



Address by  
**MR CARLSON TONG KA-SHING, GBS, JP**  
**Doctor of Social Sciences, *honoris causa***

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Council Chairman Dr David Wong, Council Members, President Professor John Lee, distinguished guests, and friends of The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK).

It is indeed a great honour to be conferred this Honorary Doctorate by EdUHK, particularly as I receive it with two distinguished scholars, who are iconic figures in their respective fields. As an eminent scholar in East Asian studies, Professor Kawata Teiichi has done so much to bring together Chinese and Japanese culture and philosophy. Professor Stephen Raudenbush, meanwhile, is a pioneer in developing methodologies to fight inequality in education. They have played hugely important roles in bridging gaps and fostering understanding between cultures.

Although we come from different backgrounds, one thing we all share is our passion for education. I spent my entire career in accountancy, and I have since devoted a large part of what is supposed to be my retirement to the world of education.

My connection with EdUHK dates back to 2014, when I was Chairman of the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI). We signed a collaborative agreement with EdUHK's predecessor – the first of its kind with an institution funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) – to provide flexibility for elite athletes to pursue academic studies while continuing with their sports careers. On a personal level, I am truly proud of the pioneering efforts we have made in this regard, and it is really rewarding to see them shine, in both the classroom and the stadium. Some have graduated with first class honours, and some have chosen to pursue higher degrees, while continuing to win medals at international competitions.

This initiative has since grown exponentially over the years, culminating in the launch of the UGC's Student-Athlete Learning Support and Admission (SALSA) Scheme in 2022. The SALSA Scheme opens up a dual pathway to pursue studies for current and retired athletes. This is best testimony to our commitment to ensuring that education is open to everyone – a goal which is exceptionally close to my heart.

This is because education forms the basis of our society, bringing a community together. It helps shape our future, enlighten our minds and broaden our horizons, so that we may build a better future together by fostering positive values and mutual understanding.

Regrettably, though, the world is facing a widening wealth gap, which has had a devastating effect on the underprivileged, in particular. As the acclaimed poet Maya Angelou said, "If it is true that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, isn't it also true a society is only as healthy as its sickest citizen and only as wealthy as its most deprived?" With education, we can help bridge this gap, but only if it is accessible to people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, caters to different abilities and needs, and is available to us throughout our lives.

In Hong Kong, we take pride in the quality of our education system. There is a wide variety of schools at different levels, with different emphases – some on values formation, some on academic achievement, and some on arts and sports development.

Of course, we cannot rest on our laurels. Our education system has to constantly move forward to remain relevant, continue to nurture talent, and adapt to an ever-changing world. Education is a catalyst for a thriving Hong Kong, which has long served as a conduit into mainland China, and an international trade and financial centre. With its unique position as part of the Greater Bay Area, the city provides a host of opportunities for those across the community who wish to make a difference with their knowledge.

All three of us are united in the firm belief that education is the pathway to bridging gaps. We are therefore truly honoured to be here today, to be conferred Honorary Doctorates, and we will continue to play our part in realising the goal of making learning accessible to all.

Thank you.