

Address by Professor Andy Hargreaves
Doctor of Education, *Honoris Causa*

Chancellor the Honourable Mrs Carrie Lam, Council Chairman Professor Frederick Ma and members of the Council, President Professor Stephen Cheung, and staff, students and friends of The Education University of Hong Kong,

I am pleased and humbled to offer these words of thanks to express appreciation and gratitude for the honour you have bestowed on my fellow Honorary Doctorate recipients and myself. My fellow recipients - Professor Anthony Cheung, Dr Rita Fan, Dr Thomas Leung, and Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh – are greatly moved by being granted this recognition by one of Asia’s leading universities in the field of education.

Universities are places of wisdom and knowledge. They also cherish a kind of ignorance: not the ignorance that refutes knowledge and expertise but that invites and anticipates them. One of life’s most blissful states is the space, moment or gateway that separates ignorance from knowledge; of not knowing from knowing; of curiosity from certainty. Through centuries of scholarship and in a time before Google, it has always been the moment of wonder and wondering, of mysteries and solutions and yet more mysteries beyond them, that has been most special in the process of educating. This is why teaching is so important and why it truly matters. Teaching is not about the delivery of knowledge and information. Algorithms can give us that. Teaching is about embracing the glorious moment of ignorance that immediately precedes knowledge and then succeeds it soon after. As China’s greatest philosopher and teacher, Confucius said: “Real knowledge is to know the extent of one’s ignorance.” The marvel of teaching and research is in how it inspires people to seek out and take on new problems, explorations, and challenges.

Since the 1990s, global interest in international educational performance has drawn the world’s eyes towards Hong Kong. In the last 15 years, Hong Kong has moved into the top 10 group of educational performers. This is a result of deliberate policies since 2002 to improve the quality of teaching, teacher education and professional development in a region that places a premium on high-level workforce skills. The teaching focus has moved increasingly towards active learning, education for understanding, demonstrations of learning in practice, and wider life learning outside school. The transformation of teaching has come from the professional preparation, professional development and collaboration between universities and schools that has been supported by the Education Bureau and in which The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) excels.

In just two decades, EdUHK has undergone an extraordinary rise to become one of the top two education faculties in Asia and one of the top 20 in the world – a realisation of its vision to be a leading university in educational research, development and innovation. The reputation of the faculty is indisputably excellent, including in the fields best known to me of professional development, school change, and educational leadership. I have flown to this ceremony from presenting a research report to an international foundation on collaborative professionalism. A Hong Kong secondary school, less than 20 minutes drive from the University, is one of our five global examples. In understanding its innovative practices, the most comprehensive research we consulted was from EdUHK.

In a personal capacity, I have felt closely connected to educators and other people in Hong Kong for more than 20 years. One of my first public speaking invitations in Hong Kong was at an international teacher education conference at The Hong Kong Institute of Education (predecessor of EdUHK) in 1999, when it was barely five years old. I have lectured here, undertaken research here, contributed to EdUHK faculty publications, become a Distinguished Visiting Professor at The University of Hong Kong and walked the land around almost all of the Hong Kong Trail. My daughter, Lucy, and my wife Pauline have visited with me many times. Our son, Stuart, is also a law professor here. With his wife, Laura, he has made his life in Hong Kong with his own family, including our baby granddaughter Josephine Lu-Mei. Hong Kong is a home for all of us in our family now, in one way and another.

One of our fellow recipients, Master Nhat Hanh says that too many of us devote a lot of energy to being anxious about the future and regretful about the past. He exhorts us to be in the moment, to enjoy where we are. Let us all celebrate and enjoy being in this moment of recognising the extraordinary scholarship and leadership of my fellow recipients, of celebrating the honourable profession of teaching, and of being uplifted by the inspiring mission of EdUHK "to lead educational innovation...by preparing outstanding and morally responsible educators and professionals while supporting their lifelong learning". Let's enjoy this moment together. For as Master Nhat Hanh says: "Why wait to be happy?"