

Dr Edmund TSE Sze-Wing, GBS

Doctor of Business Administration *honoris causa*

Address

Chancellor and HKSAR Chief Executive Carrie LAM, Council Chairman Rex AUYEUNG, President Leonard CHENG, distinguished guests and fellow graduates,

Good afternoon.

Along with Professor Joseph LAU Shiu-Ming and Mr PAN Sutong, we are deeply honoured to be here today for the conferment of Honorary Doctorate Degrees by Lingnan University. I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the University.

Lingnan University is dedicated to offering a liberal arts education that blends the best of East and West, to foster the development and capability of students, and to encourage students and teachers to give back to society through original research and knowledge. The countless awards and outstanding achievements have made us very proud to be part of Lingnan University.

Today the spotlight should be on the PhD, Master and Postgraduate Diploma graduates. Please accept my hearty congratulations because you have achieved your first goals through your endless pursuit of knowledge and untiring efforts, which have all contributed to the recognition and appreciation you are receiving today. May I also take this opportunity to congratulate the families, friends and teachers of the graduates. They would not have come to where they are today without your care, support, encouragement. I am especially thrilled to share this special moment with all of you.

The most exciting part of life is to learn and to make continuous progress. Education is like a spark to the candle of life. It has an impact on every part of life. Education is the most important motivation for social progress, pushing society forward for positive change. When I look back, I am immensely grateful to the many teachers and friends I met in school and work because these relationships have benefitted me for my entire life. That is why I am so willing to find the time and devote the effort to education. Today, I would like to share with you my two cents on the value and direction of higher education in Hong Kong.

For over a century, Hong Kong has undergone different stages in the development of higher education. From the elitism approach in the 1980s to the popularisation approach in the 1990s, and the universalisation approach since the turn of the century, there has been rapid development in higher education in the last two decades, not only in terms of the cluster of talent formed by the Chinese and foreign elites. There are many outstanding experts and world-class scholars in Hong Kong universities. In fact, the higher education colleges and universities have built internationally renowned faculties, and their academic research outcome is comparable to that of the world's top universities.

With the challenges of globalisation, increasing international competition, the rise of China, and the constant changes in all Asia Pacific countries, there is an urgent need to further enhance the quality of higher education to maintain Hong Kong's competitive edge.

I believe **Hong Kong should leverage its unique geographical and cultural advantages in developing higher education.** These advantages include its cosmopolitan atmosphere

combining East and West, its open society with an impressive cluster of talent, its rich information system, and its global vision, among many others. Therefore, while Hong Kong focuses on the systemic structure of higher education and resources management, let's not forget the strategic advantage Hong Kong has in terms of its economy, geography and culture, especially the emphasis on East and West cultural integration, the advocacy of innovation and technology, and the new cultural values in this new era, which will contribute to the leadership and prosperity of Hong Kong, China, Asia and the entire world.

At the same time, **the Hong Kong higher education sector should work more closely together to strive for win-win partnerships by consolidating their core competitiveness, and strengthening and promoting their world-leading status in a broader sense.** To become a world-leading integrated university is the long-term goal and vision for all Hong Kong higher education institutions, but it takes time to achieve this because of many constraints. But if we can give the intrinsic meaning of "world-leading" a modern interpretation, we mean putting more emphasis and effort into developing the academic arena, faculty, specific research areas, and the curriculum, all areas in which the local higher education colleges and universities have a competitive edge. Parts of the overall Hong Kong higher education system have reached the top-rated level internationally. For example, the Risk and Insurance Management programme at Lingnan University received recognition from the International Insurance Society. Lingnan University's curriculum design is ranked one of the most outstanding in the world along with the other eight top higher education colleges and universities in America, Europe and South Korea. This is just an example of how different universities can be world leaders in their unique areas of strength. Cooperating and promoting each other's leading status in the broader sense help enhance the overall standing and impact of Hong Kong in terms of the global higher education market.

Moreover, **in accordance with the modern trend of diversification, Hong Kong's higher education institutions should advocate diversification** and excellence in education to leverage their advantages and faculty strengths. They must develop their own specialised areas and encourage originality to seize and meet the opportunities and demand to fulfil the emerging needs of our diversified society. Some 85 per cent of the undergraduate students at Lingnan University participated in overseas exchange programmes. I admire the University's efforts to encourage and support the students in this way to broaden their horizons and knowledge. This is an important element of a diversified, global, outward-looking education.

These are some of my rough observations about higher education in Hong Kong, but please forgive me, because there are many experts and gurus in this assembly.

Once again, allow me to thank Lingnan University for conferring us these Honorary Doctorate Degrees. We sincerely hope Lingnan University will continue its efforts to teach inspirationally and cultivate students with outstanding ability, who will continue to drive social progress and contribute to the special power of human civilisation.

Thank you very much.