**Title:** Research Capacity Building in a Practitioner Community: a participant action research project on practitioner research

**Presenters:** Sue Burkinshaw, Peter Hughes, Christine Keenan, Arti Kumar and John Peters
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**Abstract:**

**Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

1. Evaluate the model for research capacity building provided by the national action research network on researching and evaluating personal development planning
2. Make an informed decision on the application of an action research model to their setting
3. Consider the challenges and benefits of establishing thematic regional groupings to support the development of pedagogic research communities
4. Discuss the factors that aid and hinder educational practitioners in a transition to educational researchers.

**Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are:

The workshop leaders are members of a proactive national group of HE practitioners who regularly identified the limited evidence base for their area of practice as a problem. Having bemoaned this for a while, we decided to address it directly. We successfully obtained project funding to establish a national network to produce our own evidence base collectively. The resulting NTF funded National Action Research Network for Research into PDP (NTF-NARN-PDP) project is led by Sue Burkinshaw and John Peters.

The methodological model adopted is a form of participant / community action research at the meta-level of sharing and developing research design and outcomes amongst those responsible for PDP practice at their respective HEIs. Each of the 16 participating institutions has to develop and implement at least one plan to research a key aspect of practice. The plans are shared, analysed, evaluated and sharpened at the stages of research design, data gathering and analysis, and reporting.

Three regional groupings, led by Peter Hughes, Christine Keenan and Arti Kumar, were established. They have begun to develop distinct identities as nascent pedagogic research communities, and have revealed particular aspects of the ‘capacity building’ nature of the overall project.

At the mid-point of a three year project, we will analyse the activities and experiences of the project, the regional groups and institutional members and facilitate reflective debate about the value of this approach and its processes for capacity building by other communities of practice.
We have identified several issues and challenges including: boundaries; fluidity; institutional diversity; epistemological and methodological preferences and dealing with the significant range of participants’ experience in educational research. Overall, our experiences have suggested that groups of peers, sharing a common practitioner interest can overcome issues like these to form supportive learning and research networks.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

10 min discussion: how would you turn practitioners into researchers?
15 min presentation of the participant action research on research model
10 min discussion of delegates’ understanding of the model
10 min discussion on possible applications of the model to delegates’ settings
20 min input on the experiences of regional leads on the development of regional groups and project progress to date
15 min discussion: emerging issues and possibilities
10 min plenary: identifying potential future projects

References