

UFS FORM 5: SHORT LEARNING PROGRAMME

SECTION A: CATALOGUE

CODE: HEQC/H06/EMS/SLPR (Credit-bearing SLP)

TITLE: Action Research in the Public Sector

QUALIFICATION TITLE: B. Pub. Hons.

NQF LEVEL: 6

CREDITS: 4 **NOTIONAL LEARNING HOURS:** 40

FORMAL CONTACT TIME: 16 HOURS

LEARNING ASSUMED TO BE IN PLACE:

- A formal qualification on NQF level 5 *plus* relevant experiences.
- Evidence of relevant prior learning may also be considered.
- The general regulations of the University of the Free State will also be applicable.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Learners will be able to:

- Understand the characteristics of research that is undertaken as participatory events in the public sector and why the process could be called 'action research'.
- Analyse the research environment in the public sector and apply the findings of such analysis to create a new environment for research in particular institutions.
- Familiarise themselves with the different definitions of action research, critically analyse these definitions and apply the findings within the context of the broader family of participatory research methodologies.
- Conceptualise the critical elements of action research, understand how such elements compliment each other in the application of action research projects.
- Understand the distinctiveness of action research compared to the traditional academic approaches to research.
- Understand and apply the methodology for action research and develop a strategic approach towards the implementation of the research findings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CONTENT:

In this course endeavours will be made to find answers on a variation of complicated questions, but more than that, ways and means have to be identified to implement the solutions of choice. This means that the ability to think like theorists and to act like practitioners. Many books have been written about research methodologies and many variations on the themes have been identified and discussed. Until recently, research in the public sector was the sole domain of 'outside' persons like consultants and project managers of donor supported projects. One could hardly imagine looking at public managers and other career officials as researchers in their own right.

Fact is that research is such an integral part of public organisations that managers and politicians are doing it almost unconsciously. The intention with this course is to familiarise managers and political office bearers with research as a concept and practical methodologies that can be applied to undertake the process. The idea is to systemise the processes and to enable the role players to

participate in such a way that the outcomes would be beneficial to both communities as well as institutions.

In order to do this a variety of 'approaches' to research have to be investigated. Without claiming that all the different schools of thought will be identified, it was decided that the traditional action research would form the basis of the reasoning during this course. As it will be explained that action research also result in action learning-as part of the cyclical process of research, followed by reflecting (application) and then by learning from that practice. This approach fits the practice of learning organisations like a glove. As situations are changing-which all of us know, is happening everyday-people have to learn how to deal with them and doing that from a solid research perspective, the chances of success are just much better.

As will be seen, the concept of action research is called different names by different people. In essence all these names are merely a variation on the theme of practical research. For purposes of this course it is not necessary to go into too much detail in terms of analysing each one of the different names, but if you are interested in finding out more about them, the sources that we refer to in the bibliography offer useful reading material.

CRITICAL OUTCOMES SUPPORTED BY SHORT LEARNING PROGRAMME:

- To enable public managers to apply scientific research principles in the identification, analysis and solving of public sector related problems.
- To develop a culture of critical, logical and unbiased way of thinking and acting among career officials and politicians in order to participate in contributes towards sustainable development.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT:

A portfolio of evidence, consisting of individual and group assignments, activities, group discussions, individual feedback, case studies, role-play and simulation.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

ORGANISING FIELD: 3

- (1 = Agriculture and Nature Conservation)
- (2 = Culture and Arts)
- (3 = Business, Commerce and Management Studies)
- (4 = Communication Studies and Language)
- (5 = Education, Training and Development)
- (6 = Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology)
- (7 = Human and Social Studies)
- (8 = Law, Military Science and Security)
- (9 = Health Sciences and Social Services)
- (10 = Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences)
- (11 = Services)
- (12 = Physical Planning and Construction)

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DEPARTMENTAL OR PROGRAMME "HOME": Public Management

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