Unit:
Research Methods

Assignment Title:
Research Project Proposal – Diversity Management in Public Sector Services

December 2014

Important Notes:

- Please refer to the Assignment Presentation Requirements for advice on how to set out your assignment. These can be found on the NCC Education Campus. Scroll down the left hand side of the screen until you reach Personal Support. Click on this, and then on Policies and Advice. You will find the Assignment Presentation Requirements under the Advice section.
- You must familiarise yourself with the NCC Education Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Policy and ensure that you acknowledge all the sources which you use in your work. The policy is available on Campus. Follow the instructions above, but click on Policies rather than Advice.
- You must complete the ‘Statement and Confirmation of Own Work’. The form is available on the Policies section of Campus. Scroll down the left hand side until you reach Personal Support. Click on this and then click on Policies and Advice.
- Please make a note of the recommended word count. You could lose marks if you write 10% more or less than this.
- You must submit a paper copy and digital copy (on disk or similarly acceptable medium). Media containing viruses, or media which cannot be run directly, will result in a fail grade being awarded for this module.
- All electronic media will be checked for plagiarism.

Marker's comments:


Moderator's comments:


Mark: Moderated Final Mark:


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Introduction
This assignment requires you to demonstrate many of the skills you have learned throughout the course of this module. These include selecting and justifying a suitable research approach (including outlining an appropriate research methodology, supported by relevant philosophical underpinning), developing a research plan and demonstrating an ethical mindfulness when approaching academic research. You are required to produce a fully referenced academic proposal in response to a ‘call for research proposals’ administered by the case study organisation.

Please note: You are not required to undertake the project work, merely submit a proposal of intended research approach.

Compulsory Contents
A 3,000-word research project proposal in response to a given case study.

Case Study
You are an independent business analyst. You have recently responded to the following call for research proposals. This call was circulated by your university Graduate School and submitted by Watchingham County Council. The information is included below.

“Call for Research Project Proposals – Watchingham County Council, UK

Watchingham County Council provide and manage public services for a population of 1.74 million on behalf of the UK government. These services include: refuse waste management, public safety and fire services, libraries and education, social care, leisure centres and parks, cemeteries, transport, planning, and social care. Members of the population pay a fixed sum annually for the services provided and, in addition, national government provide an annual budget in order to manage and maintain the given services.

Providing these key services is not without challenges and with greater accountability and scrutiny by the public, focus on quality of service and value for money (even in times of austerity) is critical. We do attempt to provide high-quality services to the many schools (400, with 165,000 pupils) and community carers (providing services to approximately 9,000), provide effective maintenance of over 2,000 kilometres of road and manage 300,000 tonnes of waste as part of our role. To achieve this, we rely heavily on our employees (approximately 60,000) and subcontractors (40,000) to maintain these standards.

However, within our existing workforce we have a high diversity (cultural, gender and age most specifically) and it has come to our attention via internal staff satisfaction surveys that existing management practices may not be sufficiently motivating this diverse workforce as it should. Further external evidence supports this possibility as in the last six months we have received a 20% increase in complaints from the public about our services.
We are aware that increasing complaints and employee dissatisfaction could have severe implications for the reputation of Watchingham County Council and could lead to scrutiny from the national government, who provide us with partial funding to provide our services. As such, developing a greater understanding of our diverse workforce – and motivating it – becomes rather crucial to our strategy for 2014/15.

In order to generate a holistic picture of our employees, we are seeking to commission an external impartial researcher to do the following.

- Identify challenges of managing and motivating diversity
- Identify and propose good practice when managing diverse workforces

At this time we are inviting professional research proposals from business researchers to tender for this research project. We will consider proposals which demonstrate sound conceptual frameworks and academic rigour, as well as feasibility and an ethical mindfulness.

A research grant of £40,000 will be awarded to the successful proposal in order to fulfil the requirements of the proposed research project.

Applications to: Toby Harrison, Head of Personnel, Watchingham County Council"

**Task – 100 Marks**

Ensure the research proposal addresses each of the following SIX (6) elements.

**Please note: approximate word count allocations are included in tasks as a guide.**

a) Select an appropriate research question for the proposal. **(5 marks)**

b) Provide a brief outline of the type of philosophical perspective for the research and discuss, with justification, whether you think that a quantitative, qualitative or mixed method would be most suited to this project. Use appropriate theory and supporting evidence to justify the chosen approach. **(15 marks, 500 words)**

c) Explain how you propose to identify appropriate sources to provide a theoretical and literary framework for the research. Explain and justify where you will locate credible academic and empirical sources, indicating any inclusion/exclusion criteria which may be applied to this selection. In addition, explain how appropriate theory and suitable academic models may be identified. Finally, outline an approach for how you will critically evaluate sources of information and models to ensure the academic integrity of the project. **(20 marks, 600 words)**

d) Outline a clear, feasible and justified methodology for the project, including the following.

- Primary or secondary research design
• Specific methods of data collection appropriate to the proposed design, including sampling
• Intended mode or modes of data analysis (30 marks, 1100 words)

e) Evaluate any ethical issues that may affect the proposed project and how they may be addressed. (10 marks, 350 words)

f) Produce a Gantt chart to provide an appropriate order for carrying out research tasks. Assume a six-month project lifespan. Briefly discuss this chart, explaining key milestones, anticipating any potential challenges that may arise and a strategy for overcoming them. (15 marks, 450 words)

g) Marks will be awarded for the professional presentation of the proposal. (5 marks)

Guidance
Complete all the tasks sequentially. Consult with your tutor if you are uncertain about any aspects of the assignment.

Submission Requirements
• A single word-processed document containing all material pertaining to all sub-tasks.
• Maximum word limit is 3000 words (+/- 10%) not including the appendices.
• The document should be properly structured as an essay with a bibliography (online and literature sources) and appendices (where necessary). Refer to the Assignment Presentation Requirements on Campus for more information. (See front cover.)
• Produce clear and specific reasoning and argument to justify answers.
• An electronic copy of the document must be submitted to NCC Education by email using this address: level7assessments@nccedu.com

Warning: All media must be virus free!
Media containing viruses, or media which cannot be run directly, will result in a FAIL grade being awarded for this module.

You must read and understand NCC Education’s policy on ‘Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism’.
You must complete the ‘Statement and Confirmation of Own Work’ form and attach the completed form to your assignment.