



GROUP CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

OSUN Connected Learning Contest Winner

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Course: Education and Development in a Global Era (EDGE)

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Education and Development in a Global Era (EDGE)

The course Education and Development in a Global Era (EDGE) aimed to introduce students to some of the key themes and critical issues in international educational development. (The course was offered for FUV 4Q,2020)

Practical and pedagogical value

It was important to do a group civic engagement project since it gave students the opportunity to interact with each other more and connect with other young people and adults outside of FUV in a time of utmost physical isolation and confinement.

I used Google Classroom as LMS, Google Doc for all shared communication and instructions, and Zoom for group consultations. The students were extremely resourceful in how they used widely available platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Google Docs to plan and implement their group projects. For certain groups, I set up Zoom Sessions and started the meetings for them - and assigned them as hosts - since they did not have a Zoom license.

Education and Development in a Global Era (EDGE)

Course Summary

- This course is intended to introduce you to some of the key themes and critical issues in international educational development.
- It is widely understood that forces of globalization are profoundly changing the experiences and opportunity structures of young people in an increasingly interconnected world.
- While there is a growing recognition that the knowledge-based global economy requires a new paradigm for education in the 21st century, a significant number of the children and adolescents in the world remain vulnerable, disengaged and disenfranchised from education.
- Against this backdrop, the course will examine the social, political, economic, and cultural forces that keep children out of school and excluded from learning in different parts of the world.
- The course will also critically examine some of the policies that are implemented in transcultural contexts to address the challenges of educational equity and social mobility in an inter-dependent globalized era.

Assignment Title and Short Description:

Group Civic Engagement Project - related to education and school-age children and youth in Vietnam, where FUV students will develop and deliver some tangible “product” by the end of the course. Students were also encouraged to consider longer term projects that could be continued beyond the course with guidance from their campus Civic Engagement Advisor. At least one of the five groups have already made that intent clear from the beginning and have been referred to the campus Civic Engagement Advisor for sustaining their initiative into the next academic year.

Contextual Information:

The Group Civic Engagement Project was the principal assignment for this course. It was introduced half-way in the course’s 8 week duration (quarter); and was due at the end. **However, in retrospect, the assignment should have been introduced in the first weeks of the quarter – to give students more time to deliberate.**

Pedagogical Notes for Colleagues

In remote learning environment, regular communication with the students was important, especially since students had little time (around 4 weeks) to plan and

implement the activities. I dedicated one class session for Group Consultation, which proved helpful. Students brought in different levels of understanding about doing a Civic Engagement Project – since some of them had taken a course on Civic Engagement in a prior semester. A persistent pedagogical challenge – common to most Civic Engagement initiatives by young people – was that in their enthusiasm for carrying out preferred “interventions”, students were less attentive to the expressed needs for such activities from their intended beneficiaries. This was an important learning moment. It also opened an opportunity for revisiting some of the foundational readings in the course that dealt with specific aspects of the challenges of educational exclusion and inequity. Going forward, I would make it an explicit requirement that students rationalize their proposed educational interventions with links to course readings and bibliographic references in a more elaborate write-up. This also necessitates that the assignment be introduced early on in the semester, a point I noted earlier.

Given that everything had to happen in a period of semi-total lockdown in Vietnam, I am truly impressed by the resourcefulness of the students of FUV. In short amount of time, they managed to scope out and reach out to their prospective beneficiaries / project participants, scheduled activities with them for live video consultations, and held follow-up conversations to assess the efficacy of their interventions. I am sure there were some students in the groups who worked harder than others, but overall I was impressed by the level of their focus and efficiency. I am not sure to what extent this focus might vary in other cultural contexts – or in a situation where students are far more distracted during the traditional on-campus semester and socialization.

Technological tools

I used Google Classroom as LMS, Google Doc for all shared communication and instructions, and Zoom for group consultations. The students on the other hand were extremely creative and they used Facebook groups, recorded videos, and live Zoom Sessions (where I had to start the meetings for them and assign them as hosts, since they did not have a Zoom license) for activities with their beneficiaries (adolescents and young adults attending schools and colleges in Vietnam). Essentially, the students were extremely resourceful in how they used widely available platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Google Docs to plan and implement their group projects.

Some further thoughts for Colleagues

1. An Education course is a natural fit for Civic Engagement projects since most college students feel comfortable about sharing their expertise with younger beneficiaries (i.e. school age adolescents and youth), and find it easier to navigate an institutional environment (school or college) that they are most familiar with.

2. It was important to do a group civic engagement project since it gave students the opportunity to interact with each other more and connect with other young people and adults outside of FUV in a time of utmost physical isolation and confinement.
3. It was important to encourage the students to think of their Civic Engagement project beyond the course duration – and consider it as something they might continue going forward, with guidance from campus Civic Engagement Advisor.
4. Lastly, given that we were in the challenging period of near-total lock-down, I wanted to stay away from making the project (and the course) activities too much determined by grading rubrics. When students asked me about grading criteria, I asked them not to worry too much about grading, and said that there was only one requirement: they should think about doing something they would be proud of.
5. Students in this class formed 5 groups – of 2, 3 and 5 members in each. Their projects addressed a range of issues. One group developed and delivered a “practical curriculum” for using technology tools for self-study to “digital immigrants” - or young people they felt were new to digital resources and were falling behind during the pandemic. Two groups worked with high school students and shared with them the strategies of “Student Driven Learning” – something they had benefitted from in their education at FUV, but felt was lacking in the local public schools. One of these two groups actually was able to build on a previously established connection with a public school in HCMC. A fourth group decided to develop resources for high school students so that they could make more informed college / post-secondary education decisions. Finally, the fifth group chose to do a “Desk review” of non-formal and civic education initiatives in Vietnam – so as to better inform future policy and practice in this area. The group felt that for many disadvantaged Vietnamese children, NFE provides a pragmatic avenue to meaningful learning opportunities.

Below I list the key steps - with some commentaries for faculty colleagues. The actual communication / instructions to the students appear after this matrix.

Steps	What Students Do /Did	Notes for Faculty Colleagues
1	Students share ideas on possible Civic Engagement projects	I used Google Doc and set a deadline
2	Students form groups of 2 - 5 – depending on their own thematic interests and friendships.	This happened quite organically. Once students read and commented on- their peers’ ideas, they found their partners. They then shared their Group composition and tentative project idea on the same Google Doc. I set a deadline.

Steps	What Students Do /Did	Notes for Faculty Colleagues
3	Students start developing the different components of the project – starting with a timeline.	I uploaded a brief “guidelines” document on Google Classroom. I also created dedicated shared folders for students to start to put documents, multimedia resources and research bibliography that were relevant to their projects.
4	Group-wise Consultation	I had separate live conversations with each group. In some cases one member of the group met with me to clarify some issues while others were working with time-sensitive tasks (for example scheduling their on-line meetings with beneficiaries). We monitored progress with interim deliverables – as defined in the guidelines (#3). Depending on the nature of their projects, I adjusted some of the deadlines and deliverable
5	Final Presentation	This happened on the last scheduled session of the course – students shared their products and highlighted important aspects of their work. I had earlier shared a broad guideline for their presentation. Classroom. This was a classic group presentation – with PowerPoint, screenshots and videos – only happening remotely.
6	Post-presentation Reflection	This was the final exercise of the course. I drafted a message about how I wanted each of them to reflect on their group civic engagement project within the broader contours of the course. This was an individual task.

Student Communication / Instructions

What could be a meaningful Civic Engagement Project for our EDGE Class?

May I please ask you all to think and suggest some Civic Engagement Project ideas for our class? These projects should be related to education and school-age children and youth, and ideally should produce some tangible “output” or “outcome” by the end of our course (so we have around 6 weeks). Alternatively or in addition, these

projects could be longer term projects, and can be continued after the class. Granted, all project ideas need to take into account that we can only operate online – for now.

Managing & Delivering Your Group's Civic Engagement Project

Group deliverable: A + B + C + D, where A = 20 points, B = ungraded, C = 20 and D = 60 points

A. Please create a 2 -page (max) **Project Overview** that should include the following sections:

1. What is the objective of your project?
2. Who are the beneficiaries of your project?
3. What educational challenge / problem / issue are you trying to address through this project?
4. What activity / intervention will be carried out as part of this project over the next 4 weeks?
5. What is your Theory of Change? (Why do you think this project will benefit your target group?)
6. How will you measure success?

Due: Friday May 8 (Please consider it as a draft, a blueprint for what you are doing. Understandably, some aspects might change during the course of the next 3.5 weeks, given the on-the-ground reality.)

B. Please provide a **checklist of milestones** that will be accomplished on a week by week basis by the Group Members through the end of our course. Your checklist should look something like the table below:

#	Milestone / Key Activity	Date / Duration	Responsible	Remarks
1				
2				

One way to think of this is the “what, when, who, what if” table of keeping track of your project. Note, you will be only putting the key activities here (for example: 5 mentees identified, or Terms of Collaboration Established with Nguyen Quang Dieu school, or Background Research on NFE in Vietnam Drafted, etc.)

Due: Tuesday May 12 (Please consider this as an organizing tool for yourself to stay on track, and make sure that responsibilities are fairly allocated among group members. Also, you will need to adjust this document as situation changes (as they often do!)

C. Process Document: as the name indicates, this is a running note of how you are getting tasks done to reach your milestones on checklist. You can think of this as a “how to guide” for others who might like to take up a project like yours, or even continue this project with you / after you beyond this course. So it can just be simple bullet points or short sentences or infographics. **Due: This is an on-going document** - something you will keep adding to depending on the nature of your project, and your milestones timeline. I will look at it before each of the remaining sessions.

D. Product of your Civic Engagement Project: This is the main product or output of your Group Civic Engagement Project. Most of your efforts will go into developing it and executing this - whether it is a well-researched report or a series of virtual sessions based on a newly developed curriculum for online learning. We will need to make sure it is a quality product and it achieves the objective of your Group’s Civic Engagement endeavor. Note: For each group, this final product will be different. So please start thinking about an outline of that final product - and we will continue to refine it together.

Due: Tue May 12: Outline of your Product (what are the key components of your product / output). **Due: Thu May 28: Final version in Class presentation**

Suggested Guidelines for Presenting your Group Civic Engagement Project

1. As for your Thursday's session (May 28), I am proposing that you plan for a 15 minute presentation that should discuss both your product and process.
2. You should be able to communicate to the rest of the class what you did, how you went about doing it, what were unexpected challenges and/or pleasant surprises along the way, and how (if at all) you had to pivot / adapt your plans.
3. Please spend some time elaborating your products – whether they were training modules, or guided discussions, or research materials with applied potential. Be prepared to show a screen, play a video clip (in Vietnamese is OK), and walk the rest of the class through the group’s shared folder where you have compiled the background research as well as your own creations. Essentially, you want to give the audience a scope of your output by highlighting a few specific areas that you considered important / interesting.

4. Finally, share with the class your good faith assessment of where the project stands and what your group endeavor has managed to achieve. If you have thoughts about what happens next with this initiative, this will be a time to share.
5. We will then take around 5-7 minutes for any clarification question, comment, critique, suggestions.
6. Then on to the next group. So roughly 20 – 22 minutes for each group (including questions, right after each group's presentation).

Best wishes for your Group's Civic Engagement Project.

Civic Engagement Project and EDGE Course Reflection

Please provide brief responses to the following two questions. Please upload ('submit') your responses in a single word document by Tuesday, June 2. Thank you!

1. Having carried out your Civic Engagement Project so far, how would you refine and /or (re)articulate your endeavor's "Theory of Change"? Is there anything you personally would have done differently if it were a solo project? (max. 100 words)
2. In the EDGE course we have had a rather expansive coverage of themes, domains, geographies (contexts) and levels of education. We all agree that education is critical for development of a nation, especially in an interconnected global era. Yet the potential of education remains unrealized and unfulfilled. Given what we have discussed in the course, what do you see as the 'weakest link' in education systems in low-middle income countries? (max. 100 words)

Course: Education and Development in a Global Era (EDGE) at FUV – Q4, 2020

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