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Communities of practice and professional development

UTS

THINK.CHANGE.DO

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WHY THE INTEREST – Setting the Scene (cont)

- > Revision of Professional Doctorates – Doctor of Nursing, Doctor of Midwifery, and Doctor of Health Services
 - > Candidates enrol / progress through the doctorate as a cohort – point of difference with candidates doing a PhD
 - > Share 4 subjects throughout candidature

WHY THE INTEREST – Setting the Scene (cont)

- > Assume that they will have similar developmental and support needs
- > **Concern**
 - > Want interaction around assessment and aspects of the dissertation
 - > How to engage them in meaningful ways – busy professional life, family, very task focussed

WHY THE INTEREST – Setting the Scene (cont)

- > Professional Doctorate
 - > Core interest in practice / professional development, and transformation of both the person and the field
 - > Graduates need to operate in an arena which spans organisations and hierarchies
 - > Have to be e-literate and have the capacity to lead change (both as a requirement of the doctorate and as graduates)

Transformation?

- > If the goal of a professional doctorate is:
 - > TRANSFORMATION OF THE FIELD
 - > TRANSFORMATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL

- > Problem of representation – how to show this transformation?

- > Problem of legitimacy – how is it evaluated?

Interaction - with whom and to what end?

AND

- > How do we interact with students around issues of transformation of person and field?
- > Are these interaction part of, or separate from other relationships – supervisory or collegial or peer interactions?
- > How do we get them interacting?
- > Context of such interactions?

Appropriate process / forum for interaction?

- > Community of Practice?
- > Discussion Board / Blogs & Wikis / Listserves?
 - > Probably the easiest
- > Action Learning Sets
 - > Collaborative change endeavour
- > E-Portfolios?
 - > Is it interaction?

> No answers yet

Community of Practice (CoP)

- > Medium for collaborative interaction and knowledge generation / co-construction
- > Community
 - > Group of individuals who share a common interest, identity and/or territory
 - > Group – implies – cooperation and collaboration
- > Practice
 - > What they interact about – the focus of the community



Context

Virtual v Real

Within or Without an Organisation

Local National International

Context – (Caterpillar Inc)

- > Not formal structures like project teams or working groups
- > Exist in the mind of the members – connections, relationships and shared problems are the glue
- > Efficient tools for knowledge generation and sharing – competitive advantage embedded in tacit knowledge
- > Caterpillar has 600 online communities involving 15000 people worldwide

> **Ardichvili et al (2003)**

Context – (Caterpillar Inc)

- > Formed by employee initiative not by design
- > Competencies do not exist apart from the people who develop them, skills discursively produced / disseminated
- > Vibrant = active participation in knowledge sharing activities:
 - > Live chats
 - > Q&A sessions
 - > Giving and receiving asynchronous feedback on postings etc
- > **Ardichvili et al (2003)**

About Communities of Practice (CoP)

- > CoPs learn through the act of social participation and engagement
 - > Situated learning – (one of the) theoretical basis
 - > Individual as learner \longrightarrow learning as participation in social world
 - > Knowledge as negotiation
- > Role development
 - > interpreted within a group model as a social process
- > Professional space / arena
 - > Where specialists debate, exchange ideas and evidence, and construct knowledge

Communities of Practice (CoP) & Knowledge

- > Tacit knowledge – personal and implicit to practice
 - > Emergent understandings can be explored (TRUST)
- > Contextualised learning / Situated learning
 - > Addresses problem of relevance
 - > Provides the big picture to the individual elements
- > Local knowledge
 - > Not always well regarded but ...
 - > If useful to the community counts as knowledge
- > Professional identity / role identity

Utility of Community of Practice

- “Community Engagement” is something of an imperative for academics at the moment
 - Ideal interface for practitioner / academic interaction
 - CoP involving the Academy and Prof Doc students, new graduates, PG students, practitioners etc is a way that academics can make a real community contribution
 - The gulf between the classroom and the clinic – CoP can blur the line of distinction and distance
 - A medium for engagement – participatory and collaborative

Utility of Community of Practice

- Opportunity for expert clinical nurses (knowledge worker) to influence practice and education through CoP
 - Mentorship / internship
- Practice development and professional development outcomes
 - Serious contribution to issues of professional and practical concern
 - Develop and maintain a sense of professional “belonging”

Possible positive outcomes

- Practitioners / professionals who feel supported in their professional commitment
- Confidence in ability to conduct themselves in their work
- Offset the demoralisation and isolation
- RECLAIM nursing

Barriers to participation / sharing

> Why share

- > Knowledge as public good – not personally owned
- > Establish self as expert

> Why not share

- > NOT about “information hoarding” or private asset
- > May not “deserve” to post
- > Fear of criticism
- > Not completely accurate or mislead, let colleagues down
- > Have not earned to right

Ardichvili et al (2003)

ISSUES

- > How instigated
 - > Peer instigated and peer sustained?
 - > Interesting v instrumental concerns
 - > Mandated \longrightarrow Cynical?
- > How to effect participation and to build connectivity
- > Coerced interaction
 - > Management goals in tension with professional, practice and personal goals (possibly)
- > Requires commitment



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