

Address by

the Right Reverend Andrew Chan Au-ming, *Honorary Fellow*

Council Chairman Mr Pang, Professor Cheng, Members of the Council, Deans and Faculty Members, Distinguished Guests and Students,

On behalf of all the Honorary Fellows this year – Mr Fung Sau-chung, Ms Leona Lam Wai-ling, Mr Frank Lee King-ting, Mr Tai Hay-lap, Ms Christina Ting Yuk-chee and myself – I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for having such a great honour conferred upon us. We come from different backgrounds – some of us are from educational institutions, some have years of frontline experience as teaching professionals and some are devoted to the promotion of the arts and culture. Nevertheless, we all work “with one heart” for Hong Kong’s next generations, and this spirit completely aligns with the HKIEd’s mission. As Mr Pang wrote in the Institute’s Strategic Plan, “only human talent can ensure the ongoing success and competitiveness of our city, and cultivating talent starts with education.”

Indeed, cultivating talent has to start with education. Today I would like to take Finland as an example for deliberation. A small Scandinavian country that is less advantaged in many ways than its neighbours Norway and Sweden, Finland has nevertheless dazzled the world with its remarkable achievements. You might recall that one of the most popular mobile phones is created in Finland. The country’s successful transformation has hinged on its ability to recognise the importance of education. With Scandinavia’s high cost of living and high wages, Finland could not possibly compete on production costs with Asian countries that have lower standards of living. Its only alternative has been to excel in creativity and innovation. With its success in new product development, Finland has leapt from having an economy traditionally based on agriculture and forestry to being an information technology powerhouse, which has allowed the country to thrive and grow. This is an outstanding example of how education can equip a society with countless possibilities to innovate and develop.

Finns also understand that high-quality university education alone does not enhance the competitiveness of a country. Instead, it has to be education for all, and as a result the Finnish government is fully committed to teacher education. It believes that the “human brain” is the most valuable asset of a country, and although its investment in education expenses such as books and facilities is limited, the creativity unleashed has been boundless. Creativity enhances the competitive edge of a country. Moreover, a stable education environment lowers school drop-out rates. This in turn reduces the associated social cost, which can then be further invested into education, allowing the country to afford education for all.

Now, let us look at Hong Kong. Many scholars have pointed out that we must change into a knowledge-based society. We all hope to see Hong Kong making greater contributions to the economic, cultural and technological development of our vast country – China. To this end, we must take the vision of “education for all” to the next level. Among the eight tertiary institutions in Hong Kong, none is more able to carry such an important responsibility than the HKIEd. As articulated in the HKIEd’s mission, “Education creates knowledge, understanding and the capacity to transform life and society.”

Today, all of us who have the honour of being conferred Honorary Fellowships look forward to working with the Institute community for the betterment and progress of Hong Kong and China. We also hope that the HKIEd will soon become a university, so that the quality of education in Hong Kong will be further advanced, making the city a blessing for China and the world.

Thank you.