a focus on education and other complementary disciplines, primarily offering undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes and undertaking research and research training; or
  - partner with an existing university in order to provide a multidisciplinary learning and research environment and flexible career pathways for its students while developing other proposals that are congruent with the mutually agreed development plans of HKIEd and the partner university;
- (d) that Government should :
- approach the institutional development of HKIEd as a matter requiring additional funding, over and above existing levels of funding provided to the UGC; and
  - continue to take a flexible approach in planning the manpower dimension in teacher education.

### **Relevant papers**

13. A list of the relevant papers on the LegCo website is in the **Appendix**.

**Relevant papers on  
retitling of The Hong Kong Institute of Education as a university**

| Meeting             | Date of meeting | Paper  |
|---------------------|-----------------|--|
| Legislative Council | 7.12.2005       | <a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 57 - 60 (Question)</a>                                |
| Legislative Council | 7.2.2007        | <a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 60 - 70 (Question)</a>                                |
| Panel on Education  | 22.3.2007       | <a href="#">Minutes<br/>CB(2)1333/06-07(03)</a>  |
| n/a                 | n/a             | <a href="#">Report of the Review Group on Hong Kong Institute of Education's Development Blueprint</a> |

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