

Address by
Professor Marilyn Cochran-Smith
Doctor of Education, *honoris causa*

Council Chairman Dr David Wong, Council Members, President Professor John Lee, distinguished guests, and, friends, alumni, faculty, and staff of The Education University of Hong Kong,

It is a privilege to provide brief remarks on behalf of myself and the other honorary doctorates conferred this year by the University. I know I speak for all four of us when I say we are greatly honoured – and humbled – to receive this recognition.

The four of us represent different areas of expertise and professional experience, and thus we have made quite different contributions to our fields and to society. Stephen Ball, the Karl Mannheim Professor of Sociology of Education at University College London, has changed the ways we think about the sociology of education in the UK and internationally. The Honourable Maria Tam, recognised for her many years of public service, notably regarding constitutional matters, is a recipient of both Hong Kong's Gold Bauhinia Star and its Grand Bauhinia Medal. Popular with the public and legislators, Frederick Ma has served in finance, commerce, and economic development. He established significant scholarship programmes at the University of Hong Kong and the Education University of Hong Kong, where he served as Chairman of the Council. My own accomplishments are related to teacher education research, practice, and policy with a focus on teacher quality policy and a life-time commitment to teacher education that is inquiry- and equity-centred.

Despite our very different backgrounds and experiences, one thing we share is admiration for the University's mission to prepare outstanding and caring educators and professionals.

Teaching and teacher education have been central concerns for me for more than half a century. Indeed, I began my career as a 21-year-old primary school teacher in 1972 and then taught my first university courses to prospective teachers in 1978.

Of course, over time, many things have changed about teaching and the preparation of teachers. Fifty years ago, teacher education was primarily a local concern, teachers were treated as relatively low-level workers, and teaching was often perceived simply as "women's work." Now, and highly consistent with the mission of this university, the vital importance of teaching and teacher education is recognised internationally and at the highest levels of policy and practice. Now teaching is understood as both critical intellectual work and as deeply relational work that supports students' social, civic, and moral development. Now teachers are regarded as agents of change, and they are recognised as the linchpins of education reform. Along these lines, a recent UNESCO report on education for

the future focuses on building a common global humanity. Fundamentally, the report assumes that teachers are central to this new vision. It includes a full chapter on what it calls the “transformative” work of teachers, stating, “teachers are the key figures on whom possibilities for transformation rest.”

There is no question that the mission of this university matters. And there is no question that fulfilling the mission requires effort and collaboration by people in many different professional fields and sectors of service, such as those represented by the honourees today.

I know I speak on behalf of all the honourees, as I congratulate the Education University of Hong Kong on its many accomplishments and remarkable growth over the last 30 years. I wish you the best as you go forward!