

ASA's stand on HKIEd's re-titling and response to the UGC report

1. **We feel very disappointed with the UGC report not recommending an immediate university title for HKIEd.**
2. We believe that HKIEd is in fact functioning as a university, (1) offering degree studies up to doctoral level, (2) with about 90% of its academic staff with a doctoral degree, and (3) with graduates who are treated as university graduates. Therefore HKIEd should be granted the proper title of a university, which it rightly deserves, and which truly reflects the roles it is playing.
3. We are not at all convinced of the fairness of the reason given for not granting HKIEd a university title: HKIEd being a mono-technic teaching institute. HKIEd was assigned a mono-technic teaching institute role by the ordinance upon which the HKIEd was created, and this role was further reiterated by the Sutherland Report of the UGC in 2002, regardless of the institute's competence and willingness to offer programmes in areas other than education and postgraduate research degree programmes. Now this unfair accusation is imposed upon us as an excuse not to grant HKIEd its proper university title. We hold that it is the responsibility of the government and the UGC to solve this dilemma originating from wavering and contradictory government policies.
4. This act of not granting HKIEd its proper title will have negative effects on the development of the institute which in turn will affect negatively the development of the teaching profession and ultimately will be detrimental to the development of Hong Kong into a regional education hub as proposed by the government.
 - (a) Without a title of university, the recruitment of quality secondary school graduates will be negatively affected, especially when more and more private universities are going to be established in the near future. Moreover, we believe that a University of Education is urgently needed given a context where private universities with various foci will be offering a rapidly expanding range of choices to young people. Any tertiary institution focusing on education without a university title will face very unfair competition, and will be disadvantaged in the recruitment of quality secondary school graduates. This in turn will have negative impacts on the quality of Hong Kong's future teachers.

- (b) The absence of a university title currently hinders the Institute's scholarly exchanges with other institutions, especially those on the Mainland where the title 'institute' only refers to those provincial institutions offering sub-degree programmes.
- (c) It also gives a wrong impression to the HK community that education is not important and its practitioners do not deserve university level training.

5. We are against the option of merging with another comprehensive university suggested by the UGC report.

(a) We firmly believe that a university focusing on Education, with a broadened disciplinary base, that covers disciplines that are complementary to Education, is of paramount importance to Hong Kong, in particular to its development into a regional education hub. We believe that education is the ultimate art of cultivation of humanity, which needs to be well-informed by disciplines in the liberal arts domain*. To establish a University of Education proper, we believe that such a broadened field of studies and researches could re-contextualize educational studies, giving it a more comprehensive and sustainable foundation.

(b) We do not think merging with a comprehensive university is a fast track as suggested by the report because it involves a lot of very tough negotiations between institutions of very different cultures and will take a very long time.

(c) Moreover, a faculty of education in a comprehensive university is always marginalized by other much more marketable faculties in terms of resource distribution. As a consequence, the aim of having a university focusing on education will never be achieved through this route.

6. However, despite our disappointment with the UGC report and our contrary views, we welcome the fact that the report has moved a step closer towards resolving the problem by signaling the green light for HKIEd to move forward towards a university with a focus on education, supported by a number of additional disciplines that are complementary to education.

Therefore, the ASA of HKIEd requests strongly that the government participate actively in solving the problem by taking appropriate measures in term of funding, amendment of the ordinance etc., so that HKIEd can move forward promptly towards the direction of providing broader disciplines and postgraduate research degree studies as a multi-disciplinary University of Education. There should be a clearly scheduled timetable for the re-titling which should not take longer than two years. This is for the betterment of the Hong Kong education profession and the development of Hong Kong into a regional education hub.

10 March, 2009.

*Liberal arts domain

http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/2a/cd/80.pdf

Elmore, D.E., Prentice, J.C. & Trosset, C. (2006) Do Students Understand Liberal Arts Disciplines? *Liberal Education*, 92(1): 48-55.