M.Ed. Capstone Research Options

Your Options for the M.Ed. Capstone Research Project

As a Concordia University M.Ed. candidate, you have the option of taking EDGR 698 (Action Research) or EDGR 696 (Practitioner Inquiry) for your final capstone research project. As a general rule, Concordia University students take EDGR 698 (Action Research), as action research is highly regarded in education. By default, you will be registered for EDGR 698 (Action Research); however, you are provided an opportunity to change this enrollment to EDGR 696 (Practitioner Inquiry). This brief pamphlet explains your Capstone Project options.

The Action Research Project (EDGR 698)

The Action Research project is a disciplined process of discovery designed to integrate theory into personal daily practice in a way that improves practice and the individual conducting the research. The Action Research project is a capstone experience in Concordia University’s Online Masters of Education program. It gives the scholarly practitioner the opportunity to examine relevant issues in his or her own setting which may complicate, compromise, or complement practice—and to find meaningful, practical, research-based answers. In Action Research, candidates are empowered to identify issues or problems in practice, review relevant literature that examines identified problems, and design a research-based plan with the potential to improve practice.

Action research is an educational process that can be conducted in any setting (i.e. school, business, church, home, etc.). It can include an entire classroom, a single participant such as one-on-one tutoring, employees, co-workers, etc. Consider the following example. A teacher desires to find out if group activities will improve her students’ math performance. Over three weeks of whole-group instruction, she measures students’ performance on math problems. Then, for the next three weeks, she supplements her instruction with small-group learning activities and again measures student performance. She finds that student achievement increased during small group activities compared to whole-group instruction. Because of this research, she changes her approach to teaching math. In EDGR 698 (Action Research), students expand on their research question developed in EDGR 601 (Educational Research) to design an Action Research plan. The result is an action research project plan that can be implemented in future classroom experiences (subject to district human research approval).

Practitioner Inquiry (EDGR 696)

This course will require professional and personal reflection and development that challenges assumptions of the known and works towards developing skills to improve educational practice. The steps involved in this process are intensive, cyclical, and based on research about effective practice. Methodology and key educational research concepts will ground the coursework and the student will be required to utilize these concepts in practice through both analysis and synthesis of existing research as well as teaching data.

The emphasis in this course is NOT on the actions and data generated by the students. Rather, the focus is on teacher self-study and reflection on one’s own knowledge, experience, and curiosities for further learning. As such, the data of this course is very much focused on the candidate as a teacher-learner. For example, a secondary teacher might be interested in exploring how to better use technology-based collaborative learning tools in the classroom but recognizes the limitations of their own understanding of the different social media options that are available to support this work. Therefore, the candidate explores the question: “How can my own technology skills become more developed to ensure my capacity to design appropriate instructional uses for students?”

An elementary teacher wants to do a better job of teaching the conceptual meaning behind some of the work her students are doing in math – instead of teaching them to memorize facts without understanding how multiplication works; the teacher wants them to fully grasp the reasoning as well as the outcome. However, the teacher realizes that because of how she learned math as a child, she is not sure that she feels confident dealing with the many misconceptions that students bring to this type of deep math learning. Therefore, the candidate explores the inquiry...
question: “What is it that I really understand about the process of multiplication and how can I enrich my varied ways to explain this concept to students?”

**Which capstone option is best for you?**

EDGR 698 (Action Research) is recommended for all M.Ed. students. If you are a practicing educator and have access to an educational setting where you can focus on potential future improvements to practice, then EDGR 698 is a great option. If you are a highly reflective person who is interested in focusing on improving yourself as an education professional, EDGR 696 (Practitioner Inquiry) is a great choice. Both of the capstone courses are very rigorous, so plan your time accordingly.

**Next Steps**

If you plan to take EDGR 698 (Action Research), no further action is required. If you decide to take EDGR 696 (Practitioner Inquiry), you need to email student services (studentservices@education.cu-portland.edu) with your registration change request. Be sure to include the following information:

- First and Last Name
- Student ID Number
- Capstone preference: EDGR 696 (Practitioner Inquiry)