Project Title: Using Small Private Online Courses (SPOCs) as Vehicles to Address Fundamental Issues in the Effective Design, Organization, and Assessment of Learning Outcomes in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Leading Institution: The University of Hong Kong

Participating Institution(s): The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

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This project finds itself part of a rethinking on how universities can best use online learning: be it in the form of the publicly available MOOCs, small-scale SPOCs, or blended online on-campus courses. Overall, it aims to provide insights on the design, development, research and assessment efforts around online learning. More specifically, it deals with three key issues which possibly plague the further development of these innovative means of learning, namely scale, diversity and quality assurance.

While institutions are responding to these issues quite differently in their online course offerings, the project aims to shed light on the winning ingredients needed. This is done by developing ten SPOCs to serve as prototypes of MOOCs – mostly based on HKU’s Common Core Curriculum, the centrepiece of the University’s four-year undergraduate curriculum. Among the teachers invited to participate in this project there are five winners of the HKU Outstanding Teaching Award and one recipient of the University Grants Committee Teaching Award. The process of creating these prototypes is an act of discovery for us to find out what pieces we need as we shape our MOOCs.

This project will involve close collaboration among HKU, CUHK and HKUST in the
following ways:

making the ten SPOCs available on the Knowledge & Education Exchange Platform system (led by CUHK);
conducting a comparative study on learning analytics across three institutions;
launching a professional support network for designers and teachers of online courses for inter-institutional collaboration, making it possible to establish benchmarks and other reference points for academic standards-setting, strengthening quality assurance systems within and beyond one university.

The project is also forward-looking and has a long-term objective of using online courses to further our education mission to the secondary school sector in Hong Kong by making high-quality educational materials available to younger life-long learners.