

Good Morning Colleagues,

I am delighted to be here today to open the second Educational Research Symposium of the VTC.

The second 8-year strategic plan of VTC has the theme “Value Innovation and Capability Building”. In particular, research and development is identified as one of the focus areas for capability building, and the Applied Research Office – later renamed as the Industrial Liaison Office – was set up in 2010 to strengthen VTC’s research capability.

Our staff have been undertaking research projects and research-oriented consultancies of different sizes in a wide range of disciplines, engaging in mainly downstream research collaborating with various industry partners. Unlike traditional universities, we have a focus on applied research, leveraging on our strengths such as our staff’s practical knowledge and experience, the range of state-of-the-art equipment and facilities, and the close partnership with industry that we have established over the years. We have also been successful in winning open competitive grants from different research funding bodies including the Innovation and Technology Fund, Quality Education Fund, and Environment and Conservation Fund. Many funding bodies are now shifting their preference to projects that lead to commercialisation and involve collaboration with industry. This trend goes in line with VTC’s direction.

The above collaboration between VTC and industries is important in that VTC staff can make use of industry partners’ market sense to identify the proper problems to work on – in particular those that have a more direct appeal to the society, as opposed to the hypothetical ones. Industries also benefit from the innovation of VTC staff, the comprehensive research equipment existing in VTC, and the transfer of timely knowledge.

Looking to the future, VTC should also consider stepping up its effort on “partnership research” or “collaborative research” with mainland or overseas partners. Through such collaboration, VTC staff can be exposed to the latest international need, practice, and standard. Such knowhow can become the basis for enhancing the curriculum and delivery of VTC education. VTC has already started taking actions along the line. A recent example is the alliance of THEi with a Taiwan company on renewable energy in March 2013. Upon a donation of HK\$6 million from Kentec Corporation of Taiwan, THEi is to establish a power grid centre which will become the best-equipped centre in the technological development and testing of renewable energy among the tertiary institutions of Hong Kong.

Educational research, in particular, is an area VTC cannot afford to ignore. It is a growing movement in tertiary education, promoting research for the advancement of teaching and learning. It builds on past practices in higher education like classroom lecturing and programme assessment and peer review of teaching to enrich teaching and learning. It would let teachers develop their pedagogical expertise. VTC also has a particular edge on educational research. Being one of the leading providers of vocational education and training in the region, VTC has over the past thirty years accumulated the most comprehensive collection of student data in Hong Kong. Such data, if properly utilised, could be a treasure on revealing how vocational education makes impact to students of different background, and how vocational education could be better delivered to different students.

Recently attention in educational research has been directed also towards other areas such as the effect of using new technology to enhance teaching and learning outside the classroom, and the specific educational needs of the socially disadvantaged groups such as students of Ethnic Minorities, and students with Special Education Needs. There are many VTC stakeholders who could benefit from results of such activities.

The theme of this second Educational Research Symposium is “Quality Vocational Education”. I am heartened to learn from the Symposium Organiser that both the contributors and participants of this Symposium come from a wide spectrum of operational units of VTC. I hope that through this Symposium, staff will be more aware of the importance of educational research and be proactively engaged in it. This regular event will also spark off new ideas to bring educational research in vocational education and training to new heights.

I would like to give thanks to the Industrial Liaison Office in coordinating and organising this event. I trust that our staff, THEi, and VTC as a whole will benefit much from it.

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Executive Director

Vocational Training Council