

For discussion on
22 March 2007

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Proposal on Retitling of the Hong Kong Institute of Education as a University

Purpose

This paper reports the background and the recent developments relating to the proposal on 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. The Institute started to offer programmes at degree and above levels in September 1998. Currently, HKIED provides doctoral, master and undergraduate degree, post-graduate diploma, certificate and other in-service teacher education programmes to pre-service students and serving teachers.

3. In March 2004, HKIED was granted self-accrediting status in respect of its own teacher education programmes at degree and above levels. Prior to this, the Chairman of University Grants Committee (UGC) made it clear in her letter to HKIED in January 2004 that self-accreditation and university status were two separate issues, and that granting self-accrediting status carried no implication on university status.

4. In July 2005, HKIED and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) announced that they had entered into an agreement on deep collaboration in the area of teacher education. The agreement provides a platform upon which collaborative projects will be considered, planned and implemented. The two institutions believe that their combined strength will

create synergy and facilitate cross-fertilization, which will enhance the quality of education and the teaching profession throughout Hong Kong. The HKIED Council has announced earlier that should there be a possibility for deeper collaboration with CUHK, the Council will deliberate in full, with wide consultation with staff and students.

5. The prevailing international trend is the development of comprehensive universities which offer a range of degree programmes in various disciplines, allowing the students to broaden their horizons and giving them more choices in university education. Even “Normal Universities”, such as Beijing Normal University, National Taiwan Normal University etc., whose original aim was to provide teacher education programmes, are being developed into multi-disciplinary universities. At present, only one-third of the programmes offered by the Beijing Normal University are on Education. On the other hand, quite a number of outstanding higher education institutions overseas do not carry a university title. Examples include the MIT and Caltech in the United States.

6. In considering applications from any institution for retitling as a university, the Government will consider the merits of each case, the blueprint for future development and take into account various relevant factors including 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 institution; its sustainability; and the public interest, etc.

Recent Developments

7. The Government has so far not received HKIED's application for university title. The Government has all along had an open mind as to whether the Institute should acquire a university title.

8. An informal meeting was held among representatives of HKIED and the Education and Manpower Bureau on 29 December 2006, to exchange views on the retitling issue. At the meeting, the Secretary for Education and Manpower said that it would be important for HKIED to give serious thoughts to the present situation and put forward a proposal for the Institute's long-term

development, and that in doing so, various options should be explored. In response, the Chairman of the HKIED Council said that HKIED would submit a blue print for its future development in connection with the idea of retitling.

9. HKIED is the major teacher education institute in Hong Kong. It is in the interest of the community that HKIED should have a robust and sustainable long-term development plan. Upon receipt of HKIED's application, we shall examine it in detail with reference to the future needs of, and overall benefits to, the society. We will also consult the UGC and, if necessary, the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation, before submitting a recommendation to the Chief Executive-in-Council for consideration. In the case of HKIED, the change of title involves legislative amendments to its governing ordinance. Such legislative amendments will be subject to the approval of the Legislative Council.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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