

Address by Dr Daniel Tse Chi-wai, GBS, CBE, OBE, JP
Doctor of Social Sciences, *honoris causa*

Mr Chairman and members of the Council, President Professor Stephen Cheung, staff, students and friends of The Hong Kong Institute of Education,

On behalf of Professor Jerome Bruner, Professor Dolores Gallagher-Thompson and Dr Elizabeth Wang Ming-chun, I want to express our most sincere gratitude to you for the great honours you have bestowed on the four of us today. It is unfortunate that due to unavoidable circumstances, Professor Bruner and Professor Gallagher-Thompson are unable to witness in person the conferment ceremony that you have so carefully planned for us. Equally unfortunate is that you will miss the words of wisdom and scholarly insights these two great masters would have shared with you if they had been here to deliver this Thank You Address. Despite the fact that I am the least of the four honorary degree recipients, the honour of delivering this Address was passed on to me by default.

Speaking of giving thanks, please allow me first on behalf of my relatives to express a heartfelt gratitude to the predecessors of The Hong Kong Institute of Education, namely, the former colleges of education from which my two cousins, four sisters-in-law and one brother-in-law received their teacher's training in the mid-1950s. I should also add that all seven of them except my brother-in-law were brought up in Macao. As you would probably guess, there was no opportunity for further education in Macao in the 1950s, and the political situation in China was not encouraging at that time. For these young people who completed secondary education in Macao, a small chance for further education with a more secure future was the narrow door of admission by examination that was kept open by the colleges of education to students whose secondary education was not from Hong Kong. With that ray of hope in mind, my two cousins and the four future in-laws set sail to Hong Kong one after the other. Fortunately, all of them passed the tough entrance examinations, and were admitted to the colleges of education to start their professional lives.

Thanks to the quality education and professionalism of their alma maters, my seven cousins and in-laws did devote their whole lives to teaching, whether they were residing locally or abroad. Judging from their lifelong commitments to education and fine professional performance, I can only conclude that the three colleges of education which later formed part of the present HKIEd must have contributed most substantially in building Hong Kong's modern primary and secondary educational system, through the rigorous training of their students.

As time went by, the opportunities for higher education and demand for graduate teachers at secondary schools increased steadily in the 1970s when the economy was booming in Hong Kong. Then came the early 1980s, when Hong Kong was swept up by another flood of talent outflow due to the political uncertainty of 1997. To shore up the supply of highly educated talents, the British Hong Kong Government made a series of bold moves to expand the scope of higher education. These included the creation of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the development of first degree courses at the polytechnics and approved post-secondary colleges, and, of course, the amalgamation of the colleges of education to form a new tertiary institution. There were debates at one point in time on whether it was more beneficial to keep a stand-alone tertiary institution of education or to merge it with a comprehensive university. Those who supported the merger idea argued that while the fierce competition in tertiary education would be too tough for a stand-alone institute of education, merging it into a large university would accord the institute with an immediate university status with security. But those who insisted on going it alone were willing to forfeit the immediate benefits of becoming part of a large university, and to pay the developing price for the longer term goal of an independent and self-governing university. In the end, the going it alone side won the debate! Today's HKIEd is the testimony of this victory.

As I read the HKIEd publications provided to me since the beginning of this year, I was struck by the clear vision and mission you spelled out for your Institute. In particular, I was deeply impressed by the theme of "Transformation" you adopted in the two sets of triennial strategic plans of 2009 and 2013. Even more remarkable is that you reached most of the milestones outlined in the two strategic plans before the second triennium was over, as pointed out by your Chair of Council in his latest Annual Report Message.

In fact, the success of transformation of your Institute into an education-focused, multi-disciplinary institution with strong research capacity has been noted by the international university ranking agencies. The resulting high rankings HKIEd attained in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2015 in education and linguistics are the best evidences of your achievements. Indeed, as well documented in the two 2015 *HKIEd News* publications, HKIEd does have a proud story to tell about "Transforming KNOWLEDGE" and "Transforming PEOPLE". On behalf of my fellow honorary degree recipients today, I salute you all. You are the HKIEd story makers and the HKIEd story tellers. The world will listen to your story, and HKIEd will earn its rightful place in the academic world with proper respect and recognition from its peers. Thank you.