

Learning and Organisational Resources for Communities of Practice

Type of resource: Managing, supporting and evaluating (individual and collective, and informal and formal) learning

Type of scenario: Reification

GoodPractices: Sharing good practices and lessons learned

Summary

- Objective: to describe professional practices in various situations related to important issues.
- Scenario: discussion based on individual experience and practices of the participants.
- Tools: paper/pen, Amaya, SweetWiki or discussion forum.

Objectives

The objective of this LOR is to collect the good practices experienced by the CoP members in various professional situations. The members are asked to describe their practices regarding a specific topic by highlighting the lessons they learned about known (contentious or particularly difficult) issues as well as the practices they would advise other professionals about these issues. The CoP can then have a shared repertoire of described practices from experienced professionals. These practices can finally be discussed and negotiated.

Scenario

The activity is described as it took place in face to face mode. However, it also can be organised at a distance through different media (see the 'Tools' section below). In face-to-face the activity lasts about 3 hours (one half day) with a group of 8 to 12 participants.

1. The group chooses one or two topics of discussion related to well-known professional issues. The issues will preferably be related to contentious or difficult professional situations so that the discussion leads to a debate.
2. Regarding these issues, the participants are asked to individually think about 3 questions (they can take personal notes):
 - Have I already experienced this issue? If yes, how could I describe my experience (when, where, with whom, what did I do, why)?
 - From this experience, what are the lessons I learned? What did I keep from this experience and what do I no longer do?
 - From this experience, what are the good practices that I could pass on to others? What advice could I pass on?

If more than one issue have been chosen, it can be good that each member presents his/her experience/practices regarding only one of the issues that he/she chooses. This will help to save time and to allow each one to present one's experience.

3. Each participant tells his/her story. In a first step, the coordinator and the other participants can ask questions of clarification or for detailing the personal lessons learned and good practices. Afterwards, a discussion can be held in order to debate the good practices that each one would keep.
At this stage the role of the coordinator is important for regulating the debate. What is discussed must remain the practices of the members, not the members themselves as persons. In addition, confidentiality should be required: what is said within the group should stay within the group.
4. The coordinator or an assistant takes notes in order to share the experiences, lessons learned and good practices after the meeting.
5. At the end, the coordinator evaluates the meeting by circulating a little questionnaire asking the participants the positive and negative aspects of the discussion as well as their learning outcomes.

Tools to support activity

- In order to take notes during the discussion, the coordinator can use Amaya (<http://www.w3.org/Amaya/> - <http://palette.ercim.org/content/view/164/119/>) with an appropriate template. The file produced can then be easily shared or displayed on a web page. When several discussions will have been organised, the format of the reports will allow easily searching and reusing pieces of contents for other purposes (an annual report of the CoP activity for example). If the use of Amaya templates is not easy during the meetings, a coordinator or a CoP member could be in charge of the meeting accounts to be written in Amaya.
- SweetWiki (<http://argentera.inria.fr:8080/> - <http://palette.ercim.org/content/view/160/119/>) can also be used in order to take note during the meeting. After the meeting, the members can then add their additional comments.
- If the discussion takes place at a distance, it can be organised through a forum during a specific period of time (for example, one week). The coordinator will have to take care that each participant takes part in the presentation of the personal experiences and in the discussion.

Example of use by a community of practice

In the CoP of the Learn-Nett tutors, this LOR is organised in 5 steps during the tutors' training (one day synchronous training at a distance)

1. The participants form sub-groups of 3-4 tutors. They have to discuss 3 or 4 cases of pedagogical situations with students. They use a chat room.
2. Each member of the sub-group presents his/her own experience regarding each case.
3. A debate is organised. The goal is to write together a common solution to each case.
4. The sub-groups present their solutions in a plenary meeting (visioconference). The members of the other sub-groups can comment or ask questions.
5. The coordinator and volunteers write the cases and proposed solutions in SweetWiki pages.

On the next year, the new tutors discussed the cases available in SweetWiki pages and produced solutions by sub-groups on specific pages.

Further resources

- http://www.daretoshare.ch/en/Dare_To_Share/Knowledge_Management_Toolkit/Good_Practice At this address, further resources are proposed to spark off practices. The presentation is in English, German, French and Spanish.