

UGC Report on the Development Blueprint of HKIED: HKIED's Position and Plans

Introduction

1. The University Grants Committee (UGC) released its Report of the Review Group on the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED)'s Development Blueprint on 17 February 2009. Although some of our staff, students and alumni feel disappointed that UGC is unable to support the Institute attaining University title at this point of time, we welcome this Report because of its stated recommendation for the Institute to develop into an Education-focused, multidisciplinary institution with research capability. We see the Report in positive light and stand ready to further develop under our "Education-plus" vision, to unleash a new phase for education development in Hong Kong and the Region.

HKIED's Response

2. The UGC Review Group did not recommend the establishment of a university of Education as a monotechnic institution. We would like to point out that Education is not mono-disciplinary, but a field of study informed by and integrated with a multiple of academic disciplines. Notwithstanding this, we are committed to continuing broadening the multidisciplinary knowledge base of our students and extending the range of programme offerings at HKIED. We see the UGC Report as supportive of our "Education-plus" vision, and are also encouraged by the clear support given by UGC to HKIED playing an important role in research and research training.

3. The UGC Report outlines two feasible options for HKIED's future, namely the Institutional Integration Option and Stand-Alone Option.

4. The Institutional Integration Option is in effect an option to "merge" with another university, the success of which involves elaborate and very time-consuming discussions and a congruence of minds, not to mention complex organizational and cultural hurdles to be overcome. We have made it clear from early on that 'merger' is not on our agenda. However, we have always been open to forging closer collaboration with other local universities in our programme development and research.

5. The Stand-Alone Option is for HKIED to become a University on its own. In this connection, the UGC Report recommends that the Institute can "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" (Recommendation 3(a)). This is exactly what the Institute is heading towards under our current "Education-plus" concept. We are pleased to know that such a pathway is now endorsed by UGC and shall focus our attention and energies on the early realization of this goal.

What HKIED Has Already Achieved Today

6. The HKIED is already a well-established university-level tertiary institution with self-accrediting status in "Education" programmes. About 77% of our UGC-approved

student numbers are at degree level (Bachelor of Education, BEd) and above, including Master of Education (MEd) and Doctor of Education (EdD). With some 270 academic staff and 140 teaching staff (Teaching Fellow and Instructor grades), HKIEd has the largest critical mass committed to Education-related programmes and research in Hong Kong. Over 90% of our academic staff have doctoral qualification, comparable with other established universities.

7. Since its establishment in 1994 by amalgamating the then five colleges of education, HKIEd has produced over 34,000 graduates. Today, about 84% and 30% of Hong Kong's primary and secondary school teachers respectively are graduates of HKIEd or its predecessor colleges. In addition, about 80% of the trained kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong (with degree or sub-degree certificate Early Childhood Education awards) have obtained their training from HKIEd. The quality of professional teacher education we provide can be attested by the high proportion of our graduates receiving recognition for their teaching excellence and commitment to education. Since the inception of the Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence in 2003-04, 169 teachers have received the award, of whom 109 (64.5%) were graduates of HKIEd or its predecessor colleges; for the year 2007-08, 37 out of 42 (or 88.1%) were our graduates.

Gearing Up for Becoming a University of Education

8. We share with UGC the emphasis on broadening our academic discipline areas and enhancing our research capability. Over the past year, under the current Senior Management Team, we have been stepping up our efforts in strengthening our academic and research capacity through -

- global strategic recruitment of Chair Professors and Professors,
- academic restructuring, and
- reorganizing our research infrastructure to nurture new centres of excellence.

9. In terms of *strategic recruitment*, we have increased the number of Chair Professors/Professor appointments to 31 (14 Chair Professors and 17 Professors).

10. In terms of *academic restructuring*, we have reorganized our academic structure into three Faculties (Education Studies, Languages, and Arts and Sciences) in August 2008. The Faculty of Education Studies promotes cutting-edge education studies within the context of learning society, innovative classroom and new pedagogy. The Faculty of Languages promotes language education, language acquisition, linguistics and literature. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences promote cultural and creative arts, humanities and social sciences, environmental studies, as well as some science-based subject disciplines.

11. In terms of *reorganizing our research infrastructure*, we have adopted a three-tier system of Institute-level, Faculty-level and departmental level research centres and programmes. Following a rigorous international review of centre proposals, we have just approved the establishment/consolidation of 4 Institute-level research centres this year, namely: the Research Centre on Language Education and Acquisition in Multilingual Societies; Centre for Assessment Research and

Development; Asia Pacific Centre for Leadership and Change; and Centre for Governance and Citizenship. These centres possess the critical mass to lead cutting-edge research in the fields concerned.

12. In response to the UGC recommendations, we shall adopt a three-pronged strategic approach:

- ***Education focused:*** We shall further consolidate our academic strength in Education (both teacher education and community learning), continue to take the lead in primary and early childhood education, and strive to offer some of the “best” education programmes in Hong Kong and the Region. At the same time, we shall diversify the range of programme offerings at BEd, MEd and EdD levels, and develop International Executive Master’s and Doctoral programmes as new signature programmes in Education areas. Our undergraduate curriculum is being revamped in preparation for the new “334” academic structure (from 2012).
- ***Multidisciplinary:*** We shall develop a good spread (at least three) of complementary academic discipline areas in addition to “Education”, through our Faculty of Languages and Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Our preliminary consideration has focused on “Languages” (including Linguistics and Literature), “Creative Arts and Culture”, and “Humanities & Social Sciences” (Social, Environmental and Global Studies). New Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Social Sciences (BSocSc) programmes are being planned for launch in the coming 1-2 years, if we are given the necessary first-year-first-degree (FYFD) places (120 as recommended by the UGC Review Report) and related resources by Government through UGC. Pending the granting of unrestricted self-accrediting status by Government following an institutional review of HKIEd, we will need the assistance of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation and Vocational Qualification (HKCAAVQ) in validating these new non-Education programmes falling outside our current self-accrediting scope.
- ***Research capability and research training:*** In addition to launching new Institute-level research centres, we are adopting a research-friendly and research-active strategy on campus, to help build up some vital research teams and produce quality outputs with pedagogical, academic and social impact. We shall also establish a full-fledged research training infrastructure with appropriate quality assurance mechanisms, to support the admission of research postgraduate (RPg) students (MPhil, PhD) by next year in “Education” areas, provided we are allocated the necessary RPg places by Government through UGC (30 as recommended by UGC Review Report).

Our University Aspirations

13. For HKIEd, re-titling as “University” is not just a name-change. It will facilitate the advent of a University with a special niche in new learning. It will also contribute to an enriched higher education landscape of Hong Kong, and to reinforce the city’s positioning as an education hub. What defines a university is its pursuit of knowledge without boundary, its free thinking and free speech environment, and its capacity for rationality, diversity and a broad-base intellect. The education we provide will prepare

our students to become competent and caring professionals, intellectually active, socially caring and globally aware, capable of integrating theory and practice. As the main provider of teacher education in Hong Kong, HKIEd is committed to grooming a new generation of teachers who are well-rounded, multidisciplinary, articulate, adaptive, and able to inspire.

Conclusion

14. We now have a much clearer direction in preparing for the transformation of the Institute to become a multidisciplinary University of Education. We shall engage in further discussions with both the Government and UGC over how to take things forward in concrete steps. Given the roadmap now available, we do not think the timetable for HKIEd to become a University of Education should be delayed any further. Such a timetable can be worked out mutually by Government and HKIEd. We look forward to a proactive policy commitment from Government on the “University of Education” goal. On HKIEd’s part, we are planning for the necessary steps to be completed within the course of the coming triennium (2009-12), and will draw up a New Strategic Plan for this purpose.

Hong Kong Institute of Education
April 2009