

PART FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR HKIED

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This concluding part of the Report sets out the views of the Review Group on two substantive issues which arose a number of times during discussion: self-accreditation and the risk of mission drift. While the issues themselves do not bear directly on the discharge of the Review Group's terms of reference, they are relevant in taking forward the recommendations made by the Review Group. In addition, the question of the future title of the Institute is addressed. This part also sets out recommendations for actions which the Review Group considers would benefit HKIED.

5.2 Self-accreditation

5.2.1 The Review Group considered a number of future scenarios for HKIED as part of its deliberations:

1. The status quo: no university title; self-accreditation in Education only; accreditation in other areas to continue with HKCAAVQ;
2. University title, with no change in current accreditation arrangements (as in 1 above);
3. University title with limited self-accrediting status: self-accreditation status in Education programmes; self-accreditation status to be granted in the three programme areas (Chinese Studies; English Studies; Global and Environmental Studies) which had obtained PAA status in July 2014; accreditation to continue with HKCAAVQ in other areas;
4. University title with full powers of self-accreditation.

5.2.2 The first and second of the above scenarios were dismissed outright by the Review Group, as should be clear from the recommendations set out in Part Four. The Review Group then considered the third and fourth of the scenarios. As stated earlier, HKIED has been self-accrediting its Education programmes making up the bulk of its academic activities since 2004, as well as being re-accredited for most of its non-Education programmes in 2014. These facts pointed to an institution in which the processes and procedures associated with the quality assurance and validation of its teaching and curriculum were operating effectively with such processes being able to sustain HKIED in the future as it matured as a university. It might be observed that the

confidence shown by the UGC Review of HKIEd in 2004 has been amply borne out.

5.2.3 Evidence from, *inter alia*, quality audits conducted by QAC across UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong suggests that there is no substantive difference between HKIEd and the universities in relation to the quality of internal academic processes underpinning the validation and award of degrees and sub-degree qualifications. Student outcomes in terms of graduate quality are also comparable to the other Hong Kong universities. Bearing that in mind, the Review Group considers that the fourth scenario is appropriate for the Institute. The phasing of the move to the new status of full self-certification would need to be a matter for more detailed consideration but the move to self-certification in the three PAA programme areas should be initiated as soon as is practicable.

5.3 Mission Drift

5.3.1 The risk of possible 'mission-drift' on the part of HKIEd should it be awarded university title and rights of self-certification was raised with the Review Group by an external stakeholder. The Review Group responded by raising the issue with the President of HKIEd and his senior colleagues and, separately, with the Chairman of the HKIEd Council and colleagues. They were asked directly whether the award of university title might lead the Institute to develop programmes in areas with little or no connection to Education, thereby leading to distraction from its core mission. Assurances were given by the Institute's leadership that Education must remain the keystone of HKIEd's activities now and into the future.

5.3.2 The Review Group welcomed these assurances. Now and into the future, formal safeguards to preserve the core mission lie in the strong governance of the Institute. It should be made explicit in the formal enabling instruments that HKIEd's core activity will remain the enhancement of educational practice, particularly through the education of teachers, and that the programmes it offers must be directly relevant or complementary to such an end.

5.4 Institutional title

5.4.1 The Review Group considers that it will be a matter for the HKIEd Council, staff and students to decide on an appropriate title for the Institute, signifying that it has University status. Analogous to the question of the preservation of the core mission in the enabling

instruments, the Review Group believes that the future title should refer explicitly to the core mission of education and thus should contain the word "Education".

5.5 Areas for further improvements

5.5.1 The use of 'University' in its title will bring with it heightened external expectations of the Institute. In this context, the Review Group proposes the following actions, which it believes may help the Institute to respond to such expectations.

Clearer articulation and further development of the vision and mission

5.5.2 In its initial discussions, the Review Group sometimes struggled to understand what exactly was meant by 'Education-plus'. Clarification came through discussion with senior managers and staff at HKIEd. As 'Education-plus' will be a core characteristic of the Institute in moving forward, the elements underlying it and the way in which they interact to create 'Education-plus' as a whole need to be more clearly explained for external audiences, whether potential students, research collaborators or other interested parties.

5.5.3 In relation to the longer-term mission of the Institute, Education is by its nature a multi-disciplinary area of academic activity, drawing primarily on roots in the Humanities and the Social Sciences but is now coming to embrace research in computer science, ecology and the natural sciences. The new programme areas chosen to give more academic breadth to HKIEd have been developing across a broad spectrum, with Psychology, for example, taking in clinical aspects of the subject in addition to the behavioural and cognitive. Research in Global and Environmental Sciences has encompassed the sciences involved in ecology, while research in Education includes work in Mathematics and Science. The Review Group welcomes such developments, as the added breadth strengthens HKIEd's core mission and also its identity as a university. HKIEd should explore adding to that broader subject spectrum, possibly through deeper collaborations with Life, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences departments in other universities.

Planning for changing external circumstances

5.5.4 It was noted by the Review Group that the Institute's current Strategic Plan is largely predicated on the goal to achieve university title. While the plan gives some attention to changing external circumstances, greater attention should be paid in future plans to the relevant impact of such changes, such as the projected demographic changes in Hong Kong's school-age population. Such changes are likely to affect the demand for teachers and societal change may create new demands for specialist teachers such as the move towards greater professionalisation of the kindergarten workforce and increased needs of students with SEN.

Research co-ordination and support

5.5.5 Review Group members have benefited in their 'home' institutions from the existence of research offices, which are designed to support the work of academic researchers and increase competitive grant success rates. These offices disseminate information on research grant schemes, provide intelligence about external opportunities, facilitate research applications, help guide researchers through intellectual property matters and generally provide co-ordination of the research endeavour across the institution as a whole. The Review Group noted that the Institute had established a Research and Development Office to carry out some of these functions. As the nature and scale of research at HKIED increases, the Review Group suggests that HKIED should explore the enhancement of this Office, initially possibly through undertaking a comparative study of comparable offices in peer institutions.

International Advisory Forum

5.5.6 The Review Group was impressed with the value gained by the Institute from hosting an annual international conference for senior university managers. This gathering of senior academic leaders from around the world heightened the international profile of HKIED. With its increasing recognition worldwide among peer institutions and a university title, the Review Group believes that HKIED would benefit from establishing a small International Advisory Forum, with members drawn from leading Education-focused universities and relevant institutions around the world. The President and his colleagues might initially use the Forum as a resource in furthering development of the Institute but gradually the meetings may serve as an occasion for discussion of issues facing Education-focused universities around the

world. Such activities would help the Institute continue to expand its international profile.

Fund-raising

5.5.7 In universities around the world, fund raising has become an essential element of income generation. University Development Offices play an important role in bringing a structured professional approach to 'friend-raising', as well as to fund-raising. The existence of such an office in HKIED would focus its activities in these areas and help raise the profile of HKIED within Hong Kong. The Hong Kong community can be proud of HKIED for producing teachers of high professional calibre and for its excellent research, as well as for HKIED's strong commitment to the public good. The Review Group recommends that HKIED establish a Development Office, with a remit wide enough to encompass increasing public consciousness of all of the achievements of the Institute as well as encouraging fund-raising from benefactors.

5.6 Conclusion

The right to use university in its title has long been an ambition of HKIED. Since first meeting in October 2014, the Review Group has had an extensive opportunity to learn about HKIED - its current activities, its achievements and its potential. The Review Group has concluded that the award of this right to the title of 'university' is now fully warranted. The Review Group has been impressed by the importance that Hong Kong places on education and the critical role played by HKIED in ensuring that the teachers, in whose hands that education lies, are of the highest quality. As well as the strong evidence of the primacy that the HKIED gives to the quality of its teaching and research, the Review Group was consistently impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of staff at all levels within HKIED and, it should be added, of its students. The Review Group wishes the HKIED a long and prosperous future as the eighth UGC-funded campus-based university.
