“Networked Learning Communities”: Multidisciplinary Community of Practice on Student E-portfolio

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What is a Community of Practice (CoP)?
Wenger (2011) has summarized the three crucial characteristics of CoP:

- **The Domain**: CoP has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest
- **The Community**: Members build relationships
- **The Practice**: They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools...
Wenger (2004) further associated Community of Practice as the cornerstone of knowledge management:

- **Domain** provides a common focus
- **Community** builds relationship that enables collective learning
- **Practice** anchors the learning in what people do

1. Bottom-up + top-down
2. A new solution is proposed → apply as “strategy” → transform into “performance”
3. Involve practitioners in knowledge management → feed knowledge back into the organization → “learning loop”

*Combines bottom-up enthusiasm and initiatives from members with top-down encouragement from the organization*
Comparison with other forms of organization:
(Please refer to the table on your handout)

- People-oriented **VS.** Task-oriented or Target-oriented
- Allows members to organize themselves, set their own agendas, establish their own leadership
- position oneself in a practice-focused discourse and usher in new cultural practices with new orientations (Niesz, 2007, p.610)
- At least 5 years → show a cultural change (Cox, 2002)
REFLECT
A Community of Practice for Student E-Portfolios
Multi-disciplinary + T&L Units

Discuss, Research, Groupwork

Sharing with other communities

“Symbiosis”
Re-theorizing and Extension: “Networked Learning Communities” (NLC)
“Networked Learning Communities” (NLC)

Adapts existing CoP models to demonstrate evolution and development of CoPs’ role:
1. Faculty Learning Community (FLC), Cox (2004) for education
2. The Learning Space Model, Wenger (1998) for education

Communities:
1. Bear potential to overcome the inherent problems of a slow-moving traditional hierarchy
2. A means of developing and maintain long-term organization memory
3. Creates social capital: connections, relationship and common context
   -> Better Performance
“Networked Learning Communities” (NLC) in higher education context

**Stage I**

- **Community of Admins (CoA)**
- **Community of Practice (CoP)**
- **Community of Learners (CoL)**

**CoP Capitals:**
- Connections, Relationships,
- Common Context,
- Knowledge, Reflective Culture...
- Memory

- CoP: Buffer between the CoA and the CoL
- Learners’ performance feeds back into the practice of the CoP
  = knowledge for the CoA collected via reports, focus group interviews and questionnaires or professional development programmes
- NLC enables a scenario where the *impetus comes from the CoA but the initiative comes from the CoP*
NLC - Stage 2: Symbiosis

- two or more CoPs → “Symbiotic” relationship through exchanging knowledge and resources

- Individual CoP takes advantages, efforts and assistances from another CoP(s)
- E.g. involved in parallel with the CoP dealing with the “Teaching Portfolio”

\[ \text{Accumulated CoP Capitals:} \]
Knowledge, resources, experiences...

\[ \rightarrow \text{integrate and extend the utilization of student eportfolio and teacher eportfolio} \]
## Social Capitals [Lesser, E.L., & Storck, J. (2001)]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Illustration in CoP in the organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural Dimension</td>
<td>Making connections to others within the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Dimension</td>
<td>Reinforcing the development of interpersonal relationships within the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Dimension</td>
<td>Developing the shared context between two parties</td>
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## NLC Capitals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Illustration in CoP in the institution</th>
<th>First Stage of NLC</th>
<th>Second Stage of NLC (&quot;Symbiosis&quot; of NLCs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Dimension</td>
<td>Prompting cultural and atmospheric change (in terms of learning, teaching and administrating) in the institution</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Dimension</td>
<td>Completing the circuit of CoA and CoL, lead to a more transparent and reflective management mechanism within the institution</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Voices of Members...

Professional benefits:
1. Collaboration and support from peers
2. Sharing expertise, (personal) experiences, practices, insights and pedagogies
3. Self-reflection on teaching
4. New techniques, approaches, skills and knowledge were introduced

Expectations at the beginning...
1. Work with a group of colleagues
2. Passive observer
3. Open mind
4. Quite reluctant at the beginning

But later found that...
1. Exchanges and brainstorming of ideas
2. Practice was put into a bigger perspective
3. Driving force for change
4. Meaningful
Influence your ideas on teaching & learning:
1. New ideas
2. Explore other ways beyond instructions
3. As a springboard
4. Was convinced of necessity of using such a tool in Language Teaching & Learning
5. Students need ownerships, freedom and space for creativity

CoP influence policy making on teaching and learning in the University:
1. Identify the necessary support needed for front-line teachers
2. Indicate to policy makers which areas/issues to be addressed at the institutional level.
3. Provide evidence of the effectiveness of a particular teaching and learning approach
4. The University will be better able to promote innovative practice
5. Shift from a teacher-oriented philosophy to a student-centered
6. Shift from knowledge-oriented teaching/learning philosophy to the focus / importance to acquire skills and competences

Cox, M.D. (2004). Introduction to faculty learning communities. New directions for teaching and learning, 97, 5-23


Something To Do...

- Identify a common teaching & learning issue in your institution around which you can build a community of practice
- Classify the components of your CoP as *Community, Practice & Domain*
- Suggest a method to sustain the CoP within your institution and get *admin* interested in your project