

CHAPTER 2

ENHANCING QUALITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION

2.1 The most important goal for HKIEd is to provide high quality Teacher Education in Hong Kong. It is now widely acknowledged that the most effective pathway to improved student learning outcomes is the quality of teaching, especially teachers' ability to motivate and facilitate such learning. For example, the *Communication on Teacher Education* (2007) from the European Commission begins with the observation that '*research shows that teacher quality is significantly and positively correlated with pupil attainment, and that it is the most important within-school aspect explaining student performance*'. [40, p.3] Likewise, *Hong Kong's Education Blueprint* (1999) requires teachers to encourage self-motivation and effective learning among students, and to be a good role model in the cultivation of values in students. [44, para. 4.5]

2.2 Education is the essential foundation of a thriving and innovative society. The quality of education in a society is no less important for economic development. As competition among economies becomes more intense, the importance of education as the key to future success intensifies. Above all, following the structural shift from manufacturing to a service-oriented economy in recent decades, Hong Kong will need to develop strong and appropriate human capital to stay in the forefront of competition, and this will be affected by the quality of education delivered by its schools and teachers. One of the best ways to achieve this is to enhance Teacher Education programmes so as to train high quality teachers for Hong Kong's schools.

2.3 The quality of teachers is, to a large extent, determined by who are attracted to enter the profession and how they are trained. The community expects teachers to be sufficiently knowledgeable in the subjects they teach and proficient in pedagogy. It is therefore vital that our Teacher Education programmes, of which HKIEd is the major provider, are of high quality and support the student-centered and life-long learning principles of the ongoing education reforms in Hong Kong.

2.4 This chapter begins by placing HKIED in the local context and provides a profile of the Institute. It then considers the development and professional upgrading of Teacher Education institutions in a number of countries. Finally, it looks at current international reforms and the emerging issues in Teacher Education that might contribute to the improvement of Teacher Education in Hong Kong, and provides an informed context for the evaluation of the Blueprint.

ROLE OF HKIED IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN HONG KONG

2.5 HKIED has a key role in the supply of teachers in Hong Kong. Some general background information on Teacher Education in Hong Kong relevant to the Review is set out at **Annex D**. A brief summary of HKIED's history and current offerings are at **Annexes B(1) – B(3)**, and its Role Statement, as agreed with the UGC, is at **Annex B(4)**.

2.6 HKIED is a relatively new higher education institution, whose first bachelor degree graduates emerged in 2001. The current strength of HKIED is in the training of teachers for the primary and pre-primary school sectors. Currently about 80% of new primary teachers in Hong Kong are graduates of the Institute. This dominant status is significant in considering changes to the profile of the institution. At secondary level, HKIED provides about 25% of new teachers. In addition, HKIED provides programmes at sub-degree and non-degree levels to a large student body. It has very few postgraduate research enrolments and receives no UGC-funded places for research.

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS – TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

2.7 Our understanding of how Teacher Education might best perform its crucial role is seldom static. Over the past four decades, major trends in the developed world have been particularly important to the status of single discipline colleges and institutes. From North America to Australia, from Europe to parts of Asia, we have seen waves of modernising and upgrading of monotechnic Teacher Education institutions. This is seen as part of the overall process to professionalise teaching.

2.8 In the United States throughout the twentieth century, teacher training institutions were either developed into larger, usually liberal arts colleges and universities, or formed or merged with Education faculties of existing universities. This transformation was and is seen as a significant step in the process of upgrading the teaching profession in the United States. [7]

2.9 In the United Kingdom, colleges of education began their transformation into universities later than in the United States, with a number of new universities completing this process only in the last decade. The developments in all cases were characterised by the broadening of discipline bases to include the liberal arts and sciences, and through mergers with comprehensive institutions. [25]

2.10 While there is still some diversity in continental Europe in the nature of institutions that deliver Teacher Education, the dominant trend is to upgrade monotechnic teacher training colleges and institutes or merge them with existing universities. As noted in the *Green Paper on Teacher Education in Europe* (2000) this was the case in Finland, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom. While permitting some anomalies in approach among foundation countries, it is pertinent that the Trans European Mobility Scheme for University Studies, a trans-European cooperative programme, does not accept Eastern European institutions unless they are multidisciplinary. [18&39]

2.11 In Australia, the transformation of teachers colleges followed a path similar to North America and the United Kingdom. In the late 1960s and through the 1970s, most teachers colleges responded to the demand for a wider range of courses, and with increased government funding, became colleges of advanced education, often through mergers with one or more teachers colleges or other single discipline higher education institutions (such as agricultural or technical colleges). The Commonwealth Government's *White Paper on Higher Education* (1988) then led to the transformation of colleges of advanced education into universities. [50]

2.12 In Mainland China after 1949, the higher education system was strongly influenced by the Soviet model which favoured single-discipline institutions (Agriculture, Languages, Education, *etc*). Mainland China also faced at that time the major challenge of extending the provision of education to an enormous population. The system of normal schools, teachers colleges and Education universities located institutions in every

province, in order to ensure that the supply of teachers to local areas could be met. [32&35]

2.13 In the 1960s, major teaching universities, such as Beijing Normal University, began to broaden their discipline base. As education was seen as the route to economic development in Mainland China, increasing pressure was brought to bear on Teacher Education institutions. In recent decades, the full impact of the one child policy in reducing the need for primary teachers has led to the consolidation of teachers colleges, through broadening or mergers with comprehensive universities.

2.14 The general opening up of the higher education system in China during the 1990s has led some comprehensive universities to start programmes in Teacher Education. Peking University and Tsinghua University have entered the field of Teacher Education. A recent study reports that the number of non-Teacher Education colleges and universities participating in Teacher Education rose from 20 in the early 1980s to 258 in 2002, enrolling nearly 30% of students in Teacher Education programmes. Increases in teacher salaries have attracted graduates from comprehensive universities to the teaching profession. Mainland China's higher education funding model and the perceived status among different types of institutions have led teachers colleges and normal universities to develop into comprehensive universities. [32&35]

2.15 While examples of new monotechnic universities can be found, as described in the Blueprint, the Review Group considers that these emerged from particular historic and cultural conditions. The most prominent example in the Blueprint – Tokyo Gakugei University – provides a broad range of liberal arts courses, and fewer than half of its undergraduates become teachers. It is in all respects, not a monotechnic university.

2.16 After taking account of the historic and recent trends in upgrading Teacher Education institutions around the world, the Review Group is persuaded that there is considerable merit in the path followed in most higher education systems in the developed world. Specifically, there are clear advantages to students, staff and the community in universities providing a multidisciplinary environment. Here students can choose to specialise in one or two disciplines, thus opening alternative career paths to them. In such an environment interdisciplinary research and teaching can also be fostered, and this adds to the richness of the student experience.

IMPROVING QUALITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLD-WIDE REFORMS

2.17 The recent establishment of a major coherent reform agenda for Teacher Education across 46 European nations, as well as current initiatives in many other countries, highlights both the emerging areas of concern and the range of positive developments in Teacher Education around the world. [1,4,39,41,62&64]

2.18 A recent European Commission paper on reforms of the teaching profession in Europe reports that from 1990 onwards, all but three European countries have initiated considerable changes in the teaching profession. The Australian Government undertook a major *Review of Teaching and Teacher Education* in 2003, and has recently established an initiative on national teacher training and registration standards. [41&48]

2.19 Since 2001, Teacher Education institutions and faculties in the United States have been grappling with the policy and practical implications of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, with its strong commitment to standards-based education reform. [73] The Japanese government undertook a major review of teacher training in 1996, with subsequent programmes of change driven by pressure from the community and the very low retention rate of newly trained teachers in the profession. [1,16&30]

2.20 It is reported that in Mainland China, concerns about examination-oriented education led to a major reform in 1999 toward 'all-rounded' education. Internationally, recent and current reforms are driven by a real or perceived crisis in the level of student learning outcomes, and an acute awareness that the quality of education really matters in economic as well as social and cultural terms. [32&64]

2.21 Hong Kong's *Education Blueprint for the 21st Century* (1999) seeks to address many of the same concerns that have been identified in other countries, including over-emphasis on examinations, rote learning and deteriorating language proficiency of students. [44, para. 2.8]

2.22 Pressure from parents, communities and governments aside, the teaching profession itself has strongly promoted reforms in many areas including continuous professional development for teachers, research-based teaching, reflective practice and attention to issues arising from the changing demands on teachers in increasingly complex classrooms.

SIGNIFICANT CURRENT ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

2.23 We now turn to consider a range of issues prominent in the literature about improving the training of teachers and the performance of teachers and students in rapidly changing social and economic environments. In this global environment, pressure is brought to bear by governments and communities which increasingly recognise the economic (and other) value of high quality education.

2.24 For teachers and Teaching Education, powerful challenges are being driven by substantial changes in political, social and economic forces. These include the growth of an interconnected, complex global economy, unprecedented developments in communication technologies, and the effect of changing social mores on school and classroom environments. In many countries, education reform is driven by a community's perception of falling educational standards reflected in reduced student learning outcomes.

2.25 While some of these issues are addressed in current Hong Kong education reforms, a significant level of cultural change in relation to the mode of education and teacher training is still in process. It appears that key recommendations of the recent reforms, such as curriculum broadening, both at the school and tertiary levels, and continuing professional education for teachers, as well as strategies to attract good students into the profession, are only at an early stage of implementation.

Need to Base Teaching and Learning Strategies on Educational Research (Evidence-based Practices)

2.26 While the case for basing teaching practice and policy on research may appear to be self-evident today, the teaching profession has long suffered a disjunction between research and practice. This arose in part from the apprenticeship tradition of the normal schools, and the importance given to discipline knowledge by the universities, leaving little room for strengthening the relationship between educational research and pedagogy. HKIED is aware of these traditional paradigm differences, and is committed to developing a research and research training environment at the Institute that will shape pedagogic approaches and lead to innovation in curriculum design.

2.27 A teacher's attitude to research-based education can be shaped by his/her pre-service training environment. Teacher Education institutions which are actively engaging in research and support research partnerships with schools are most likely to succeed in creating the predisposition to a research-based approach in their students. This is also vital in relation to a teacher's own analytical or reflective practice.

2.28 Early in the Blueprint (paragraph 9), HKIEd draws attention to the desirability of a research-based approach to school and classroom change, suggesting that this will be an integral part of the approach to be taken by HKIEd. The Blueprint emphasises the Institute's plans to integrate research with professional practice. In its reports on continuing professional development, the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications has pointed to the important role of higher education institutions in working in partnership with schools to plan and design school-based and individual continuing professional development programmes. HKIEd's proposals around school partnerships can make a valuable contribution in this area.

Quality Control, Accreditation, Standards and Assessment

2.29 Around the world, including Hong Kong [E4], increased attention to quality control, accreditation, standards and assessment by governments, parents and communities is an inevitable consequence of the perceived inability of schools and teachers to reverse declining trends in student learning outcomes. The development of general competencies for teachers, such as those articulated by the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications, are a spin-offs from the accreditation and standards agenda. The UGC's *Report on Teacher Education* (1998) also contained recommendations on performance-linked promotion for teachers as well as the need for professional structures that could '*... establish comparable benchmarks for the profession of teaching*' comparable to the professional bodies associated with other professional areas (law, medicine, etc.). [59, p.47]

2.30 The growing influence of quality control and development of standards is reflected in the tightening controls being introduced by many countries in relation to their higher education institutions. Validation and certification of new and revised programmes by quality assurance agencies and professional bodies are devised to ensure that higher education

programmes (including Teacher Education) are keeping pace with the rising expectations of their communities and the ambitions that parents and citizens have for future generations.

Course Structures

2.31 In most developed countries (and in many other jurisdictions, including Mainland China) reforms upgrading most pre-service Teacher Education programmes to three or four undergraduate (or equivalent) years are now complete or nearing completion.

2.32 In the United States, where this trend first began, the next wave of reform in course structures is looking to the five-year programme. This may take the form of a five-year concurrent bachelor and master programme or the (required) addition of a master degree (as in the State of Massachusetts). Study shows that greater numbers of graduates of five-year programmes become teachers and remain as teachers. This trend is referred to in the Blueprint (paragraph 8) and again in the supplementary materials reproduced at **Annex H**. These pressures may affect the programme choices made by HKIEd in the transition to “3+3+4”.

Supply-side Issues

2.33 Timely provision of teachers at the right levels in the right numbers has always been a high priority for most governments. However, as discussed in the UGC’s *Report on Teacher Education* (1998), demographic and other changes make accurate predictions very difficult. Governments around the world have been dealing with these issues through various means, such as offering scholarships and forgivable loans to attract more students into the profession. At the other end of the spectrum, some countries have a surplus of teachers, bringing to the fore the matters of teacher mobility and the cross-validation of Teacher Education programmes. These issues are also at the heart of national ambitions to export Teacher Education beyond one’s own jurisdictional boundaries.

Renewed or Increased Commitment to Professional Development and In-service Programmes for Teachers throughout their Careers

2.34 Life-long learning for teachers, continuing professional development and in-service training are based on the premise that pre-service Teacher Education programmes cannot provide all of the training that a teacher will need over his or her entire professional career. This is particularly true in an environment of significant and rapid change

as has been recognized in both *Learning for Life, Learning through Life* and the UGC's *Higher Education in Hong Kong* (2002). [E5]

2.35 There is general agreement that such in-service education should be linked to pre-service curricula and based on educational research findings. In addition, many serving teachers require further training in their subject fields but such upgrading may be difficult to achieve with the short, piecemeal approach evident in most in-service programmes. In this connection, as noted in the Blueprint, there is a desire in Mainland China to improve the articulation between pre-service and in-service provision, concentrating on new curriculum, subject integration, school-based development, guidance and counseling in schools and education for diverse learning abilities.

2.36 Given the prioritisation of the above issue in Mainland China, HKIED may wish to consider how it can further develop a leadership role in relation to continuing professional development for Hong Kong's teachers. Indeed, the *Interim Report on Continuing Professional Development* (2006) of the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications notes that while:

'... a considerable number of continuing professional development courses are run by tertiary institutions to meet the demand, ... the quality of continuing professional development courses can be highly variable regardless of cost, and this is a concern of both teachers and policy-makers.' [36, p.19]

Accommodation of New Tasks and Roles for Teachers – Coping with the Changing Environment

2.37 New roles for teachers, greater diversity in the classroom, the impact of communication technology and the overall speed of change are currently transforming the nature of teaching and call for a considered response from pre-service and in-service training providers.

2.38 Two related issues may be seen as subsets of adapting to the speed of change. The first is dealing with the changing classroom, including multi-culturalism and multi-lingualism. The latter, at least, is a topic of interest in Hong Kong. Paragraph 11 of the Blueprint also identifies a more diverse student population in Hong Kong arising from the "3+3+4" academic reform as a significant challenge for Hong Kong schools.

2.39 The second issue adding to the challenges for teachers relates to information and communication technology and the development of education software. This is a significant topic in Teacher Education reform agendas around the world where there is a general call for these technologies to be harnessed for the improvement of teaching and learning. UGC's report *Higher Education in Hong Kong* (2002) devoted an entire section to technological development and education, addressing electronically-based teaching and learning, web-based resources, student technological capabilities and the need to develop new technological skills for staff. [58, p.27]

The Bologna Process [E6]

2.40 We refer here to possible implications for Hong Kong of major European Education reforms – the Bologna Process – underway since 1999. Key aspects of this education reform process which may be relevant to Hong Kong, include:

- Uniform degree structures;
- Alignment of quality assurance agencies; and
- International transportability of educational qualifications.

2.41 The Bologna Process is taking account of the possible impact it might have in higher education sectors beyond Europe. As Hong Kong invests in developing an education hub, Europe is setting an international standard for quality assurance and the alignment of qualifications to the evolving needs of the global workforce. In the arena of international education, matching Bologna is a way of demonstrating Hong Kong's commitment to achieving the high quality consistent with international standards and requirements. The adoption of a common way of describing higher education qualifications (called the Diploma Supplement, to be attached to every university transcript) is relevant for Hong Kong institutions such as HKIEd, which has ambitions to export their educational products internationally. Mainland China has also shown interest in cementing its educational links with a number of European countries and sought observer status for the 2007 Bologna Process ministerial meeting. [38&71]

IMPLICATIONS

2.42 The Blueprint, research literature, and other materials provided by HKIED demonstrated the Institute's awareness of the profound changes in the international environment for the discipline of Teacher Education, and for previously monotechnic Teacher Education institutions. This examination of international concerns, reforms and policy issues also provides the background against which the Review Group has evaluated HKIED's development proposals.