

## **PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT**

### **Invitation to participate**

Tutoring, support staff and students involved in the pilot Industrial Psychology online course, Human Capacity Development, are invited to participate in a related project conducted by Japie Heydenrych as part of his Doctor of Education (D Ed) research. Principally, this means allowing the data to be created as part of the pilot project at Unisa to be used as part of the aforementioned degree research.

Data gathered will therefore have a dual purpose. Apart from the research aiming at assisting with improving teaching and support practice with the Online Learning Community (OLC) at the University of South Africa (Unisa), the researcher is also working towards the D Ed degree at Unisa. The doctoral research has complementary objectives to the institutional project as follows:

### **Objectives of the proposed research**

The objectives of the proposed research are:

- to determine the effects/impact of the introduction of the OLC (Online Learning Community) in the print-based environment of Unisa;
- to determine the need for change in supporting and facilitating learning and community in the OLC as compared to current print-based tutoring;
- to educate towards improved practice in supporting and facilitating the OLC;
- to implement improved practice of supporting learners online and facilitating community in the OLC.

### **Background to the proposed research**

The institution involved, the University of South Africa, is on the verge of implementing its first online courses in the form of the online learning community with the use of the World Wide Web (WWW) and CMC (Computer Mediated Communication). Previous research into the implementation of new technology in institutions points towards a traumatic experience for all stakeholders. If such an implementation is attempted at a traditionally correspondence-based distance education institution like Unisa, it is expected that staff will have to improve their understanding and professional practice to make implementation successful.

The proposed research is based on the action research approach which aims to inspire staff participants to assess their roles in the online learning community and to contribute towards improved practice in a group context. Student participants will be invited to share their learning experience. Data collected will include forms of electronic communication between participants, student interviews and other official and course documentation.

**Confidentiality**

Data will be recorded and stored in a form that preserves the anonymity of the participants. The D Ed thesis and any publications and presentations from the D Ed projects will not identify the participants.

Any participation is voluntary. The act of volunteering or not has no influence or consequence for students' assessments or results. Should anybody agree to participate, he or she is free to withdraw subsequently should they wish to do so. Should a participant agree to this, he or she has to sign the attached consent form.

If a participant has any queries concerning participation in this research project, they can contact the researcher or supervisor.

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