

Commission of Inquiry on Allegations relating to the Hong Kong Institute of Education

STATEMENT OF DR. ALICE LAM

I, DR. ALICE LAM,

, do say as follows :-

1. I make this Statement from personal knowledge, except where the contents indicate another source, in which case I believe the information to be accurate and true.
2. I was appointed as the Chairman of the UGC in 1999 and I have retired from my position at the end of March 2007.
3. By two letters respectively dated 26 March 2007 and 30 March 2007 issued to me and to UGC's solicitors, the Commission through its solicitors invited me to provide a statement to supply information relating to 7 items as set out in the first letter. The letters are exhibited as Annex A for ease of reference. I now address these 7 items in turn as follows:-

Item (1)

4. I am aware that the SEM (Prof Arthur Li) has long held the view that it would be in the long term interests of teacher education provision in Hong Kong, and the HKIEd itself, if the HKIEd could join hands in some way with (an)other institution(s). Indeed, the SEM has also advocated the joining together of other institutions, for example CUHK and HKUST, to create a better education environment in Hong Kong.

5. Thus I recollect that the SEM is generally favourably disposed to the question of a merger or deep collaboration between the HKIEd and another institution. However, my reading of the SEM's position has always been that, while he would like to see a merger, he will not force a merger. He would like to see the HKIEd (and other institutions) move as far as possible in that direction. But he has not made merger a condition for continued funding to the HKIEd.

6. Indeed, at various stages, to my knowledge, both Prof Morris and HKIEd Council Chairman Mr. Thomas Leung have also shown considerable interest, and indeed enthusiasm, for a possible merger with another institution:-
 - (1) My diary record showed that on 28 November 2002 Prof Morris invited the SEM and me to a lunch - at which other HKIEd staff were present. I recalled that on that occasion, Prof Morris said to me and the SEM that gaining self accreditation for the HKIEd would facilitate an equal status of the HKIEd with the other institutions in the discussion of merger or deep collaboration between the institutions.
 - (2) Further, prior to the UGC conducting the Institutional Review of HKIEd's readiness to attain self accrediting status, I met with Prof Morris and Mr. Thomas Leung who professed to be keen on merger. They insisted that obtaining self accrediting status would facilitate such a move. The note of the meeting in question held on 1 September 2003 is at Annex B. My impression is that their - or certainly Prof Morris' - enthusiasm for merger subsequently waned.

7. Annex C below sets out extracts of a series of documents where the question of some form of institutional integration between HKIEd and CUHK was discussed and SEM's

views sought or known on the matter. The discussion between CUHK and HKIEd led to the 'deep collaboration' agreement signed between the two parties in July 2005. It can be seen that SEM was content for this to proceed and for the UGC to give it our backing. It will be noted that the Agreement specifically rules out full merger for two triennia.

8. In this regard, I need to explain that institutional integration is not an all or nothing phenomenon. The UGC has defined 5 different models of Institutional Integration in our document titled "Integration Matters" published in March 2004 set out under Annex D below. These range through:-

- the Merger Model
- the Federation Model
- the Deep Collaboration Model
- the Loose Affiliation Model
- the Status Quo Model

Thus, one cannot say that there is only one solution (e.g. merger) to closer collaboration with another institution. There is a range. I believe that the SEM fully understands that.

9. As regards the occasions after the announcement of the deep collaboration between CUHK and HKIEd when the matter of institutional integration involving HKIEd was raised in the presence of myself and SEM, already set out in Annex C are all relevant UGC records.

10. I know the SEM socially and meet with him socially fairly frequently. However, during such occasions it is my practice not to talk "business". Thus, as regards occasions other than those I have identified in paragraph 8 above when merger or other forms of institutional integration might have been raised in the presence of myself and the SEM,

my recollection is that they were all related to meetings or lunches arranged to talk about UGC business. Normally the Secretary General (SG) was also present at such occasions. Neither I nor the SG have in general kept records of these exchanges, which were for better mutual understanding and to update each other on developments and thinking. Thus, in general the only evidence that exists is a brief note prepared by the SG to me setting out headings of what we might discuss. Whether we did so in respect of each item - or whether other items might have been raised - is not a matter that I have any recollection on given the lapse of time and lack of full records of meeting. A list of meetings (and extracts of the notes and records, if available) where the matter of institutional integration might have taken place with me and the SEM both present is set out at Annex E.

Item (2)

11. I was not aware of any objection to the Institutional Review (IR) of the HKIEd taking place as planned, until Prof Morris called me one day between 26 May to 3 June 2003 when I was on holiday in London: I had missed his call and I therefore phoned him back. Prof Morris sounded upset over the phone and told me that the IR may not be going ahead. I told him I was surprised as I was not aware of any objections to the IR. I also told him to stop fretting and reassured him that insofar as I was aware, the IR would go ahead as planned.
12. It was after the commencement of this Inquiry when we searched through the UGC records that the SG located two relevant records of exchanges between the EMB and the UGC, both included in Annex F. The April 2003 memo revealed concerns of the EMB towards the IR of the HKIEd. But by the time when the second memo was issued on 25

June 2003, it was clear that any such concerns of the EMB had been resolved.

13. For completeness, I wish to point out to the Commission that the IR of the HKIEd had been delayed from its planned start in the first half of 2003 because of the outbreak of the S.A.R.S. epidemic in Hong Kong.
14. As regards my recollection of the personal views of the SEM towards the carrying out of the IR, we were able to ascertain these first hand when the UGC met with the SEM on 20 August 2003 – see Annex G (para. 17). I have no other recollection nor record of other occasions where the SEM expressed his views on the matter to me.
15. I had no recollection of having any direct interaction with the PSEM (Mrs Fanny Law) where she expressed any views relating to the IR of the HKIEd.

Item (3)

16. I should first stress that whether I attend graduation ceremonies is a matter that I decide on my own. There are 8 graduation ceremonies each year - one for each of the 8 institutions under the UGC umbrella. I cannot possibly attend all of them. It has been my practice to try and share them out with the SG. And of course I also have to take account of my diary considerations.
17. As regards the HKIEd graduation ceremony on 18 November 2005, that was a special one, because a former member of the UGC, Lord Sutherland was being given an Honourary Degree. Nevertheless, due to other commitments, as noted in my diary (see extract at Annex H – my scheduled meeting with the PwC in that morning relating to some personal affairs of mine which had become urgent and which I knew some days in

advance would need to spill over onto the morning of the 18th – as well as on the 17th), I was unable to attend the graduation ceremony myself but I was content to ask the SG to be the UGC's representative at the ceremony. Instead, I attended the dinner after the ceremony. To the best of my personal recollection, I did not discuss with the SEM (nor could I think of any reason why I would so discuss with him) on my own attendance at the HKIEd graduation ceremony.

Item (4)

18. The detailed paper trail on this matter is self-evident from the documents which the UGC has provided to the Commission, in particular items 30, 45, 46, 48 (same as item 30), 56, 57, 58, 59, 63, 70, 71, 72, 75, 78, 80 [para.14(a)] and 82 [paras.4 and 11 of the TESC 05/04 paper].
19. Broadly summarized, it was the Administration's policy that all kindergarten principals should obtain the C(ECE) [i.e. Certificate programme for Early Childhood Education] qualification by 2005/2006. After allowing a further "buffer" year, that meant all serving kindergarten principals and supervisors should have completed their training by 2006/2007 – thus nil places initially proposed for part-time C(ECE) programmes to be allocated to the HKIEd for the year 2007/2008.
20. In mid March 2004, the HKIEd invited the EMB to reconsider the above policy decision relating to the C(ECE) programmes (item 70). On 17 March 2004, the EMB wrote to the UGC (item 71) agreeing to reinstate funding for the 200 part-time places of the C(ECE) programmes, *inter alia* taking into account the tripartite meeting involving the EMB, the UGC and the four teacher education institutions (TEIs) held on 19 February 2004 (item

63).

21. Save as the above, I have no further comments on this matter.

Item (5)

22. On (a), I agree that it was not usual for the UGC to issue a revised guideline to the 4 TEIs (not limited to the HKIED) after the "Start Letters" were issued.

23. The reason for such a move could be broadly stated as follows:-

(1) The UGC Secretariat had been aware of the general direction of EMB thinking for some time, had concerns about it and thus was able to set out the position to the UGC for its meetings in early January 2004. Please refer to items 48, 49, 52 and 54 of the first batch of our documents disclosed to the Commission. In mid January 2004 after the UGC meetings, the UGC wrote to the EMB expressing its concerns and observations. Please refer to the self-explanatory exchanges between myself (item 55 of the first batch of our documents) and the SEM (item 59 of our documents).

(2) On FYFD places, please refer to paras.4 to 6 of item 55 (UGC's concerns and observations), and para.2 of item 59 (EMB's response). In summary, our concerns were mainly two-fold:-

(a) With the number of FYFD students places capped at 14,500, to fulfill EMB's proposed substantial increase in FYFD teacher education places, there had to be a corresponding cut in student places in other institutions and disciplines,

which was most undesirable.

- (b) EMB proposed a very large increase in places required for English and Chinese Language teachers. Given the short lead time, this might lead to the TEIs taking up sub-standard students to fill in the student places. The UGC also had worries over the TEI's ability to expand their teaching capacity within such a short span of time.
- (3) On FT PGDE places, please refer to paras.7 and 9 of item 55 (UGC's concerns and observations), and para.3 of item 59 (EMB's response). In summary, the UGC expressed caution over the accuracy of manpower forecasts and suggested the Administration give the UGC flexibility as to exactly which KLA's (Key Learning Areas) the places should go to. The UGC also suggested that any imminent shortages of teachers might best be addressed by further provision of FT PGDE places in the 2005-2008 triennium, which would be the most effective way of training teachers within a short span of time.
- (4) However, before the EMB responded to UGC's concerns, the deadline for issuing the "Start Letters" to the institutions fell due. It is important to note that the "Start Letters" cover many broad planning parameters as well as manpower planning figures. Thus the "Start Letters" issued did not only cover teaching education places but also other disciplines, and it was impossible for the UGC to wait until the issue of teacher education places was resolved with the EMB before it sent out the "Start Letters". For this reason the UGC had to issue the "Start Letters" before it received EMB's revised guidelines (after it appreciated UGC's concerns and accepted its advice). The revised guidelines were then incorporated very quickly into the second

letter issued to the 4 TEIs.

24. On (b), please refer to my answer in paragraph 23 above.

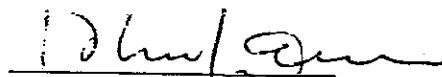
Item (6)

25. First of all, it is incorrect to suggest that the EMB “gave instructions to the UGC” to stop the intake of the HKIEd’s B.Ed (Secondary) programme for “teachers of Art, Music and Physical Education” in the year 2008/09.
26. The Administration gives the UGC, *inter alia*, specific manpower requirements covering multiple disciplines including teachers. These are not “instructions”, although conventionally it is understood by all parties that the UGC and the institutions will try to meet them if possible. Nevertheless, it has happened in the past that the UGC has reverted to the Administration on specific manpower requirements for one reason or another, with a view to having changes. This has applied to both teacher places as well as other areas.
27. As regards exactly what EMB sent to the UGC, please refer to extracts of a letter from SEM to Chairman, UGC at Annex I which also sets out the Administration’s views. Please note that PE is a separate programme from Arts and Music, and PE is conducted in both CUHK and HKIEd.
28. For completeness, I would add that the UGC has not yet come to any view on the question of what student numbers to recommend to the Administration in respect of B.Ed (Secondary) programmes for teachers of Art, Music nor in respect of the PE programmes in the year 2008/2009.

Item (7)

29. Whilst I appreciate the Commission approaching me for my personal view on this issue, I believe this is a broad policy issue which should be addressed by the members of the UGC collectively, and not by me in my personal capacity. Unfortunately, the UGC would only convene its meetings three times a year, the next of which shall take place in April 2007. The UGC may table this matter for discussion in the April meeting, and may in due course submit a statement to the Commission in this regard if it deems appropriate.

Dated this 2nd day of April , 2007.



Dr. Alice Lam

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relating to
the Hong Kong Institute of Education**

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Dated the 2nd day of April , 2007.

LO AND LO
SOLICITORS & NOTARIES PUBLIC
35TH FLOOR,
GLOUCESTER TOWER,
THE LANDMARK, CENTRAL
HONG KONG
TEL : 2523 8181
FAX : 2810 5351
Our Ref: CPY:GA:LB:86667

Our ref : CPY:GA:LB:86667
Counter ref :
Filename : m:\matter\866\86667\statements\alichelam-070402(filed).doc