Transformative Communities of Practice

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The term Community of Practice (CoP) is attributed to Lave and Wenger (1991) but when searching the term, we find that it was also use by Brown and Duguid (1991), Orr (1990) and earlier by Constant (1987). Lave and Wenger (1991) describe the term as a social learning theory. Wenger has continued the work and created a guide with McDermott and Snyder (2002). They note that Communities of Practice contain three components: domain, community, and practice. A domain in a Community of Practice (CoP) is not just a group that shares a common interest, but one that is committed to the interest. In other words, you must be willing to work toward that interest. Community implies that you engage with the group in common activities and work together, share information and help each other to achieve a common interest or goal. Practice means that all the members are practitioners, in our case educators, students or administrators. All CoPs must have these three components.

CoPs have continued to be of great interest to broad communities. The Learning Communities Journal (http://celt.miamioh.edu/lcj/) featured a special themed issue about Student and Faculty Learning Communities and Communities of Practice. And Canada's own Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Annotated Literature Database includes an entry about CoPs (Check it out at: https://researchsotl.wordpress.com/2016/05/26/communities-of-practice-cop/ and browse for more topics at the home page.)

In this dedicated issue to CoPs, you will read how colleagues have established and sustained CoPs of various kinds, and how they have helped us reflect on teaching and learning. You will see examples of CoPs for faculty, for graduate students, for undergrads as part of courses. And, adding to our brief overview of terms and references, we thank Jordanne Christie for the broader literature review in her article about the role of CoPs for technology integration. It is our sincere hope that the stories in this special issue will inspire you to join or start a community of practice.

References

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