

ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR KWONG CHIU LEE DOW
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION, *honoris causa*

Council Chairman Mr Pang Yiu-kai and Members of Council, President Anthony Cheung, staff, students, alumni and friends,

I am honoured and humbled to be here today to receive the recognition implied by the honorary degree of Doctor of Education from this Institute of Education to which I have felt closely bonded for more than 15 years.

As the Institute is now celebrating its fifteenth anniversary you might wonder how I can say “for more than 15 years”! The answer is that before the Institute came into being, I was asked by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) to lead a Review of the Colleges of Education as part of the assurance process that the new Institute should indeed evolve from the achievements of these predecessor colleges that had successfully been preparing teachers for Hong Kong over many decades.

So in 1993 I had the pleasure of visiting Northcote, Grantham, Robert Black and the Technical Teachers’ College along with the Institute of Language in Education, to meet with the Principals and their senior staff, to see the institutions at work, to drop in on classrooms, laboratories, music and art centres and sporting facilities, to briefly interact with students and staff and so form an impression of the readiness to begin the transition to the exciting new phase of a purpose built Institute of a standing to enable it to move towards University status.

As they say, the rest is history. But I do want to record how impressed I was, as were my colleagues from HKCAA, with the commitment and the enthusiasm of the people from the Colleges, and how we all agreed that here was a secure base from which to build. I enjoyed my roles as Advisor to the Provisional Governing Council in 1993, and as a Council member of the new Institute in its first four years.

So much has been achieved in the ensuing time and the wonderful facilities and expert staff at the splendid Tai Po campus today is far ahead of what was available and possible at the Colleges, coming as they were from a different era with lesser expectations. But let us pay full tribute to the spirit, the dedication and the efforts of those College principals and their staffs, and to the early planners and leaders of the Institute. While in no way seeking to be comprehensive, I do want to acknowledge specifically the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Michael Leung, who with Simon Ip the inaugural Council Chairman, and founding President Professor C K Leung planned for the future with tenacity, foresight and much wisdom.

Since that early period, I have appreciated opportunities of continuing connections with Institute developments, admiring especially the monumental contributions of Ruth Hayhoe [the second President] and the accomplished and sustained leadership given by Dr Thomas Leung [the former Council Chairman].

Turning briefly to the future, let us note that in many countries and communities there has been a wider recognition that the primary years of schooling and the early childhood years are of high importance in determining the

subsequent educational attainments and prospects for many students, particularly for those from less advantaged backgrounds and from families less familiar with how to create educational opportunities for their children. Some of us have long known this, but governments and communities at large are now seeing that the quality and preparation of primary and early childhood educators really does matter. They increasingly recognise that this matters if we are to achieve economic success in knowledge led industries and in technological advancement, and that it matters no less if we are to achieve fairer societies, giving better life chances for all our people, and, one hopes they will come to see as well that personal satisfaction and inner health grows from a satisfying education.

This of course means that the students who graduate from this Institute, like those who graduate from similar settings in other countries, will be called on to do more in their societies and communities than have some teachers in the past. As potential community leaders their preparation and their continuing education matters, and the acknowledgement of the role and work of the Institute similarly matters.

I wish the Institute and its people every success as you approach your next milestone. By that time I expect that full University recognition will have been unambiguously achieved!

I am sure my fellow honorary doctoral candidate joins me in expressing thanks for our recognition today, and wish all involved with the Hong Kong Institute of Education continuing success and advancement.