

DTEC TEA I Cohort CoP Webinar Series

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Communities of Practice: Sharing and Building Knowledge

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What is a Community of Practice?

CoPs are “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, a passion about a topic (related to what you do), and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis”.

- Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4

Three critical characteristics of CoP

- 1) the domain (topic or theme to be addressed and advanced);
- 2) the community (members motivated by a community with mutual interest in the domain); and
- 3) the practice (ideas, tools, expertise, knowledge, and shared resources that serve to move the field of inquiry forward).

- Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002

What Makes a CoP Unique?

- A CoP is much more informal than a work group or task force.
- Members of CoPs are not typically assigned, but join based on their interest in the domain and their ability to contribute to the practice.
- Participants may volunteer or be assigned to a task force, but the activity usually has a specific predetermined goal and a projected time of existence (Nickols, 2003).
- Together, the members of the community share their expertise and mutual understanding about the domain to develop greater knowledge and build the practice.
- CoPs they create connections among people across organizational and geographic boundaries (Wenger, 1998).
- Are mostly focused on one primary area.

Benefits of CoPs

- The purpose is not to teach novices, but to build on the cumulative knowledge of members around the topic and bring their practice to a new level.
- This will ensure that knowledge to address concerns or issues regarding the topic increases.
- It also allows the opportunity to practice the knowledge learned and implement strategies suggested by the CoP.

How Are CoPs Useful?

- The experiential knowledge that an individual develops over time and through a variety of experiences, places, and activities can be profoundly useful in his or her own particular setting.
- By building on its members' shared knowledge, a CoP can be useful in developing new ideas and new strategies.
- To a balanced focus on learning, planning, doing, reflecting, and improving, with a special emphasis on doing
- Focuses on a spirit of collaboration through a network of colleagues

References

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Understanding Mental Health in an Ecological Context: Exploring Strategies to Support Our Youth



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