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Communities of Practice (CoP) in Early Learning and Education

Annotated Bibliography

SSHRC Ideas Connect

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A collection of summaries in the form of annotations on articles discussing Communities of Practice (CoP) in the Early Years sector intended to inform the community and inspire discussion.

Table of Contents

(Listed by article title, sorted by author last name)

Communities of Practice: Engagement, Imagination, and Alignment in Research on Teacher Education.....	3
Building Communities of Practice: Creating Small Learning Communities of School Leaders that Support Teacher Development as a Transformational Effect on Student Achievement	6
Using Wenger's Communities of Practice to Explore a New Teacher Cohort.....	9
Creating Communities of Practice	11
Creating a Culture of Research in Teacher Education: Learning Research within Communities of Practice.....	13
Teacher Learning via Communities of Practice: A Malaysian Case Study.....	15
Using a Wiki in a Community of Practice to Strengthen K-12 Education	19
A Study of Social Participation and Knowledge Sharing in the Teachers' Online Professional Community of Practice.....	21
Investigating the Community of Practice of World Language Educators on Twitter.....	23

Title:

Communities of Practice: Engagement, Imagination, and Alignment in Research on Teacher Education

Citation:

Au, K. H. (2002). Communities of Practice: Engagement, Imagination, and Alignment in Research on Teacher Education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(3), 222-227.

Summary (highlights of the article):

Au (2002) has conducted research that focuses on creating a system that would support the learning of teachers that come from a disadvantaged area of Hawaii called Leeward Coast. She wanted her research to emerge positive change in this small community that would eventually expand to the larger community.

Au's (2002) research objective is to improve the schooling experiences for members of a Hawaiian community by preparing teachers to be able to work in many different types of working environments, such as in educational settings ranging from low to high income statuses. Au (2002) believes that there needs to be emerged collaboration between the educators and the community. To foster this collaboration, Au (2002) took into perspective the work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice* (CoP) (1998). According to Lave and Wenger (1998), CoP allow members to form their identity and inspire individuals to learn, while also taking into consideration the different types of learning people have and the differing communities that people are coming from. Through this lens, Au (2002) develops research on teacher education in diverse communities, which can potentially improve both theory and practice for educators. Within this CoP, members must be committed to improving school experiences in diverse communities. This commitment requires involvement and strong interactions with all members of the community. Though these members may have different backgrounds of education, they must share a common interest, which is to better the education system within their community. Au (2002) incorporates Lave and Wenger's (1998) perspectives of effective use of CoP in understanding her research. Au (2002) was informed by studying the work of Lave and Wenger (1998) that there are different kinds of CoP. Au (2002) became aware that each person comes from their own personal CoP, and therefore contains a wealth of

knowledge and experience to share with the larger community. Different perspectives used in collaborative efforts like CoP have the potential to inform research later on in developing new theories or practices within the field.

Au (2002) continues to discuss which areas of Lave and Wenger's (1998) research she used in order to inform her research of the cohort of student teachers she was working with. Having a variance in backgrounds allows members to gain different perspectives and ideas that may contribute to enhanced practices. In some cases, it may seem members of the same background will not be able to produce significant progress; however, it may be that these groups can generate better solutions than with members of different backgrounds and build trusting relationships.

There are three research modes Au (2002) used to inform her research. These modes were developed by Wenger (1998) in order to reinforce what belonging feels and looks like in a learning environment while also using this model as a way to build trust and meaningful relationships within the community. These three modes assisted in supporting the identity formation of the Hawaiian student teachers in Au's (2002) research.

The first mode of belonging according to Wenger (1998) is engagement. Wenger (1998) explains that engagement occurs between the members of a community that are attempting to figure out a way to understand certain ideas, practices, and roles by working together. In Au's (2002) research, engagement consisted of building a CoP with the teachers in the community that had common goals for common gains and mutual understandings for the outcomes of these goals. For example, one goal could be improving community involvement within the school system.

The second mode is imagination. According to Wenger (1998), imagination is creating a source of inspiration and making connections to past, present and future images of the community. Au (2002) was able to bring historical background about the community she was research in regards to how schools were taught in the past and providing context to how the education system had changed to what it was in the present day. By conducting this research, Au (2002) was able to provide an understanding of the community to the members participating in the CoP in order to inspire the teachers to take pride in their work out of respect for past native heritage teachers, who were slowly suppressed by western culture. This research inspired a new way for the CoP to imagine how they want their future education system to look by incorporating what is important to their local culture into their teachings.

The third mode is alignment, which Wenger (1998) defines as community members offering expertise and focus to support and improve the wider community and organizations. In Au's (2002) research, she came to an understanding that inspiration for change needed to be evoked for the teachers in order for them to become passionate about taking action to make improvements that needed to be made in their community. Au (2002) researched how important relationships were within the community in order to align the members of the community to make the changes needed that made sense to the realities of the community needs.

Au (2002) concludes by stating that to improve schooling in diverse communities, a different approach needs to be taken in order to inspire positive change. This approach should involve interaction between community members and using Wenger's (1998) CoP three mode model in order to assist in supporting and building those relationships. Au (2002) mentions the importance that CoP can have on making community members feel like they belong, and that engaged members can create lasting relationships within a community. Au's (2002) research has allowed for a deeper understanding of how members participating as a part of a CoP can develop significant research to further inform theory and practice for the education system.

Key Messages:

- Took CoP perspective to apply to schooling experiences.
- Found each person comes from their own CoP and contains knowledge and experience to share with the larger community.
- Variance in backgrounds allows for different perspectives and ideas which can contribute to enhanced practices.
- Making community members feel involved.

Title:

Building Communities of Practice: Creating Small Learning Communities of School Leaders that Support Teacher Development as a Transformational Effect on Student Achievement

Citation:

Bloom, G., & Stein, R. (2004). Building Communities of Practice: Creating Small Learning Communities of School Leaders that Support Teacher Development as a Transformational Effect on Student Achievement. *Leadership*, 34(1), 20-22.

Summary (highlights of the article):

Bloom and Stein (2004) have investigated the importance that communities of practice (CoP) have in enhancing educational settings and the professionals associated with those settings. They have discovered that there are major benefits that have evolved due to educators participating in CoP. These benefits include:

- Increased educator retention
- Increased student achievement
- A sense of collaboration between the educators
- Positive public perception of the school
- Positive impact on educator productivity
- Improved pedagogical knowledge for educators, and
- Improved interpersonal skills between educators (Bloom & Stein, 2004, p. 20).

It is shown that when educators taking pride in their work and staying current with the changes happening in their profession, students and the educational settings begin to achieve and thrive due to the positive influence of the educators. This influence is inspired by educators sharing their work and working together regularly to assess their student's progress, share strategies and resources, and collaborate with each other.

Through support of administration, educators are able to enhance their teaching abilities in different ways that assist in positively changing their learning environments to not only benefit themselves, but also the students and the school community. Bloom and Stein (2004) mention

that by administrators developing an environment set up for success, educators will feel more comfortable in exploring new teaching styles. Setting up the environment for success can include administrators continuously being supportive of their educators, designing achievable goals for educators to accomplish, and participating in administrative professional development with the educators to develop a trusting community. CoP assist in making these aspirations realities because they offer conversation that continuously enhance professional development between all colleagues who participate in the CoP. Bloom and Stein (2004) stress the importance of having strong leadership throughout the process of a CoP, as a strong leader can assist in answering or guiding difficult questions asked in the collaborative group.

Within a CoP, participants become exposed to new research, perspectives, and methods. Bloom and Stein (2004) offer a six step model that assists in the CoP process which consists of:

1. Sessions are focused and happen on a monthly or quarterly basis in order to maintain the commitment to the professional development of the educators and other professionals involved;
2. Participants in the CoP are being exposed to new and current research and practices that are evolving their profession in order to stay current and hash out any struggles that may be preventing them from being successful in their work environment;
3. Participants are applying what is taught and suggested in the CoP into their everyday practice and then revisit these strategies in a follow-up CoP. These new practices that the educators try would have the option of being observed and recorded in order to help inform the CoP about the experience;
4. All administration and in-centre staff are involved in the CoP in order to gain multiple perspectives and develop an understanding of inter-professional work;
5. A follow up administration input session is scheduled with small groups that continuously consist of the same individuals in order to develop positive and trusting relationships. These sessions are to assist in providing advice or having quick conversations about acute concerns or struggles that can be addressed right away or brought up at a later CoP;

6. Administration follows the protocol which describes the pre visit, the visit, and the post visit conditions and then later compares to how the educators are displaying practices found in current research (Bloom & Stein, 2004, p. 21).

By engaging in strategies such as administrative observation and inter-professional collaboration in CoP, teams of educators are able to assist one another in dissecting the information gathered in those processes. Educators are also able to reflect on their experiences and ask for feedback with regards to their practice in the field. This new knowledge gained from resources offered in a CoP can easily be applied into practice with support from administration and colleagues.

Bloom and Stein (2004) were able to have educators access an in-service practicum program that acts as a community of practice using the six step model. There was a total of 84 percent of participants that revealed they benefited from this program (Bloom & Stein, 2004, p. 22). The participants declared that they have changed many of their practices as a result of the collaboration they were a part of and that it was one of the best learning experiences they ever had. Bloom and Stein (2004) explain that CoP between educators that teach any grade-level allow participants to benefit from new pedagogy they are not familiar with. Bloom and Stein (2004) explain that CoP have the ability to create professional working environments that offer the ability to learn and grow within the field while creating opportunities for professionals to learn from one another in collaborative ways.

Key Messages:

- Investigated importance that CoP has in enhancing Educational settings and the professionals associated.
- Major benefits evolved.
- Six step model that assists in CoP process.

Title:

Using Wenger's Communities of Practice to Explore a New Teacher Cohort

Citation:

Cuddapah, J. L., & Clayton, C. D. (2011). Using Wenger's Communities of Practice to Explore a New Teacher Cohort. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(1), 62-75.

Summary (highlights of the article):

Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) conducted this CoP study that involved new teachers experiencing the educational field. These new teachers are feeling pressure to do well because they feel that they are being viewed and judged by experienced teachers who have been in the field for longer periods of time. These newer teachers are feeling that they need to prove themselves and conform to old practice because that's how "things have always been done", thus leading to higher staff turnover due to lower job satisfaction.

The new teachers in this CoP study were willing to put in extended time to enhance their teaching abilities outside of their work day. In this CoP, members gather together to address various topics including: classroom management, teaching resources, working with caregivers, motivating learners, and literacy (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011). This CoP was called The Beginning Teacher Program (BTP). This program allows professionals from across the sector to collaborate with each other to develop best practices through collaborative discussions about their experiences in the field. In the BTP, an important element for the CoP to be successful was that a community needed to be created between the participants attending the CoP. An emphasis of connection to one another needed to be reinforced with support of experienced educators who have experienced the changing field. Through research, Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) found that group conversations between educators with little experience and educators with more experience is important for knowledge sharing, and supporting educators of similar professional backgrounds. It was also found to be beneficial if the educators were able to meet in their educational environments so that they were able to comfortably express their concerns and needs in a place of familiarity.

In the BTP, participants collaborated with each other about best practices concerning classroom problems and successes. Through these conversations, members were able to test out various theories amongst the group, and find solutions for various dilemmas. For example, an individual would share a concern, which would lead to the group sharing practices to problem solve for the concern. The person with the concern would experiment with the problem solving solutions in their learning environment, and reflect on how the experience went in a follow up CoP (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011). After two months, members of the BTP felt comfortable with each other as they began to build trusting and honest relationships with one another. The BTP and similar CoPs have the ability to create atmospheres for educators to share concerns with each other, pose questions, and find solutions to improve their practices and further develop their professional identities (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011). Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) shine light on the fact that new teachers are coming into the field with a wealth on new knowledge and experience that are able to compliment exhibiting practices. These new teachers are able to invite new ways of thinking about how old practices can be transformed into new and meaningful experiences for all educators, professionals, and students that are connected to these learning environments.

Key Messages:

- CoP study involving new teachers
- Build trusting and honest relationships
- Invite new ways of thinking

Title:

Creating Communities of Practice

Citation:

Danielson, C. (2016). Communities of Practice. *Educational Leaders*, 73(8), 18-23.

Summary (highlights of the article):

Danielson (2016) explains that policies and teacher evaluation rating scales have put stress on teachers' abilities to perform and be self-fulfilled at work due to the competitiveness of the field and the constant system desire for the teacher to follow strict rules. These restrictions of policies do not always allow for creative learning, in which teachers have an expectation to function certain ways within the educational settings and do not have creative freedom to set up the environment that is best suited for their students.

Danielson (2016) continues to explain that communities of practice (CoP) can have the ability to create communities for educators to learn from each other, share knowledge, and improve their teaching skills in educational settings that may be restrictive to their teaching abilities. There are some guidelines that need to be implemented to create a CoP for educators. First, an organization or agency must create a welcoming environment where educators feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas in a non-judgmental space. However, educators must also be challenged and inspired to participate by investigating new or improved practices to use in their educational settings.

It is important for educators to become aware the CoP is intended to assist as a continuous resource that opens discussion to support one another within their educational settings. These discussions can range from a variety of topics not only focusing on what is happening in the classroom, but what is happening in administration and policies that are affecting the educators. Danielson (2016) offers that a CoP can have a facilitator to assist in encouraging CoP participants to share their best practices or dilemmas, and remind them that it is okay to ask for advice from one another. When educators ask for feedback or suggestions, they promote collaboration between members and provide opportunities for members to be engaged in the learning process. Danielson (2016) suggests providing educators of the same

grade level or department with common planning time to be able to collaborate with each other. Educators can use this time to examine new curriculum and how to implement practices within the classroom.

Danielson (2016) concludes that CoP should be used in the field to improve the work and skills of all educators instead of rating and ranking the educators performance within the classroom. By using a CoP approach, educators will be able to reflect easily on what is working and what needs change within their settings, and not have fear of what rating or ranking they would receive based on their performance.

Key Messages:

- CoP has ability to create communities for educators to learn from, share knowledge and improve teaching skills.
- Intended to assist as a continuous resource that opens discussion to support on another in an educational setting.

Title:

Creating a Culture of Research in Teacher Education: Learning Research within Communities of Practice

Citation:

Hill, M. F., & Haigh, M. A. (2012). Creating a Culture of Research in Teacher Education: Learning Research within Communities of Practice. *Studies in Higher Education, 37*(8), 971-988.

Summary (highlights of the article):

For teachers to remain current within the changing field, Hill and Haigh (2012) argue that educators need to begin taking initiative as researchers within their field of practice. By developing research skills, educators will be able to meet the standard requirements of professional development easily, broaden their knowledge regarding professional practices, and enhance their professional identity by engaging in conversations regarding their research. By engaging in these conversations, educators as researchers are building on professional relationships to break down tensions and barriers between professions within the field. These tensions can transpire from the assumptions of one profession holding greater knowledge about a topic over another profession due to qualifications.

Yet, it is difficult to develop a research culture within the early learning sector as many teachers, educators, and professionals have differing professional standards. Many professionals may have more advanced research capabilities than some teachers or educators and therefore can lead to future tensions and barriers. Teachers and educators are also usually involved with additional programs that can affect their abilities to conduct quality research as there may not be enough time, funding, quality resources, education regarding how to research, and poor environmental research culture in regards to support from colleagues or other professionals.

Hill and Haigh (2012) argue that building communities of practice (CoP) where teachers, educators, and other professionals can learn and grow together, will allow educators to become conductive and collaborative researchers. Hill and Haigh (2012) explain that for educators to be

competent researchers, we must build on knowledge about teacher education. Hill and Haigh (2012) propose communities of practice may be used to allow educators to become skillful in research practices through collaborative discussions posed throughout the CoP. Hill and Haigh (2012) explain, that CoP should allow educators to act as researchers by having meaningful conversations about their shared practices, experiences, and perspectives occurring within the field. Hill and Haigh (2012) explain acquiring skills for research occurs through research experiences with the right amount of support from colleagues, supervisors, and other professionals. With this support, educators are able to build on their new teacher-researcher identities and be comfortable with their abilities to apply new learned methods into practice.

Every CoP runs a risk of not becoming successful due to some struggles and limitations that arise around educators being able to attend a CoP. These struggles and limitations can include: high burnt out rates, participants feeling that there is a judgmental atmosphere, lack of trust between participants, lack of funding or promotion of CoP, and poor leadership between participants. These reasons can lead to failures of established CoP. A group that meets regularly and supports each other but has a low level of interaction between the participants and are unwilling to try suggested practices offered by other participants may fail. In order to prevent a research CoP from breaking down and being unsuccessful, it is important to build an atmosphere that inspires research within the working environment, establishes positive and professional working relationships with colleagues and peers, is passionate about the research (find an interest in how the topics relate to what is happening in the learning environments), and acknowledges the successes of colleagues while encouraging their capabilities to conduct meaningful research.

Key Messages:

- A CoP within educators can learn and grow together and allow them to be conductive and collaborative
- Meaningful conversations about shared practices, experiences and perspectives in the field.
- There are struggles with CoPs, but also benefits to a successful one.

Title:

Teacher Learning via Communities of Practice: A Malaysian Case Study

Citation:

Murugaiah, P., Azman, H., Thang, S. M., & Krish, P. (2012). Teacher Learning via Communities of Practice: A Malaysian Case Study. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 7(2), 162- 174.

Summary (highlights of the article):

According to Murugaiah et al. (2012), an effective learning environment relies on educators that can learn and understand the changing concepts of content and pedagogy. The research states that collaboration is key in educator learning, and it creates a stimulating learning community. Professional development programs can help achieve this collaborative community, where needs and experiences can be shared and discussed with peers and colleagues who can provide support. Through these opportunities, educators can build on their skills, ideas, and motivation.

Recent research shows that educator learning is an “active, constructive, collaborative and context-bound activity” (Murugaiah et al., 2012, p. 164). Educators need opportunities to share their experiences and knowledge in a social environment so that they can learn from each other. It has been proven that a change in knowledge ultimately leads to a change in practice.

According to Wenger, the creator of Communities of Practice (CoP), CoP consist of “groups of people who are interested in sharing their practice and learning how to improve it through regular interaction” (Murugaiah et al., 2012, p. 164). CoP have significantly evolved and now use technology to create online environments where professionals can share everyday problems, strategies, best practices, developments in the field, and professional development opportunities. According to Murugaiah et al. (2012), online CoP work best in smaller groups. If the group gets too large it can create a bystander effect, where participants are less likely to help under the belief that someone else in the group will.

Murugaiah et al. (2012) then discuss the Malaysian context, stating that online CoP are not yet widely used. This study states the focus for professional development is on face-to-face training which does not provide much opportunity for discussion and connection with peers and colleagues. Murugaiah et al. (2012) believe that using CoP to increase educator collaboration can help educators grow as professionals. This study focuses on the use of CoP in Malaysia to help educators cope with the reform of their educational system. Educators in Malaysia are used to a “top-down” educational system where they are told what to do rather than making their own decisions, and are not used to the freedom of saying what they want. Participants were encouraged to use blogging and an online discussion platform as tools to engage in CoP. Blogging was chosen as a tool for engaging in CoP because blogs promote interactivity and allow educators to actively reflect on their practice, discuss goals and needs, add to their knowledge, and share ideas with others.

Murugaiah et al. (2012) explore the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model created by Garrison et al. (2000). The CoI model follows a collaborative-constructivist approach, and suggests that learning and knowledge occur socially which supports the vision of CoP. The CoI model is commonly used to explain online learning, and states that it involves the interaction of three presences:

1. Social presence, which refers to how the participant is able to represent their personality online;
2. Cognitive presence, which refers to how participants make meaning from the communication;
3. Teaching presence, which refers to the combination of the other two elements through design and facilitation (Murugaiah et al., 2012).

This study focuses on the cognitive presence, which is formally defined as “the analysis, construction, and confirmation of meaning and understanding within a community of learners through sustained discourse and reflection” (Murugaiah et al., 2012, p. 166). The cognitive presence has four phases:

1. “Triggering;
2. Exploration;
3. Integration;

4. Resolution/application” (Murugaiah et al., 2012, p. 166).

Each phase is also broken down into indicators and sociocognitive processes. As an overview, the phases cover the process of a participant presenting a problem or question, brainstorming, an exchange of information or suggestions, connecting and building on each other's ideas, creating solutions, and applying or testing the solutions.

Within this study, five educators were expected to share their practices, interact with each other, and comment on each other's posts through online blogs. Three moderators were assigned to help monitor, prompt, and sustain participant interactions. Murugaiah et al. (2012) found that there were two forms of participation – central and peripheral. The central participants engaged in more two-way interactions, had a deeper investment in the group, posed more questions, shared more experience, and promoted more collaboration. The peripheral participants rarely interacted, and either read posts but did not respond, or simply were uninterested in the discussion at all. Murugaiah et al. (2012) state that according to research, this could be because the peripheral participants lacked the confidence to contribute to the discussion. Another possibility is that due to their workload as educators, they found the online activity time consuming and burdensome.

Group dynamics also play a role in the level of participation. Murugaiah et al. (2012) state that two different types of conflicts can arise – cognitive conflicts and affective conflicts. Cognitive conflicts occur when the group does not find the ideas suggested useful. Affective conflicts occur when participants interpret posts or comments as personal attacks. Participation was affected because participants did not want to post comments that might offend other participants and cause tension. Participants also did not want to ask questions or make constructive criticisms due to fear of how it would look to their peers and superiors in terms of their credibility. These conflicts and fears affected participation, which affected the participant's learning.

In conclusion, Murugaiah et al. (2012) state that in order to have successful CoPs with deep learning potential, there must be more two-way interactions, the participants must trust each other and themselves, they must value community participation, there must be real time communication, moderators must facilitate and model high level discussion, and the sociocultural factors must be considered. According to Murugaiah et al. (2012), in order for the

CoP approach to work, it must be ingrained in the education system so that it can grow naturally and become the norm for educator professional development.

Key Messages:

- CoP not widely used.
- Increase educator collaboration and can help educators grow as professionals.
- Value of community participation.

Title:

Using a Wiki in a Community of Practice to Strengthen K-12 Education

Citation:

Sheehy, G. (2008). Using a Wiki in a Community of Practice to Strengthen K-12 Education. *TechTrends*, 55(6), 55-60.

Summary (highlights of the article):

Sheehy (2008) explains that knowledge sharing is a strategy that many educators are reluctant to engage in as many educators are protective of their personal knowledge. Sheehy (2008) offers the idea of two types of knowledge: “tacit” and “explicit” knowledge. First there is tacit knowledge, “which is intangible know-how” (Sheehy, 2008, p. 55). Next is explicit knowledge, “which is objective and formal knowledge that can be communicated easily” (Sheehy, 2008, p. 55). Understanding tacit knowledge in education is educators and professionals working together to share their learned experiences in learning environments in order to assist in supporting one another in practice. Explicit knowledge in education is easily understood knowledge that an educator, for example, can write down and transfer the information to be easily understood by another educator.

Sheehy (2008) suggests that the most obvious strategy to manage knowledge in the sector of education is through establishing communities of practice (CoP). As Sheehy (2008) indicates, within a CoP participants engage and collaborate with each other to share knowledge. Sheehy (2008) explains that in school settings, educators do not generally experience educational environments outside of their own learning and teaching settings. Sheehy (2008) goes on to explain that educators only collaborate with each other when the opportunity is voluntary or required, which does not offer rich and meaningful collaboration. Sheehy (2008) explains that teachers may not feel comfortable sharing their practices with other educators or professionals in related fields out of the fear of being judged. CoP offer constructive and positive opportunities to explore professional development models for educators to use in order to enhance their professional practice. Online CoP would also be successful when educators do not have the ability or are not comfortable in engaging and connecting in physical settings.

Research suggests that through technology, educators may strengthen their relationships and increase collaboration when an online forum is connected to a physical CoP. The online aspect is following up on conversations; if a question or idea was posed in a CoP, participants have the opportunity to easily add to the conversation after the discussion has occurred. This prevents losing the rich discussion that was created in the CoP.

Key Messages:

- Knowledge sharing is a strategy that educators are reluctant to use.
- Participants engage and collaborate to share knowledge
- Online aspects helps collaboration.

Title:

A Study of Social Participation and Knowledge Sharing in the Teachers' Online Professional Community of Practice

Citation:

Tseng, F.-C., & Kuo, F.-Y. (2014). A Study of Social Participation and Knowledge Sharing in the Teachers' Online Professional Community of Practice. *Computers & Education, 72*, 37-47.

Summary (highlights of the article):

Tseng and Kuo (2014) explain that online communities of practices (CoP) are essential for teachers to be able to further improve their teaching skills and increase their knowledge. Their research has proven that online CoP are beneficial as they help raise teachers' skill levels and increase students' achievements by being able to connect easier. Certain methods are needed to be used to effectively run an online CoP. These methods include an online CoP that consist of social participation opportunities. However, online opportunities should not be a replacement for face-to-face interactions. Tseng and Kuo (2014) also state that online CoP allow members to become aware of their shared practices and concerns. This allows members to gain a sense of belonging and establish professional identity for their profession. Furthermore, Tseng and Kuo (2014) explain that online CoP are platforms where teachers can engage with other professionals to improve their teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge. Online professional CoP are also useful because they allow participants to feel more comfortable expressing their opinions to a larger population rather than in face-to-face interactions. At times, face-to-face interactions can have an intimidation factor that can restrict professionals from speaking their mind to larger groups.

Tseng and Kuo (2014) discovered through their research that when there are stronger ties between CoP participants, these participants build their sense of empathy towards others outside their familiar communities. This research suggests that teachers need to continuously update their knowledge and teaching skills in order to provide high quality education; online CoP are a great approach to platform this style of professional development.

Key Messages:

- Online CoP are beneficial
- CoP increases teaching skills and knowledge which increase student connections and achievement.
- Educators need to consistently update their knowledge.

Title:

Investigating the Community of Practice of World Language Educators on Twitter

Citation:

Wesely, P. M. (2013) Investigating the Community of Practice of World Language Educators on Twitter. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 64(4), 305-318.

Summary (highlights of the article):

Wesely (2013) offers research that explains how the sharing of knowledge between teaching professionals can spread better quality of best practices within the field. This is done by professionals sharing what works for them when practicing in the field, and discussing challenges and successes with larger groups. Through communities of practice (CoP) teacher learning increases and educators develop an increased amount of knowledge due to sharing activities through the process of discussion. Wesely (2013) studies the work of Wenger (2006), which suggests a CoP can take many forms, in various sizes, locations, and forms for interaction. Wesely (2013) suggests that a CoP can assist educators in improving their practices by evolving their strengths and reinforcing their beliefs about what education should look like in the field. Participants of Wesely's (2013) CoP research study lived in several areas globally and collaborated with each other using the online application called Twitter. To examine teacher learning in this CoP, Wesely (2013) focused on the similarities that the educators had in regards to their teaching styles and their similar understanding of best practices in education. With having these educators collaborate in discussion regarding their experiences in the field, they are able to engage in what research has argued to evolve into deeper learning. Participants of Wesely's (2013) Twitter CoP affirmed by joining this community they were able to foster their learning within an online community. Participants in Wesely's (2013) study also explained that they gained insight to new improved practices that they began to adopt in their teaching practices. For example, participants have taken suggestions offered throughout the Twitter website discussion, such as gradually eliminating paper in the classroom as an example, and these suggestions have improved the quality of their classroom settings. Within the Twitter CoP, participants are able to examine different resources, take part in open conversations and build

trusting relationships with participants on a global scale that offers different perspectives and ideas. Wesely (2013) found that through their engagement, the participants became less isolated and continuously changed their teaching practices based on insights acquired through the group. In Wesely's (2013) Twitter CoP many participants were able to build trusting, meaningful, and sustainable relationships with other professionals in different communities. These relationships brought constructive conversations that informed positive change within learning environments. Wesely (2013) concludes by stating that CoP can foster professional development to develop and enhance practices for the future learning of educators and their students.

Key Messages:

- Sharing knowledge can create better quality.
- CoP can assist by improving practice by evolving strengths and reinforcing their beliefs about what education looks like.
- Less isolated and continuously changed teaching practice based on insights acquired through CoP.
- Build trusting relationships that are meaningful and sustainable.