

Assignment 4 OCoP

Classroom2.0.com

by Heather Michel

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Classroom2.0.com

Classroom2.0.com is a successful educational online community ⁵ of practice.

³ Communities of practice (CoPs) are groups of people who are active practitioners in their shared profession and ³ who “come together intentionally, actively, and regularly for mutual gain and collective value” (Harasim, 2012, p. 150). The CoP ² concept was first proposed by cognitive anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991 (“Community of Practice”, n.d.) and has now extended past physical settings into virtual ones. Online CoPs typically meet regularly via discussion boards, newsgroups, webinars, and other Web 2.0 group collaboration tools. Educators have taken advantage of the opportunity afforded by OCoPs to network and collaborate in creating mindsets of best practices for teaching since the Global Educators’ Network was launched in 1999. Classroom2.0.com is one of the educators’ OCoPs that has grown to become extremely successful, as measured by professional growth of the teachers, motivation, collaboration, and social presence (“Community of Practice”, n.d.). OCoPs are known by several names; educators typically use the term Professional Learning Network or Personal Learning Network (PLN). Thus, Classroom2.0.com is known to be a high quality PLN recommended by many for teachers’ professional support and development (Bernard, 2011; Trust, 2012a).

History

The OCoP known as Classroom2.0.com is a PLN of educators, learners, and leaders interested in informally learning ⁶ Web 2.0, social media, and participative technologies for use in education (Whitby, 2015). This includes people ¹ from the school, library, museum, work, adult, online, non-traditional and home learning worlds, as listed by Hargadon (2015b).

Classroom2.0.com was built on the Ning social networking platform in March 2007 by Steve Hargadon, reached 2537 members 5 months later, and now boasts over 83,000 members from 200 countries (Hargadon, 2015b). It consists of discussion forums, groups of interest, weekly webinar recordings, personal pages for blogs, and a new addition as of 2014: The Learning Revolution Project. Hargadon, the founder of Classroom2.0.com, has essentially let the PLN grow on its own since 2014, turning his attention to The Learning Revolution Project and his full speaking schedule. There was a category called PicLits embedded within Classroom2.0.com soon after its conception, but it died away in 2013 even after the Classroom2.0.com EdIncubator group brainstormed on May 2, 2012 concerning a way to save it. PicLits had been a creative writing site that matched beautiful images with keywords to capture the meaning of the picture (Hargadon, 2015b).

Success from Theory

Classroom2.0.com is successful because it, like UMUC, follows the advice of the best teachings practices that it advocates. Standards are held high when a project is created to teach teachers how to teach better. Every detail of the project will be scrutinized by those who are experts at grading deliverables. The participation of educators interested in professional development also ensures high quality as they are conscious that other members are subconsciously evaluating every contribution even as they are consciously creating knowledge discriminately. The high standards continue to attract a large number of members with a broad range of perspectives and experiences to share. As Siemens (2004) said, “learning and knowledge rests in a diversity of opinions” (Connectivism section). The success of Classroom2.0.com rests on a wide foundation of best teaching practices from a range of theories,

both in its resources for professional development and in its practical applications of those practices.

Distance education learning theories usually work together in varying amounts to contribute to learning opportunities, and OCoPs generally fit into this expectation. Specifically, Classroom2.0.com utilizes techniques derived from many theories to sustain and grow its success. Online collaborative learning appears in the building of knowledge by the members of interest groups and by the discussion forum participants. Constructivism shows itself in the professional growth attained by frequent participants as they construct their own knowledge of participative educational technologies using information from Classroom2.0.com and apply it effectively in their teaching. Connectivism, not necessarily a learning theory but certainly at least a 21st century learning technique, is exemplified in the interactions amongst PLN members and between members and the numerous technologies they learn. Cognitivism materializes during Classroom2.0 LIVE weekly webinars in which an expert in some technology presents that technology for participants to learn. All of these learning theories combine to support Classroom2.0.com's current success.

Function

Classroom2.0.com basically functions as a professional support group. When an educator needs support in terms of technology issues ranging from lesson planning with technology to encountering glitches while using technology, s/he can post the need in a group discussion or the open discussion forum. With so many members situated across the globe, there is likely to be someone who can contribute a good solution in a short amount of time. "Instead of waiting for a scheduled workshop, educators can seek help using their PLNs and enjoy immediate responses

that pool the collective knowledge of network members” (Trust, 2012b, para. 11). There are many examples of this included on members’ blogs (Hargadon, 2015b).

Learning and Building Knowledge

Classroom2.0.com intentionally commits to building the field of knowledge about best teaching practices in education. It employs those best practices in its own delivery in order to enhance learning to the maximum extent. “Whether it’s coming up with fresh ideas for lesson plans and classroom activities, seeking mentorship and support from veteran educators, or cultivating resources for technology integration or for meeting state standards, teachers need one another’s expertise” (Bernard, 2011, para. 2). To contribute to learning and building knowledge, Classroom2.0.com has active discussions, lively groups, and weekly webinars on topics in the practical application of technology innovation in learning (Bianchini, 2007). A member has the opportunity to access the members list, ⁴ chat instantly with other members, add colleagues as friends, create profile pages, and view and/or add to blogs and photo/video bulletin boards as well (Trust, 2012b). Part of Classroom2.0.com, “the Learning Revolution Project holds online and physical learning events, and highlights professional development opportunities from a network of 200 partners in the learning professions” (Hargadon, 2015a, para. 1).

Assessing Success

There are many way to measure the success of a collaborative group. In an OCoP it makes sense to track growth of membership, level of member activity and participation, intellectual activities, social presence, professional growth, motivation, and collaboration, among other factors. Classroom2.0.com seems to be successful by all these criteria, some of which were measured by self-reporting while others were tracked and recorded officially, like growth of

membership (Hargadon, 2015b). ³ According to Harasim (2012), “a key indicator of the success of an online community is active and sustained engagement by the members” (p. 163). This could be monitored by automatically counting how many messages are read and written by each member over certain timeframes, both in the forums and in the groups. Also, the live participants at the weekly webinars could be counted as could the number of members who watch recorded webinars. Member activity extends into intellectual activities through “contributions to the sustenance, stability and growth of the community” (Harasim, 2012, p. 163). Social presence exists in various types of discourse. Social discourse shows the formation of relationships between members while intellectual discourse gives evidence of the effectiveness of the professional growth that is the shared goal of the members. Motivation is probably best assessed through self-reporting surveys while collaboration can be measured by the value of new ideas that are generated in the interactions amongst members and between the members and the technology they are working on learning.

Conclusion

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