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Research Assessment Exercise 2020
<u>**Impact Overview Statement**</u>

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University: The University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA):   UoA 41 education (incl. curriculum & instruction, education administration & policy and other education)

Total number of eligible staff of the University in the UoA: 67

(1) <u>Context</u>

The Faculty of Education (FoE) of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) has a broad research agenda with teacher education as the core focus and three Strategic Focal Research Areas (SFRAs): science of learning, education policy, and equity and social justice. It has a strongly impact-oriented culture aligned with HKU's '3+1 Is' strategy and centred on **knowledge exchange (KE)**, partnerships with government and schools, and consultations around the world. Unique to Hong Kong, HKU and the FoE consider KE to be *interactive*; it goes beyond the dissemination of knowledge to address questions from the field and co-construct knowledge with practitioners and school leaders. KE is carried out by FoE research centres and consortia and individual research teams.

The FoE's impact-oriented work is supported by funding schemes that prioritise widespread improvements in teaching and learning and benefits to society (e.g., EDB's University-School Partnerships [UPS] and Quality Education Fund [QEF], and the Jockey Club Charities Foundation [JCCF]). Examples since 2013 include UPS projects focusing on new government initiatives such as STEM education (Centre for Information Technology in Education [CITE]), and multiple projects addressing the language challenges faced by multicultural students in mainstream schools and providing research-based support to students, teachers and schools at all levels (Centre for Advancement of Chinese Language Education and Research [CACLER]). These projects are responses to the HKSAR Government and HKU's commitments to *innovation* and aim to *improve equity and social justice*, which are almost universal issues in education. Participants include teachers and leaders from most schools in Hong Kong. Many projects rely on **established networks** of teachers and school leaders, and their impacts extend well beyond Hong Kong. The development of *Design Studio* by CITE builds on FoE expertise in STEM education and involves a large network of local teachers in the co-design of instruction in STEM. Apart from helping local teachers deal with challenges in STEM curriculum-making, this work has yielded important research insights into networked and innovative design and has been noticed internationally. The FoE's work over many years with Hong Kong school principals (Centre for Educational Leadership [CEL]) has developed a novel approach to principal training that is having impact in Mainland China. For example, CEL's project in Gansu Province supported by the Tin Ka Ping Foundation, provides training and sustained follow-up to principals and Directors of Education, and has influenced principal training elsewhere in China. 'Reading Battle', a digital game developed by **Chu**'s team, has been used by more than 5,000 students in 50 schools and libraries in Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, and the United States, and raised interest in reading and reading levels in kindergartens and primary schools in those countries. Moreover, the FoE's Speech, Language and Hearing Clinic has provided research-based assessments and therapy to more than 5,000 Cantonese-speaking community members.

The FoE has also made important local and international contributions to **policymaking**. Since its establishment in 1998, CITE, collaborating with teachers and school principals, has enabled the development of the HKSAR Government's information and communications technology (ICT) strategies and their enactment in schools. The research led by the UNESCO Chair of Comparative Education (**Bray**) on 'shadow education' around the world is influencing policymaking, particularly in developing countries such as Cambodia, China and Myanmar (case study on *Shadow Education*). Shadow education is an important, globally recognised equity problem as many citizens cannot afford

to supplement the public education of their children in this way. UNICEF-funded research led by **Rao** developed the first context-sensitive scales for early childhood development, which are used by governments throughout East Asia (case study on *Documenting Early Child Development*). **F. Leung** has led data collection for the TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) in Hong Kong. This key international study is an important reference for policymaking in mathematics and science education in many countries and has identified Hong Kong as a high-performing educational system in these subjects.

Individual FoE staff also serve the wider community on various committees, for example, via membership of the Board of Directors of Hong Kong Education City (a wholly owned company of the HKSAR Government), government standing committees, curriculum and assessment committees and school boards. Such engagement plays an important role in providing evidence-based inputs and services to support our professional communities in Hong Kong.

(2) Approach to impact

Work with schools to improve teaching, learning and school leadership has long been an important feature of the FoE's mission. In the 1990s and 2000s, the research centres in the FoE were created based on the commitments of staff to specific areas of research and practice to enhance the reputation of HKU in these areas and to enhance benefits to society. Since 2013, the following aspects of the FoE's approach have been evident:

a) **Collaboration with the field:** The FoE has run 11 QEF projects, 5 supported by the JCCF and 28 funded by Education Bureau schemes. All are large projects; most involve professional development that responds to new government initiatives or societal needs and enable the co-construction of new educational practices. They also have helped to put new initiatives into practice. Most projects involve collaboration with, or participation by, many schools. The research centres maintain school networks which form the basis for collaborative projects whenever opportunities arise. As a result of these sustained efforts, educational practice in many of our collaborating schools has advanced from 'rote learning' to a more interactive and integrated pedagogy, and this work is internationally known. Consultancy requests from ministries of education and international organisations (such as UNESCO and European Commission, to name but a few) have been received by faculty recurrently. The major contributions of individual FoE staff have also been formally recognised by international professional associations in the field (e.g., **N. Law** has been elected as a 2019 Fellow of the International Society of the Learning Sciences (ISLS)).

b) **Knowledge exchange (KE):** KE is an important mechanism for generating impact. In 2012-13, HKU introduced its interactive vision for KE, along with criteria, funding and an award scheme to drive excellence. The FoE introduced its own award (the Professor Shirley Grundy Memorial Fund) to stimulate staff- and student-led KE. The Associate Dean for local engagement oversees and leads KE efforts within the FoE. Since 2015, KE has become a fourth area of performance at HKU that is examined in annual staff appraisals. This has made KE not just the purview of those leading professional development projects, but 'everyone's business.' FoE staff recruitment now explores applicants' thinking beyond research projects and findings to how stakeholders can contribute to, engage with and benefit from the projects.

c) **Enhancing visibility of FoE research achievements:** A first step in creating impact is to create *public awareness* of the FoE's research achievements and their significance. As detailed in the FoE Environment Overview Statement, the FoE has made various efforts to improve this awareness. In 2013-14, all FoE websites relating to research and KE were redeveloped to make them more informative and *establish a brand* (previous websites each had their own design). A web environment has been employed that allows centre staff to modify pages, create blogs and share news. Videos were

made in which staff members briefly introduced their research. The identification and naming of the FoE's three SFRAs (see the Environment Overview Statement) were strategically designed to draw attention to the practical application and impact of FoE research. To further improve international visibility of its achievements and impact, the FoE developed a pamphlet for each SFRA. The pamphlets are distributed at public events and used by staff when they visit conferences and other institutions and can be downloaded from the FoE website. The FoE also makes use of social media to share news about research and other achievements. The main strategy has been its Facebook page, which currently has approximately 7,000 likes.

(3) Strategy and plans

The FoE has made various efforts to enhance its research culture, with impact being key to these efforts. In addition to continuing to develop the above approaches, the FoE plans to add a number of new features:

a) Collaboration beyond networks: Impact-oriented collaboration beyond individual networks is needed. For example, the FoE needs to develop collaborative links with teacher education institutions (TEIs) across Hong Kong and the region to use research as a foundation for collectively addressing the educational challenges in the region. The new Academy for Leadership in Teacher Education (ALiTE), launched in 2019 and hosted by the FoE, will lead this work.

b) An integrated approach to research, knowledge exchange and impact: The FoE intends to develop an integrated approach to achieve long-range impact. This will require research to be framed with *long-range impact as a goal* and with potential users of the research or professional development contributing to its design. In addition, the *collection of impact evidence* requires attention at the design stage of projects. The FoE will create a leadership position to lead the impact strategy by working with consultants, organising professional development for staff and supporting the development of impact evidence beyond the current efforts on KE.

(4) Relationship to case studies

The impact case studies represent the breadth of engagement with stakeholders and the multi-disciplinary nature of research and development in the FoE. *Shadow Education: Nature, Implications and Policy Development* demonstrates most clearly how the FoE's approach generates impact. The Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) facilitates research on shadow education in many countries and has translated books based on that research into local languages. This work earned **Bray**'s team a HKU Knowledge Exchange Award and provides evidence of policy advice in many countries. *Documenting early child development in East Asia and the Pacific: from evidence to impact* does it in a different way. Funded by UNICEF, and in line with the goal of this funding, this research aimed to improve the participation in early childhood education and is exemplary of the strategy of designing research that will ultimately benefit people internationally. *Over-the-counter hearing aids: Improving life experience* (**McPherson**) examines a widely recognised problem that is of particular importance in aging societies such as Hong Kong's. McPherson's research shows that many hearing aids are inappropriate for specific populations and has led to a policy change by the World Health Organisation, and to the development of new types of hearing aids in Europe. As hearing ability is crucial to cognition, this study is also relevant to the educational issue of *learning* across the lifespan. *Transforming 21ˢᵗ-century skills development and assessment in higher education and beyond* (**C. Chan**) is based on the development of frameworks and instruments for assessing whole-person development in higher education and secondary schools. This work was noted and used by Griffith University in Australia, and became an example of *co-constructing knowledge*, as Chan worked with users of the research to work out how the framework could be applied. The framework is now used in many places including Hong Kong, Australia and Malaysia.