



**National
Teaching
Fellowship
Scheme**



National Action Research Network on Researching and Evaluating Personal Development Planning and e-Portfolio Practice

Year 2 Research Progress

<p>Your contact details:</p> <p>Name: Arti Kumar</p> <p>Organisation: University of Bedfordshire</p>
<p>1. What is your research question?</p> <p>Do staff make changes to their (e)-PDP pedagogical approaches and interventions for students as a result of the action research process? (<i>And does this impact on students' perceptions of their skills-development?</i> is a further question to tackle at a later stage in the cycle.)</p>
<p>2. Progress with research:-</p> <p>a) Please provide a short update of your current research activity related to the project</p> <p>I have convened an Action Research Consortium (ARC) at the University of Bedfordshire through open invitation and some targeted approaches to staff, providing opportunities for staff across all faculties and subject disciplines to become members of the ARC and undertake their own action research related to (e)-PDP.</p> <p>Clear principles have been set out for the functioning of the ARC: it is a peer-supported group that meets regularly for the broad aims of enhancing research capacity amongst its members, sharing practices and resource materials for (e)-PDP, and supporting and rewarding the final writing up of research papers for dissemination and publication.</p> <p>The purpose of the action research meetings is to provide a discussion forum where all members can present their projects, interventions and action plans to each other for guidance, evaluation, feedback and change of action, if needed. External consultants and internal presentations will build capacity in the group. Two part-time research assistants have been appointed to assist, especially with data collection and data analysis. Since ARC projects will be contributing to meeting the aims of the CETL at UoB, CETL resources have been allocated to complement the NARN funding and resources, and thus create synergy in aims and outcomes.</p> <p>The ARC meetings will run regularly alongside separate meetings and interviews that</p>



the Associate Director and research staff will conduct with each of the participants as part of the ARC strategy. CETL staff will also support the participants in this project by suggesting literary and practical resources, and the research assistants will help with tasks such as data collection/entry or transcribing interviews. A dedicated 'organisation' or web-space within the university's VLE has been developed to hold a record of all associated documents and act as a channel of communication between meetings. As such, ARC functionality is in itself an intervention that can be subjected to a research process.

We will investigate the over-arching research question through action research which will be divided into separate cycles of planning and action. We will start by gathering some baseline empirical evidence to establish starting points against which progress can be assessed. The cycles and stages will be assessed at ARC meetings and through specific focus groups and occasional questionnaires delivered to the staff involved. The outcomes will then feed into the next phase of the cycle before reaching the final aim of the project.

A similar process will be extended to students in the later stages, as we will be collecting feedback from them, and observing and assessing their skills development in various ways. Evaluating and analysing will be an important dimension in moving forward.

b) Are you experiencing any problems which are impeding progress?

There has been strong initial interest in joining the ARC, but there will inevitably be some attrition – indeed a couple of members have already said they cannot continue due to heavy workloads and new roles this semester. Lack of confidence and/or motivation, inability to manage workloads and responsibilities will be problems for some staff and reasons for non-completion of projects. I will be doing my best to support, recognise and reward staff who persevere from initiation to publication – and indeed all shades of effort in between.

3: Future Activities:

How do you see your research developing?

An outline workplan has been produced which includes deadlines, progress points, milestones etc. for the next two years. Research assistants will collate evaluations of the researchers' thoughts, progress via different methods throughout the two years. It is expected that ARC participants will keep a research log or diary which would allow access to the reflections of the researchers (perhaps using content analysis). Other evaluation methods will be used – for example we will request and record short progress reports using *Facilitate* software, as well as a recording of the ARC meetings (either tape recorded, written, photographs of brainstorm charts drawn on the walls etc.) This could



be a way of evaluating personal and collective perspectives on the progress of their individual projects, as well as the overarching institutional project.

4: Reflection:

How has the National Action Research Network supported you and what lessons have you have learnt to date, in undertaking the research?

The NARN has been key in raising my confidence that such research is both valuable and practicable, and lessons learned in one type of context can spark ideas and transfer into other contexts. Essentially I am replicating the national process at UoB, and find myself in a strong position to enhance these practices because they are congruent with the aims of our CETL, which is focussed on PDP and employability. It is also timely to focus on the e-PDP dimensions as the University has just bought PebblePad as its preferred electronic platform for e-portfolios. I have also convened an E-Portfolio Group to run alongside the ARC, and this has also drawn many staff (currently 34) who are interested in running e-portfolio trials in their subject disciplines.

5. Any other comments