

Online Course Catalogue

Course Title

Study Field

University

Action, learning and impact

Education

Utrecht University

CHARM priority field

Faculty

Number of credit points:

Transversal Skills;European values,
culture and language;

Faculty of Social
Sciences

7.5

Department

Name of instructor(s): **Danielle**

Course code

**Department of
Education**

Vlaanderen, Anna Ben Shalom,

202200022

Study Level:

Despoina Georgiou

BA/BSc

Short description of the course

In this course, you will learn how to generate impact by working as a team to bring about change in a problematic social and/or organizational context. In doing so, you work in a direct relationship with clients/problem owners to jointly question underlying assumptions that perpetuate a situation and to jointly plan and deploy interventions. The way of working follows the approach of action research. The core of action research as a method is that as a researcher, you go through multiple cycles of diagnosis, planning, implementation, and reflection. Drawing on scientific literature from different disciplines is an important tool for reflection and developing different insights as to why a particular intervention has or has not worked well. That insight forms the basis for planning a new intervention. The organization you work with learns with you, so to speak. In this way, as an action researcher, you also contribute to the development of validated practical knowledge about changing a certain situation/organization. In this type of research, you have a double commitment as a team of researchers. You study a social problem in context and work with specific groups within this context to create a change in what is collectively seen as the desired direction. We pay attention in the course to the ethical implications of this commitment and role. Furthermore, this type of research requires an attitude of constant wonder about what motivates people to behave as they do. And this also applies to your own actions as a (future) academic professional. A participant of the previous edition wrote in his/her evaluation: "A completely different and very instructive course. Very committed lecturers who value change and learning academically, practical experience, and personal development. And this is where I learned only meaningful things along with others. " Action research has a long tradition and multiple of its forms have emerged ranging from participatory action research for empowering particular groups, appreciative research to reinforce what works in a particular practice, to making a learning history as a method for analysis and intervention in organizations. You study literature on the (methodological) foundations of action research, its range of manifestations, and the views on learning and knowledge development that underpin this specific form of research.

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to: • recognize and apply different perspectives on Action Research in a specific context, • have insight into the dynamics of designing, planning, and implementing interventions in a social force field with relevant stakeholders in the role of co-researcher(s), • question social problem owners/stakeholders from different disciplines on underlying implicit assumptions about learning and change, • help social problem owners and their stakeholders learn to implement changes and (by going through the empirical cycle of action research) make practical knowledge about these specific changes explicit and share it, • recognize cultural and disciplinary differences in collaboration and make them productive in the context of their action research, • reflect individually and in teams on their own learning experiences.

Additional information

Course requirements
English language

A short motivation letter in which you demonstrate your engagement with this course.

Language of instruction
English

Start date of course:
03/09/2024

End date of course:
07/11/2024

Contact hours per week for the student:
Contact moments will take place on Tuesday mornings from 9.30 - 12.30 and Thursday afternoons from 13.30 - 17.00

Specific regular weekly teaching day/time
Contact moments will take place on Tuesday mornings from 9.30 - 12.30 and Thursday afternoons from 13.30 - 17.00

Time zone
CET (Spain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Hungary, Norway)

Mode of delivery:
hybrid (students of the CHARM partners join online, local students on campus)

Planned educational activities and teaching methods
seminars and group work

Learning Management System
Blackboard

Assessment methods
Team assignment (oral), individual reflection (oral), individual theory assignment (written)

Certification
Transcript of records

Course literature (compulsory or recommended):
Coghlan, D. (2019) Doing Action

**Research in your own organisation.
(5th edition) London: Sage**

Number of places available for
CHARM students
Min. 4

More about this course

Course Manual

Action, learning and impact

Course Code: 202200022

Participants from a previous year wrote in the evaluation:

“Everyone should take one of these radically different-than-other courses at least once. The practical focus is delightful and inspiring. You are seen as a complete human being, you are already enough as you are and you feel empowered. The teachers give tools and facilitate the learning process.”

1. General

Contact moments

The Action, Learning, and Impact course starts on Tuesday 3 September 2024, and ends in week 45, on Thursday, 7 Nov 2024. Contact moments will take place on Tuesday mornings from 9.30 - 12.30 and Thursday afternoons from 13.30 - 17.00 during period 1.

Location

For participants who are located in the Netherlands, the course will take place at a location to be determined in the city. To provide context for this, you will find an explanation of why this is so in section 6. We will be guests in this location. The course will be also offered hybrid to allow international participants to join online.

2. Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- recognize and apply different perspectives on Action Research in a specific context,
- have insight into the dynamics of designing, planning, and implementing interventions in a social force field with relevant stakeholders in the role of co-researcher(s),
- question social problem owners/stakeholders from different disciplines on underlying implicit assumptions about learning and change,
- help social problem owners and their stakeholders learn to implement changes and (by going through the empirical cycle of action research) make practical knowledge about these specific changes explicit and share it,
- recognize cultural and disciplinary differences in collaboration and make them productive in the context of their action research,
- reflect individually and in teams on their own learning experiences.

3. Content

In this course, you will learn how to generate impact by working as a team to bring about change in a problematic social and/or organizational context. In doing so, you work in a direct relationship with clients/problem owners to jointly question underlying assumptions that perpetuate a situation and to jointly plan and deploy interventions.

The way of working follows the approach of action research. The core of action research as a method is that as a researcher, you go through multiple cycles of diagnosis, planning, implementation, and reflection. Drawing on scientific literature from different disciplines is an important tool for reflection

and developing different insights as to why a particular intervention has or has not worked well. That insight forms the basis for planning a new intervention. The organization you work with learns with you, so to speak. In this way, as an action researcher, you also contribute to the development of validated practical knowledge about changing a certain situation/organization.

In this type of research, you have a double commitment as a team of researchers. You study a social problem in context and work with specific groups within this context to create a change in what is collectively seen as the desired direction. We pay attention in the course to the ethical implications of this commitment and role. Furthermore, this type of research requires an attitude of constant wonder about what motivates people to behave as they do. And this also applies to your own actions as a (future) academic professional.

A participant of the previous edition wrote in his/her evaluation:

“A completely different and very instructive course. Very committed lecturers who value change and learning academically, practical experience, and personal development. And this is where I learned only meaningful things along with others. “

Action research has a long tradition and multiple of its forms have emerged ranging from participatory action research for empowering particular groups, appreciative research to reinforce what works in a particular practice, to making a learning history as a method for analysis and intervention in organizations. You study literature on the (methodological) foundations of action research, its range of manifestations, and the views on learning and knowledge development that underpin this specific form of research.

4. Outline

Two main lines recur throughout the course. One line is connecting with people in an organization who are willing to act as your co-investigator(s). By engaging with them, you find out what is causing friction and why it is causing friction. The second line is the method of action research (AR), which you use as a group to work with the people and organizations involved to arrive at an intervention that will bring about a change in the direction discussed with the various stakeholders.

From the case histories and becoming familiar with people's problems, you also come into contact with several organizations involved. The team of action researchers consists of a group of students and a partner from a local organization. As a research group, you analyse what is going on, plan and implement one or more intervention(s). By constantly reflecting on what you observe and experience, you develop practical knowledge together about the problem(s), the partner organization, what triggers learning and change, and how AR contributes to a powerful learning environment.

You go through the action research cycle of analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation twice.

Examples of case studies that groups have worked on in previous editions:

- Doing action research to strengthen the cultural and social role of Theatre STUT in neighbourhood-oriented social innovations
- Doing Action Research in cooperation with the library on the possibilities of taking service provision in Overvecht to a higher level

- Doing Action Research with social brokers from Overvecht as co-researchers to increase the learning capacity of social broker organization DOCK
- Doing Action Research on social service, on how to get young people more actively involved in developments in the city.

A participant of one of the previous editions wrote in his/her evaluation:

“It was very nice that as a student you were given so much freedom to structure your own learning process. There was a lot of room for reflection, which was enriching.”

5. Learning forms

Action research starts from the premise that you learn by doing. This way of working assumes that students are actively involved in the chosen topics. Prior to the research, it is not clear what exactly you are going to encounter. Gradually during the research, you will discover what is important by wondering about what seems self-evident, by reflecting together on what might be going on underneath, and by delving into this theoretically. This requires an active entrepreneurial attitude. You work in an interdisciplinary group of 4 or 5 students together with experienced/content experts, who are involved in the cases as local problem holders/stakeholders.

The research group uses the cycle of action research to shape its research. You first carefully define the working theme and areas of interest. Following that, those involved plan an action, which is then carried out. Together, you evaluate what the intended and unintended outcomes of the action were and what that means for the next cycle.

The literature provides a comprehensive description of the research cycle. As is inherent to action research, you conduct the research together with stakeholders. Parallel to the research cycle runs a reflection cycle in which you constantly reflect on the content of the issue, the process of working, and the underlying assumptions. As a researcher, you are part of the research and engaged in your own learning-in-action. You build knowledge by discussing experiences to understand them better. Then you can assess whether your ideas are correct and you can come to a better action. You always work closely with the people involved in the research topic. The goal is to initiate a change. It requires you to be attentive, open to experience and wonder, ask questions and seek answers, reflect and weigh evidence before coming to a judgment, discuss, and think for yourself. Coghlan (2019) calls it: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible.

Teachers think along, (un)solicited, with the investigations you shape as students. You should expect the same from them as is expected from you as a researcher.

6. An explanation of the context in which this subject is taught

This elective is part of the minor Community Engaged Learning at Utrecht University ([Community Engaged Learning - Studenten UU - Students UU](#)) and also part of the Learning Lab. (<https://selab.nl/learninglabov/>) Learning Lab represents a specific educational approach and is one of the deliverables of a UU-wide educational innovation project (USO) aimed at developing service learning and community engagement. Specifically, students use their knowledge and skills to help solve a particular social issue with neighbourhood partners while further deepening their knowledge and skills in that process.

Action research has a strong participatory dimension, which in the context of this course means that you work together with (representatives of) local neighbourhood partners in the role of co-

researchers to create change. Besides creating change, another outcome of action research is the generation of validated practical knowledge about making change in that specific context.

The Learning Lab is a partnership between the Social Enterprise Lab (selab), DOCK, and Utrecht University. There is an opportunity to take part in the new course 'I am Utrecht: an interdisciplinary neighbourhood project' in the context of the lab. This course originated from the project on how young people between 16 and 28 can add value to the city. This course is part of the minor Community Engaged Learning / Dare and Do: Making Change through Community Engaged Learning and takes place in periods 3 and 4 for 7.5 EC. It allows you to continue your project, join another initiative, or start your own.

Since the USO project cited above, Community Engaged Learning has been attracting strong interest at UU. The question of how we want to create social change with organizations in the city is becoming increasingly central.

This year, we will work with different neighborhood partners in different districts. The aim is to make a difference in several places in the city and to work with partners to figure out how to take a step forward in the desired direction.

With international students involved via hybrid contact moments, we will also work on global issues in the framework of international community-engaged learning (ICEL - [Education - Centre for Global Challenges - Utrecht University \(uu.nl\)](https://www.uu.nl/education/centres-for-global-challenges)) that can be tackled from different countries locally and globally.

7. Overview of dates and activities period 1

This course starts in week 35 on 3 September 2024 and we conclude in week 45, 7 Nov 2024.

Contact moments (compulsory) are on: Tuesday mornings (9.30-12.30 hrs) and Thursday afternoons (13:30-17:00)

On Tuesday mornings, the focus is on preparing and implementing the interventions as part of your action research. On Thursday afternoons, there will be a focus on the literature and especially how the literature can support your team's choices in your action research.

At the start of the course, we share an activity overview with a tentative walk-through of the course. This activity overview can be found on Blackboard. For each course day, you can find what are the central questions and actions for the day, what you need to prepare and which literature to use. At the same time, teams will follow their own path and this may differ considerably from one another in terms of where one is in the process of action research. The activity overview can therefore be adapted to what is needed in the teams.

8. Testing and assessment

There are three testing components to the course in line with the learning objectives:

(1.) Team assignment (second-person perspective in action research)

You conclude the action research project in a final learning conversation. The conversation consists of two parts.

(1.1.) The conversation with your neighbourhood partner and possibly other stakeholders in which you can give the action research a final boost and you jointly look ahead to the next step; how the neighbourhood partner will proceed.

(1.2.) Reflective conversation in which you look back on the conversation and your process together in a learning way; how you conducted the action research and how you collaborated with others. You indicate how, through collaboration with others, you shaped the process of constructing the project, planning your action, carrying out the action, and evaluating the action. Working from multiple disciplines becomes visible here.

You plan this interview in consultation with your neighbourhood partner on one of the interview dates between 4 November and 8 November.

(2.) Individual reflection (first-person perspective in action research)

You show in a poster that you can adopt an inquisitive attitude towards yourself and research, that you develop consciousness, that you act from consciousness and that you learn from the principle of interiority.

(3.) Theory assignment (third-person perspective in action research)

During the course, you write 250 words each week on how you use theory in your action research. This is preparation for the literature review and it is not graded. You hand this in weekly on BB. At the end, you write a final assignment which is graded (min. 250 - max. 500 words) in which you highlight a concept/theory that was important for a choice you made in your action research. This is an individual text in which you address the value of the theoretical concept of doing action research.

You will hand this in on Blackboard by Friday 8 November 2024 at the latest.

On Blackboard you will find a more detailed description of the assignments with the assessment dimensions

The weighting of the assignments is as follows:

Team assignment: 40% with min. grade 5

Individual reflection: 30% with grade pass/fail

Individual-theory assignment: 30% with min. grade 5

9. Literature

To be purchased by participants: Coghlan, D. (2019) Doing Action Research in your own organisation. (5th edition) London: Sage

(The fourth edition by Coghlan and Brannick may also be available. The chapters in it have a different order)

Recommended literature will be provided in Blackboard.

Articles and own source research via key-word searches.