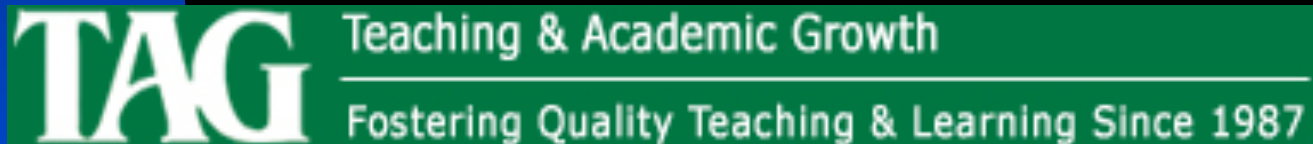


Communities of Practice: Sharing Strategies for Collaboration

A Presentation for the Educational
Developers Caucus (EDC) 2010 Conference

Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, BC

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Workshop Outline

- What does the term CoP mean to you?
- What CoPs are (varying purposes)
- Formats CoPs take
- Benefits and terms
- CoPs at UBC: The Portfolio CoP
- Cultivating CoPs and Lessons Learned
- Applications to your context

Learning Objectives

- By the end of this session, you will be able to:
 - ◆ Identify key principles in the development of communities of practice (CoPs)
 - ◆ Evaluate the applicability of CoPs to your own setting(s).
 - ◆ Articulate some of the benefits of participating in a CoP

What does the term CoP mean to you?

- Concept from educational development literature
- Often applied to teaching and learning, but also to organizational development

What CoPs are (varying purposes)

- “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2006, p. 1).
- Groups, networks, and teams organized around teaching and learning topics and/or for career stages

Formats CoPs take at UBC

Registered CoP members can interact through:

- Face-to-face meetings and workshops on identified topics (as articulated by community members) and offered by facilitators/co-ordinators or by members themselves
- Online blogs and webspaces
- Print materials
- Conversations/Networking (online and face-to-face)
- Email (sent by members and the facilitators/co-ordinators)

Benefits and Terms

Benefits

- Provide effective "deep learning"
- Encourage and support members to investigate, attempt, assess, and adopt new ideas (in education, methods of teaching)
- Support grassroots leadership development
- Allow entry and participation at any developmental and knowledge-base level
- Become part of a community of people with similar interests
- Facilitate sharing of examples and successes
- Provide a space and supportive environment for sharing of challenges and for receiving feedback
- Foster collaborative projects through networking and sharing
- Receive notification of events, funding and other special opportunities related to the CoP
- Other terms: Learning teams, Teaching scholars, (Faculty) learning communities, Customized groups

Context of CoPs at UBC TAG

- 14 Communities of Practice, first one started in 2002 (based on an expressed need from the teaching and learning community)
- Geared to a variety of roles or career stages (e.g. grad students, new/junior faculty) and topics (e.g. Problem-based learning, Qualitative data analysis)
- An informal network (25 to 500) who share a common interest and work on it
- Face-to-face meetings, blogs, listserves, seminars, and other formats

14 CoPs at UBC TAG

- UBC (Problem-based Learning) PBL Network
- Community Service-Learning (CSL)
- Teaching and Learning for the Heart and Mind
- ISoTL Network
- The Portfolio Community
- New/Junior Faculty
- The Course Design Community
- Sustainability Across the Curriculum Working Group
- Nvivo Qualitative Data Analysis Group
- Atlas.ti Qualitative Data Analysis Group
- Global Citizenship
- Peer Review of Teaching

*All co-ordinated and facilitated by individuals from TAG and some in partnership with individuals from other academic units, who have experience in the area.

CoPs at UBC: The Portfolio CoP

- Over 90 members including Faculty, Staff, Graduate Students from UBC and other institutions
- Co-facilitated by UBC TAG and UBC OLT (two dedicated support people)
- Has monthly face-to-face meetings on topics of interest as identified by community members
- Meetings advertised through Portfolio CoP listserv, TAG and OLT websites, word of mouth
- Has an online website

Ways to Cultivate CoPs: Small Group Discussion

- In a small group of 3-4 individuals, discuss the following (be prepared to share with the larger group)
 - ◆ What are some ways that we can cultivate CoPs within our institutions, units, departments, T & L centres, etc.?
 - ◆ What are some considerations in the cultivation of CoPs (theoretically and context-specific?)

Cultivating CoPs: Things to Consider

- Make clear the benefits of membership
- Use every opportunity to sign up new members; 'all are welcome'
- Keep lines of communication open – ways for you to contact them and them you
- Make it easy and transparent for members to leave a CoP if they choose
- Involve members in a variety of ways; (presenters, mini projects, etc.) their contribution is important
- Offer members *more* than you ask them to contribute

Cultivating CoPs Continued

Ways to develop CoPs:

- Cohort based, limited numbers, limited length
- Ongoing, people come and go, variety of activities and formats
- Standing open invitation across disciplines, levels, institutions, communities, etc.

Lessons Learned

- Importance of naming a CoP – one may already be in place, but has not yet been “named.”
- Importance of having a dedicated facilitator/co-ordinator – partnerships are also important.
- Importance of involving many different “roles”, as opposed to a flat structure (goal is to facilitate leadership within the community, not only among co-ordinator/facilitator)
- Need to balance “experts” with newcomers
- Prepare for an ongoing flux of community members

Applicability of CoPs to Your Setting(s): Small Group Discussion

In a different small group of 3-4 people, discuss the following:

1. How might the concept of CoPs, apply to your context or setting?
2. What might the benefits be of developing a CoP, in your context or setting?

References

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