The Culture of Learning of Digital Library Professionals in Europe: A Study of Digital Libraries' Communities of Practice

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Outline

- Background & Context
  - Communities of Practice (CoPs) in Retrospect
  - Studies on DL CoPs
  - Learning Culture
- Research Aim & Objectives
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusions

CoPs in Retrospect

- The concept has been prevalent in medicine, law, psychology, education, and theology for quite some time as early as 1864 (Wallace, 2007, p. 38).

- Was coined by Lave and Wenger in 1991 and developed extensively by Wenger in 1998 (Fuller, Hodkinson, & Hodkinson, 2005).

- Was popularized by Brown and Duguid since 1996, following their analysis of Orr's ethnographic study of Xerox technicians (Hara, Shachaf, & Stoerger, 2009).

CoPs in Retrospect… 2

- Since the beginning of history, human beings have formed communities that share cultural practices reflecting their collective learning… Participating in these 'communities of practice' is essential to our learning. It is at the very core of what makes us human beings capable of meaningful knowing (Wenger, 2000, p. 229).

Studies on DL CoPs

- These studies have been focus on:
  - Social aspects of DL (Bishop et al., 2000; 2003),
  - Decision-making process (Oguz, 2007),
  - Collaboration (Oguz, Marsh & Landis, 2010), and
  - Community building (Worrall, 2010).

The role of CoPs has not been a focus of DL research even though some influential researchers in the field have addressed this concept directly or indirectly in discussions of DLs (Borgman & Marchioni cited in Oguz , 2007).

Studies on DL CoPs... 2

- Organizations operating in DL which can be characterized as CoPs (Oguz, 2007):
  - some of them refer to themselves as CoPs (i.e. Semantic Interoperability (XML Web Services) Community of Practice);
  - others prefer to call themselves communities with an interest to specific aspect of the field though their goal and activities fit the description of a CoP (i.e. Z39.50 International Next Generation (ZING) Forum and Digital Library Federation (DLF))

Studies on DL CoPs...3

- Organizations operating in DL...
  - some have well-defined domain but itself is a network that aims to integrate and coordinate the DL research efforts carried out by the major digital library research teams (i.e. The Network of Excellence on Digital Libraries (DELOS); and
  - others play an important roles both in building and cultivating the CoPs in the DL field, and such meetings serve as a breeding ground for future collaboration in DL development efforts (i.e. Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). (Oguz, 2007, p. 51)

Studies on DL CoPs... 4

- DL CoPs may represent a variety of backgrounds and organizations in which it will be comprised of experts in the interdisciplinary fields of information and computer science.

Learning Culture

- The community creates the social fabric of learning (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, p. 28).

- Learning occurs not inside the mind of the individuals, but rather in the fields of social interaction between people (Hanks, 1991 cited in (Coburn & Stein, 2006).

- This study is anchored on Lave and Wenger (1991) situated learning theory.

Learning Culture…2

- Learning culture can be defined as an embodiment of or a set of beliefs, norms, and behaviors of individuals and groups in a community of practitioners which nurtures learning through collective discovery, sharing, and application of knowledge (Batiancila, 2011).

Research Aim & Objectives

- This investigation sought to find out the role of CoPs in the development of a learning culture among DL professionals. Furthermore, it sought to determine the success and hindering factors in the development of learning culture in DL CoPs.

Methods

- Philosophical view :   Interpretivist

- Methodological approach: Qualitative research

- Data gathering strategy: Semi-structured interview

- Sampling strategy: Non-probability sampling   (Snowball sampling)

- The data were analyzed based on five steps thematic analysis of Peterson et al. (1994)

Results... 5

Modes of Learning in CoPs and its Learning Climate

- The study revealed that formal learning also takes place in CoPs through joint summer schools, workshops, mentorships, conferences and formal meetings.

- However, most of the time learning in CoPs usually occurs informally and primarily through information sharing, e-mail discussion lists, exchanging best practices, study tours, online discussions as well as face-to-face discussions.
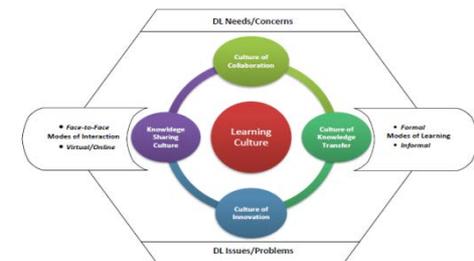
Results

- ***Learning Climate in DL CoPs***

- The interviewees indicated that there is a positive, friendly, collaborative, very accessible or open, relaxed and not competitive environment.

- Thus, this learning climate help flourish the development of both formal and informal learning environment of which every members are accumulating knowledge through their interaction and become informally bound by the value that they found in learning together.
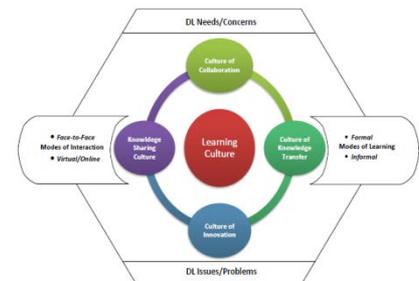
Results

Practices that Fosters a Culture of Learning in DL CoPs

- The study revealed that this formal and informal learning are characterized by four distinct cultures that foster a culture of learning:

    - knowledge sharing culture;

    - culture of collaboration;

   - knowledge transfer culture; and

    - culture of innovation.
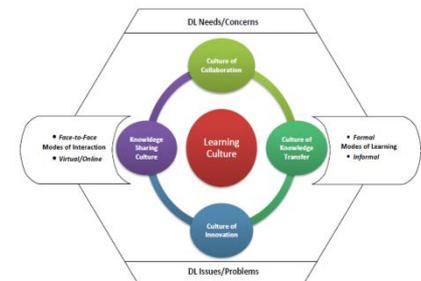
Results

Practices that Fosters a Culture of Learning in DL CoPs
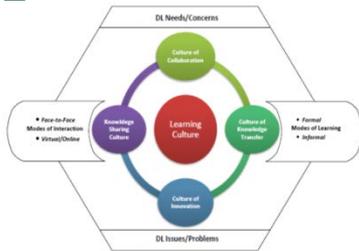
- That **knowledge sharing culture** creates a practice of open sharing where there is the presence of high level professionals that are willing to share their experiences.

- That what brought CoPs' members together is their interest on common activities and on gaining new learning experience through **mutual engagement and collaborative learning**.

- That through this interaction, **knowledge is communicated, acquired, and use in generating new ideas, creation, invention or developing new product**.

- That DL CoPs have facilitated the development of new DL services and in developing new applications and software prototypes. Thus, CoPs have brought the **culture of innovation and creativity**.

Results... 7

- ***Success or hindering factors in developing a culture of learning in DL CoPs***
  - That there are three critical success factors in creating a learning culture in CoPs such as:
    - Human behavior-related factor include: attitude towards knowledge sharing such as motivation, open-mindedness and willingness to share, trust and professionalism
    - Organizational factor include: shared vision or values, sense of belongingness and leadership
    - Technological factor – having efficient technology

Results... 8

- ***Success or hindering factors in developing a culture of learning in DL CoPs***

  - That there are four hindering factors or barriers in creating a learning culture in CoPs such as:

    - Attitude towards knowledge sharing such as monopoly in information or knowledge sharing by few individuals and passivism among members

    - Culture-related challenges include: not open or not culturally closed to colleagues, having different understanding on doing business (cultural biased or cultural inferiority) and having cultural differences

    - Language limitation

    - Time

Conclusions

- Through the literature review, it emerged that there have not been studies that specifically discuss the development of learning culture in DL CoPs.

- The findings of the study indicated that there is a strong culture of learning among DL professionals which is characterized by the four distinct cultures of practices – knowledge sharing culture, culture of collaboration, knowledge transfer culture and the culture of innovation.

Conclusions

- Furthermore, this culture of learning once cultivated will bring forth remarkable results to both personal/professional and at organizational level. It will also lead to increase in productivity and on developing innovative products and services in the DL field.

- The current research has shed light on the emergence of CoPs in the field of DL and may pave the way to a new understanding on how learning culture is created. Hence, CoPs are becoming a new means of strengthening the organizations' strategic relevance and in enhancing individuals' professional and working life

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