Online course platform

**Defining the problems**

There is a growing interest toward online courses among young people. Some of my peers are passionate about preparing and recording their own episodes concerning subject-specific topics. However, they cannot find a platform appropriate for them to publish their videos. In response to their demand, I decided to design a website specified for presentations of episodes.

According to the consultation with my client (refer to Appendix A for further details), Michael Qian, the co-founder of the team of educational support, the website shall be divided into several modules. He suggests that one module should be designated for the video produced by core-team. The video platform shall possess some basic actions that the user can perform. For example, apart from using a standard player with playing controllers, user can also subscribe, download, or comment on the episode. In addition, there should be a forum-like site which allows internet user to express their opinions or upload their materials.

Detailed functionalities of this website are written in the success criteria below.

**Success criteria**

After the consultation with the client, we agreed that the website should possess (but not limited to) the following functions:

* A dedicate website index page showing the aim of the online course platform and providing navigation interface
* Subject-specific pages dedicating to browsing online materials prepared by the core team
* A multi-lingual interface (i.e. Mandarin and English)
* For video platform, basic actions such as subscription, comment and download should be available.
* A forum-like site which allows free-communication from internet users
* User management functionalities which classify users into several categories (i.e. Administrators and users), entitling different level of permissions to different types of users
  + Administrators shall be able to upload materials and edit the page freely
  + Registered internet users are only allowed to comment on existing materials or upload materials authorized by administrators
  + Anonymous users can only view the existing materials and comments
* All users can register freely, providing their email address as their ID.
* Registered users can subscribe. So, each time a new episode is published, they will receive an informing email from the server.

**Rationale for the proposed product**

This product obviously should be a form of website, since the audience can access the website without installing any specialized programs (except a standard browser). I decided to develop my website based on PHP, supported by MySQL database, because the website needs to access, store, create or modify numerous user profiles and materials uploaded.

I chose to utilize PHP with MySQL rather than any possible alternatives (i.e. ASP.Net with MSSQL) because they have an incomparable advantage -- open source, which means they are not only free, but also powerful because of the availability of abundant resources. PHP sites are very popular around the world. Many well-known websites are founded on PHP, such as Facebook, Yahoo and Wikipedia.

Moreover, PHP websites can run on multiple platforms, supporting Windows and Linux/Unix Operating systems. Therefore, my product can be easily deployed regardless of the type of OS installed on the server, reducing the burden of maintenance, since there is no need to rewrite the source code.

Word count: 171+168 = 339 (excluded success criterion)

**Note: I will add consultation record later**