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5/28/86

Types of Creative Projects that may be
acceptable for the M.Ed. Degree

Your project must be approved by members of your advisory committee. Therefore, once you have developed an idea for your project, you should obtain tentative approval before starting work on your proposal. Here are a few kinds of projects that may be acceptable.

1. Action Research Project

Action research involves using the scientific method to study local problems, such as problems you have encountered in your own classroom. Unlike more scientific education research, action research does not seek findings that can be generalized to a population. Instead, it seeks practical answers to problems in your own school or classroom. Thus, you can often use simpler procedures in action research. **The target population for an action research project will likely be individuals associated with a public school district. Therefore, sampling techniques that provide a representative sample of participants from the district are desirable.**

Descriptive or nonparametric statistical techniques should be used to analyze action research results. (See Borg, W. R. [1981]. Applying Educational Research, Ch. 12)

2. Educational Development/Product Development

A useful project for the M.Ed. is to develop educational materials to improve instruction or help solve an educational problem. The usual procedure is to evaluate critically the materials already available (if any), decide what can be done to develop more effective materials, develop the materials, try them out in your own classroom and evaluate their effectiveness. The project report would be presentation and demonstration of the materials.

For example, suppose you teach algebra and have identified three concepts that students have difficulty understanding. You could develop special visual materials to help teach these three concepts and then try them out in your algebra classes to determine if more students demonstrate an understanding of the concepts when the materials are used.

Although most development projects focus on building more effective curriculum materials, development can be used to help improve virtually any aspect of education in which current procedures appear to be ineffective. The emphasis may be not only on effectiveness,

but on such concerns as reducing the demands of teaching, improving student attitudes, generating parental support, and so on.

The educational process/product should proceed through a typical "Research and Development" model and include the following steps as a minimum:

- (1) Research and information collecting: Includes review of the literature, classroom observations, and preparation of report of state of art;
- (2) Planning: Includes defining skills, stating objectives, determining course sequence, and small scale feasibility testing;
- (3) Develop preliminary form of product/process: Includes preparation of instructional materials, handbooks, and evaluation devices;
- (4) Preliminary field testing: The project/process is tried out in from 1 to 3 settings, using 6 to 12 subjects. Interview, observational, and questionnaire data are collected and analyzed;
- (5) Main product/process revision: Revisions of products/processes as suggested by preliminary field test results. (See Borg, W. R. 1981) Applying educational research: A practical guide for teachers. New York: Longman. (pp. 222-223).

3. Inservice Education Projects

Sometimes M.Ed. candidates see a problem in their school or school district that calls for inservice education. Preparation of an inservice package calls for the review of pertinent literature, preparation of materials, and the review and tryout of the materials. For example, one physical education teacher noted that elementary school teachers were unaware of the nutritional needs of diabetic students. He studied the literature on diabetic children and prepared an audio-visual presentation for use in school faculty meetings. The project report would be a demonstration of the package.

The inservice education package should include: (a) needs assessment, (b) course syllabus, (c) course objectives, (d) course content (tests, lecture materials, etc.), (e) assignments, (f) tests (and results), and (g) course evaluations.

4. Development of Teaching Skills

An M.Ed. project may be aimed at improving skills or skill areas in which the candidate feels himself or herself to be lacking, such as working with students in the science lab or conducting discussions of controversial issues. The project might involve reading the literature for skill ideas, observing teachers who have mastered

such skills, and arranging for supervised practice of the skills. The project report might be a brief paper and demonstration teaching using the skills.

Systematic procedures for critically reviewing literature relevant to the teaching skills area and for observing teachers who have mastered the desired skills should be addressed.

Objectives for the supervised practice, specific competencies to be gained, methods for gaining competencies and evaluation strategies for measuring the attainment of objectives and competencies should be included in the proposal and the final report.

5. Developing Content Expertise

A teacher's problem may be a feeling of inadequacy in regard to a topic he or she must teach which is not treated adequately in an available university course. The project would involve study in the area with the development of a report on what has been learned or, even more appropriately, an instructional unit based upon what had been learned. The planning, preparation, and presentation of a music recital would be another such example.

A proposal for a project on developing content expertise should include: (a) objectives both for the expertise to be gained and also for the products or processes representing the attainment of expertise, (b) methods or activities necessary to the accomplishment of objectives, and (c) evaluation methods and criteria.

6. Review of Literature

This involves conducting an exhaustive search for research and theoretical publications that relate to an educational problem in your classroom, school, or district. After relevant sources are located, the student reads and makes notes on each source and then prepares a report that defines the problem and indicates how the review of the literature helps to address the problem. See W. R. Borg, Applying Educational Research, New York: Longman, 1981, Chapters 2-5, and W. R. Borg and M. D. Gall, Educational Research, New York: Longman, 1983, Chapters 5 and 6 for information on reviewing educational literature.

The problems for literature reviews usually come from your own experience and deal with a topic on which you feel you need more information. For example, you may have noticed that certain students in your classes have trouble making friends and decide to find out what the research literature can tell you about them as a teacher. Or, you may have read an article in a popular magazine on teacher burnout and want to know more about the nature and causes of burnout, especially how you can help yourself and colleagues to avoid it.

The review should be critical in nature, and based, preferably, on a systematic model for recording and analyzing information from professional journals, books, reports and the like. It should result in conclusions or provide direction with respect to the problem you have identified.

7. Practicum Internship

A six, eight, or ten week internship may be arranged with an organization which is involved with in-service education and/or training. The students' project report would consist of a presentation on the experience, including a written document.

Objectives regarding knowledge and skills to be acquired by the student, specific activities or tasks associated with the attainment of objectives, and strategies for evaluating the attainment of objectives should be included in the project proposal.

Options Acceptable
to Different Departments

1. Communicative Disorders: 1, 2, 3, 6
2. All other departments will accept work fitting options 1-7.