

Comments on M.A. Education and Society and Educational Leadership, Project Option  
Compiled by Aziz Choudry, 27 Sept 2011

Besides the information which is already available about the MA non-thesis (project option) in Education and Society, this memo gives some examples of completed projects as indications of what can be done, although this should not be read as an exhaustive list of possibilities. Ultimately the parameters and form of the project, which will be done over two terms, are a matter of negotiation between student and supervisor. Some MA projects take the form of a more conventional report or substantive paper, others have included an art exhibition, a dance performance, the writing of a play, or a school-based study, the production of an illustrated children's book on social justice issues, and the development of an interactive website and curricula for community organizations.

### Examples of School-based projects

Some MA projects have been carried out by teachers who implemented or developed something in their school. For example, one former student called his project "Developing a sacred space in a secular school." He transformed one of the rooms into a space that could be used to meditate, pray or relax, or for guest speakers. He also used the room to discuss matters students considered important but found no other space in the school where they could voice their concerns. His project consisted of 1) the creation of this space, and 2) a written report in which he explained his rationale, examined anthropological literature on the notion of sacred spaces, and gave an overview of the implementation process and outcome.

Other projects have involved something that the student would like to implement in their school or institution. Essentially these kinds of projects lay the ground work for something the student is keen to implement. For example, one student taught science in an Indonesian University. She was concerned that the science program had no courses in bio-ethics. The first part of her text provided a rationale and reviewed literature in bioethics. She then went on to give the design for a bioethics course. Another student (a high school teacher) felt that teachers in her school were ill-equipped to respond to the death of someone in the school community. A student in her school had died recently and she found that most teachers did not know how to respond. Her project was a written document about a new workshop in which she explained her rationale, reviewed relevant literature and provided an outline of the workshop.

### Community education

One recently completed MA project student describes her project in the following terms:

I really enjoyed doing the project option, overall. It gave me a focus to my studies, and the opportunity to let my work take me where it did without strict guidelines. I would have felt too limited by the structure of a thesis, and more importantly, I wanted to be able to have a finished project that would seem more accessible and useful to anyone, not just academics. So, I created a guide for primary and secondary school educators exploring ways to be more inclusive and supportive of transgender and gender variant students. More and more research and publications exist on this topic, but a great deal of it is not particularly accessible or comprehensible to people without a background in this area –so I set out to compile all of the facts and statistics, personal narratives, and recommendations that might be useful for schools just beginning to focus on these issues.

My guide changed shape over time, as I realized what was and was not feasible, so I appreciated the flexibility of the project option. I was able to explore an issue that is personally,

politically, and academically very important and interesting to me and to create a finished product that I felt was most needed by educators and students. Part of my research involved interviewing some educators about their own experiences and thoughts about trans inclusion and sensitivity in their own schools, and what they thought might be most useful to improve their schools for the safety and comfort of their students. Every single one outlined something similar to what my final product was like, and that is no accident. Though it can sometimes be frustrating to work with so few guidelines or expectations of a project, this actually allowed me to really find what I cared about and what was needed, and create just that.

Another student's project was split between curriculum and organizational development W.O.R.D. (Writing Our Rhymes Down, a literacy-through-hip hop project) and a management / development / editor / writer for Heads and Hands Sense website project on/for youth and sexuality/sexual health. She did a great deal of work in both organizations and met regularly with her supervisor throughout the course of her project (and sometimes with coordinators from H & H, and W.O.R.D.) to discuss progress, learning, dilemmas and so on. She sent in monthly reports on her progress, and her work elicited excellent feedback from coordinators of both projects. In this case, apart from the reports and updates, and meeting up to discuss her learning with her supervisor, there was no final paper or tangible end product