

Running head: ONLINE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

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Online Communities of Practice for Educators

Introduction

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a comprised of a group of people who learn how to construct knowledge, and share a concern of similar interest with a common goal, by interacting consistently to advance a realm of proficiency in a specific practice (Wenger-Trayner, 2011, December 28). With this in mind, the purpose of this report paper is to discuss a successful online community of practice (OCoP); its history; what makes OCoP successful; and what distance education (DE) theories contribute to the success of OCoP. The report paper also discusses how this OCoP functions and contributes to learning and building knowledge. The Online Communities of Practice for Educators (OCoPfe) is one of the most successful OCoP. The OCoPfe is successful because it consists of educators who use networking technologies to effectively collaborate and communicate more efficiently about a similar interest with a common goal about a specific concern of the community.

Running head: ONLINE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Background and History

The OCoPFEs existed for over three years, several educators and stakeholders globally, have contributed numerous professional development and educational opportunities with diverse and engaging activities to stakeholders (Connected Educators, 2016). The OCoPFEs is supported by the American Institute for Research, Powerful Learning Practice, and Grunwald Associates LLC. The vision of OCoPFEs is to: reach the connected educators on a monthly basis by growing a global coalition of education stakeholder group and partners; acquire sufficient resources to achieve year-round sustainability; influence the way professional learning takes place in and out of schools; and foster collaboration and innovation within and between education stakeholder groups and partners (Connected Educators, 2016). As a result, the mission and goals of the program is to create a more globally connected evidence-based movement that fosters collaboration and innovation to transform professional learning and effective educational change (Connected Educators, 2016). In addition video materials and websites were developed to highlight and celebrate the success of the OCoPFEs.

The Success of the OCoPFEs

The OCoPFEs is a successful community of practice because it connects with a considerable amount of educators around the world. These educators use networking technologies to effectively collaborate and communicate more efficiently about a similar interest with a common goal about a specific concern of the community (Connected Educators, 2016). In addition, the educators are experts who incorporate pedagogical skills and inspire learning and innovation practices to encourage creative, critical thinking, communication, and collaborative skills for global learners.

Running head: ONLINE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The CoP is inseparable with the connectivism and constructivism practices, because of the similarities between the two practices and their direct correlation to the CoP. In this view, the learners can use their prior knowledge with their inquiry knowledge to develop their learning and innovation skills. The connectivism and constructivism practices also create learning opportunities for learners to collaborate and communicate in diverse learning environments (Siemens, 2004).

Function and Purpose

A CoP can be successful if its purpose is achieved with regards to developing new knowledge (Harasim, 2012, p. 150). With this in mind, the OCoPFEs creates an archive of recent articles with relevant data for educators to read and become more knowledgeable about current policy and other pertinent information. In addition, the OCoPFEs also creates discussion forums for their members to collaborate and communicate on similar interest and common goals (Connected Educators, 2016). Some on the discussions are based on the theories of best practices, education improvement, and other policies that educators need to incorporate in their strategies to enhance their pedagogical skills to develop new knowledge.

Learning and Building Knowledge

Education with learning and building knowledge is one of the best investments for human life. According to Wenger-Trayner (2011, December 28) the CoP is comprised of a group of people who learn how to develop knowledge, and share a concern of a similar interest with a common goal, by interacting consistently in a specific practice. In this view, the OCoPFEs

Running head: ONLINE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

continues to sustain its mission and goals of the program, by allowing the members of a community to collaborate and communicate about a specific topic of interest (Downes, 2005).

The Monitoring and Assessment Approach

In order for a CoP to be successful, it is fundamental for the CoP to sustain their mission, vision, and goals. Thus, the community needs to ensure that all the members are actively involved in appropriate activities that will benefit the community. The CoP will have representatives to monitor the community projects and ensure that the educators incorporate relevant learning activities in their projects. In addition, the representatives are expected to encourage community members to use their pedagogical skills to create and develop more advance strategies that would further develop the mission, vision, and goals of a successful CoP (Connected Educators, 2016).

Conclusion

The OCoPfes is a successful CoP because it creates a universal environment for people to meet, organize, learn and share information about a similar interest and a common goal. The OCoPfes also creates virtual opportunities for learners, educators, professionals, and other stakeholders to collaborate, communicate, and share a concern of a similar interest with a common goal in a specific practice. In this view, the OCoPfes continues to successfully sustain its mission, vision, and goals of the program that uphold the purpose of a CoP.

Running head: ONLINE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

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