# COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: A STRATEGIC TOOL OF SUPPORT TO THE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF TUTORS

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Cathegory C
Educational Sector 3
Classification of the areas of Inquiry in LDE
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Nature - B
Class – 2

## SUMMARY

*In a contemporary scenery characterized by constant changes, the organizations have been looking for more and more qualified professionals aiming to attend the necessities of a competitive market. In this context, the individuals start to be an important and active part for the fulfillment of marks and reach of results of the corporative entities. According to Brook (2010), the partnership between the organization and the people provokes compromising in the improvement of the processes, as well as in the cultivation of the professional future of the involved ones.*

*The Community of Practice supported by technology appears, then, like an option to provide this demand, when it is promoting an environment in which individuals, even if physically distant, could share knowledge, directions, experiences and solutions, working, so, like a tool that can favor the integration of experiences and the interaction between the individuals, in the context of the institutions.*

*In this sense, this article aims to outline the aspects of the creation, evolution and maturing of the Community of Practice in the direction of subsidizing the execution of a methodology of introduction of this tool for the body of tutors of Cruzeiro do Sul's Distance Learning Education.*

***Key words: community of practice; tutorship; management of the knowledge***

## 1.Introduction

In a scenery of constant changes and challenges not only the corporations, but also the citizens need to be qualified and be competitive and in constant evolution.

In the society of the information and knowledge the individual starts having an exponential value in the corporations as that one contributes not only in the execution of the processes but also in the construction of this one. Perceptions, experiences and practices of the individuals are incorporated in practices of action of the corporations that systematize these actions in a process of management of knowledge.

In this scenery we present the Community of Practice as a potential in the process of management of knowledge and integration between the individuals (group of tutors) and the corporation (institution of superior teaching).

## 2. Management of the Knowledge

There are several interpretations for the meaning of management of the knowledge and its potential for the organizations. As Davenport and Prusak (1999), management of the knowledge is defined as series of disciplined and systematized actions that an organization can establish to optimize and to maximize all the available knowledge.

An organization that learns, as Garvin (1993), is the one which has the skill to create, to acquire and to transfer knowledge besides modifying its behavior to think about new knowledge and ideas.

In the management of the knowledge, it is included the experience of the people in the organization and all the products of information, such as documents, reports, available in the same organization and out of it, as soon as, as Laudon (2004), in the economy of the information, to obtain, to distribute knowledge and intelligence and to reinforce the collaboration in group have been becoming vital for the innovation and survival organizationals.

In Calle and Silva (2008) the authors think that, in the society of the knowledge, the knowledge itself is an element that makes the difference in the productive activity, whereas the raw materials start to have a secondary importance. The organizational knowledge, as Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997), is created through the interaction between the tacit knowledge based on the personal experience, and the explicit knowledge, of doctrinal character.

The tacit knowledge comes from the personal experience, comes from the beliefs and from the values. The processing of information for the human brain produces the tacit knowledge, which, for its nature, is difficult to be formulated and communicated. The explicit knowledge refers already to the transmittable knowledge in formal and systematic language and can be represented in the form of documents, videos and manuals, in which the main objective is the communication with other people.

The constant search to turn knowledge into concrete action drives the organizations to look for ways to promote the sharing of knowledge between its collaborators, from the tacit knowledge, and from the explicit knowledge, in the attempt of growth of productivity in more and more difficult sceneries, due to the biggest competition, financial instability and volatility of capitals and of investments.

In the process of management of the knowledge, it is supposed that it occurs a process of conversion and transference that, as Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997), should tease straightly in the innovation process in the enterprises.

For Nonaka and Takeuchi (2008) this transference takes place in a cycle of four conversion ways: Socialization – Externalization – Combination – Internalization and these cycles, passing continuously over these four ways, form a spiral of dissemination of the knowledge. For better understanding of the cycle we will describe shortly the ways:

The Socialization that takes place through the straight experience, in other words, in the individual's report for individual where experiences are shared.

The Externalization takes place from the individual to a group through the dialog and reflection through: oral reports, texts, images, spreadsheets between others.

The Combination takes place when to the existent knowledge in the organization the knowledge is collected recently created.

And the Internalization that takes place from the explicit knowledge of the organization for the individual when there is producing new tacit knowledge from the interaction between what individual receives, applies, survives and re-interprets.

In this very sense Fresneda (2004) the organizations must create a favorable environment for the generation of these new knowledge to power the apprenticeship and collective activities, developing fully the use of the existent knowledge in its processes.

We detach for the incitement of the Organizational Apprenticeship of the Communities of Practices that, besides they promote the interaction between different areas from the knowledge, are used for the sharing of ideas, experiences and existences being a favorable space for the knowledge management.

## 3 . Community of Practice

The main purpose of the Communities of Practice is to develop the skills of participants, generate and exchange of knowledge between individuals that work together. Communities of Practice are driven by passion, commitment and identification with the expertise of the group, and remain as long as there is interest in maintaining the group.

For Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2013), Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better from a continue interaction.

But the Community of Practice does not only reduce the purposes of instrumental nature, relating to knowledge, but also to live, giving existential meaning relevant to life and to the actions of each member, developing aspects of their personal identity and collective. In addition, communities of Practice are constructed as such from the mutual engagement, joint venture of actions and repertoire of knowledge shared.

According to Kimieck (2002), Communities of Practice, the organizations can no longer be controlled exclusively by expertise, in a hierarchical structure, and now function more horizontally.

The use of Communities of Practice as a tool can promote the acquisition of new knowledge and skills that are considered relevant by the individuals, because they are capable of significant learning, sharing, and application in various situations of professional life. Second Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2013), three characteristics are fundamental to the characterization of a Community of Practice: Domain, Community and Practice.

The Domain Area corresponds to the area of knowledge on which community is build, characterizing the shared interest, which inspires the participation and commitment of its members. However, the Community consists of the group of individuals that have something in common, which interacts and learns together, building relationships between themselves, allowing help and learn from each other.

The Practice consists in the knowledge that the community shares and develops. It is the entire repertoire of shared resources that comprise individual and collective practices. In a Community of Practice,it is the generalization of the roles of subject learning, since each member of the community is potentially an educator and a learner. This way, it is changed the conventional distinction between school and community, as well as between formal and non-formal education.

Communities of Practice are working together with the production of documentation, tools, and procedures useful due to the fact that they promote the constant interaction between its members, considering the needs and interests of the practitioners.

## 4- Construction and Evolution in the Community: Good practices of Tutoring

This article aims to outline the aspects involved in the creation, development and maturation of the Community of Practice in order to support the implementation of a methodology for deployment of this tool for the body of

Tutors from Distance Learning of Cruzeiro do Sul Educational. We consider this action a case study that, according to Yin (2001), as well as other search strategies, represents a way to investigate an empirical topic followed by a set of procedures pre-specified.

The Community Practice of Tutoring of Cruzeiro do Sul Educational, is available in the Virtual Learning Environment Blackboard used by the institution to support the disciplines of graduation and post-graduation DE. It is configured and managed as a discipline within the system AVA. The members of the community are registered in the same way that students in a common discipline online and according to their role within the community have their characteristics of access and permissions set.

Currently, among the members of the community of practice highlight the group of tutors. Currently We have 57 tutors being, in their training: 24 graduates, 28 Experts, 04 teachers and 1 Phd. The tutors work under contract being full days per week for 30h, 36h and 40h, and 52 act in person at the institution, distributed in three shifts per day and 5 act online, outside of dependencies of the institution.

To meet the demand of courses offered by the institution, both undergraduate and graduate, are selected professionals from a wide range of areas and not necessarily with specific training in the area of education or DLE( Distant Learning Education), but experts in the areas of demand for care. This scenario requires a program of continuing education in relation to pedagogical aspects and also of foundations of Distance Education.

The Community of Practice of Tutoring had its beginning in January 2013 with the initial purpose of sharing best practices between professionals who worked at the time, that were tutors online with teacher profile. It was recast in June 2014 not only to share practices of tutoring, but mainly as an important tool in the Program of Continued Training of tutors already with new profile (technical administrative) embedded in the institution from January 2014.

Since its implementation in June 2014 sessions and features were incorporated from the needs seen by members. Existing sessions, currently in the Community of Practice of Tutoring are: Profile - Team of Tutors: session that presents the current team of tutors with a brief presentation of each of the tutors, their training and recent photo.

Birthday of the Month: session that presents monthly mentors birthday. Schedule of Mentoring: session with notes of timetable of actions of mentoring, meetings, meetings of continued education among others. Tutoring in Action: session with sharing of tutorials on the virtual learning environment, spreadsheets model to follow the practice of mentoring, shares the practice of mentoring, institutional documents, among others.

Virtual Campus Network: session that search integrate mentoring group with actions of Cruzeiro do Sul in Educational network as: blog, social networks, Youtube channel among others. Workflow System Fix: access channel to a system in which the tutors report requests for corrections or suggestions on teaching materials and activities of the disciplines for which they act. Forum: channel of interaction between the tutors that promotes a space for interaction and integration.

Polls - channel for quick searches on actions or demands. Guidance Plan of Studies - session intended for sharing guidelines for mentoring of disciplines, with supplementary materials and records of perceptions of mentors who belonged. The guidance plan of studies is feedback to each new offer of a discipline by creating a history of monitoring by discipline.

The tutors have free and spontaneous access to Community of Practice. Important to note, in figure 1 below, the flow of accesses that the Community receives which demonstrates that currently it is part of the daily routine for tutors.
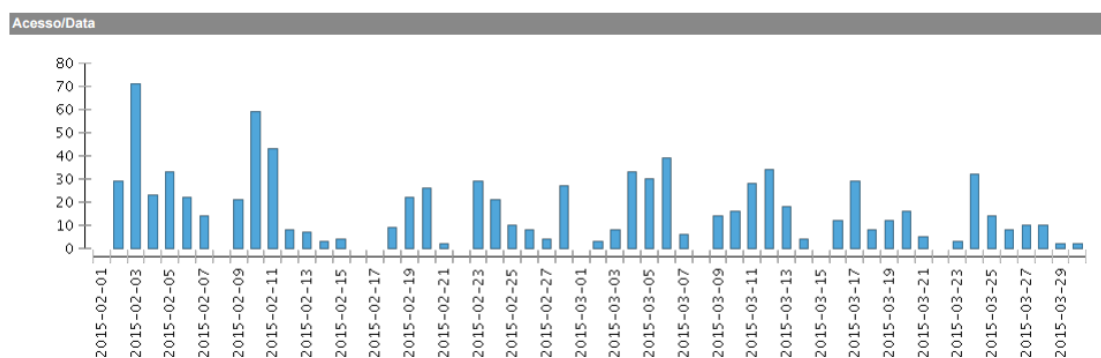


Image 2 - Flow of Access to the Community of Good Practices (feb/mar2015) - Source: the authors

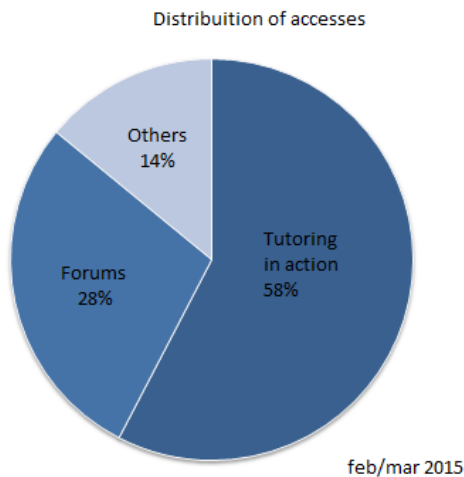In the same period the accesses distribution by area is presented in the image below

Figure 3: Distribuition of accesses – Source: the authors

The most accessed areas are Tutorship in Action, where we detach the tutorials and the Forums. We outlined that in the session: "Forums" we observe the free exchange of experiences, report of actions and sharing of strategies between the tutors, below you can see some parts of posts of the tutors:

Hello Tutor B

Thank you. I am going to enjoy the month of April.

This month I used the previous suggestion of tutor A

With so many hints, I am even boring and want to be able to help and to collaborate more with the group. Truly, thank you very much. Hugs,

Tutor C


Hello Tutor D

Thank you. I used the archives to help my pupils.

It was worth! Hugs, Tutor E


Hello, Tutor F

I am happy in contributing and collaborating!

I hope that it is opportune.

Tutor G

We show up, through reports (socialization) or still sending and exchanging archives (externalization), the phases described by Takeshi and Nonaka that contemplate the conversion ways of the tacit knowledge to an explicit one.

## 5. Conclusion

The Community of Good Practices of Tutorship has been shown an important tool of integration and communication between tutors, not only for the proceedings shared, tutorials and explicit knowledge from the supervision, but, specially, because it allows to the tutors the Socialization and Externalization of the tacit knowledge inherent in practice of tutorship of each member. Besides, it is worth emphasizing what the strategies of sharing, practices, glances and perceptions potencializes the strengthening of the group and there promotes the spiral described by Tanaka and Takechi for the management of knowledge and conversion of the tacit knowledge for the explicit thing.

We realize that the virtual familiarity still wants that it allows to the members to locate and realize like actives in the group independent of the shift or town of acting. Through asynchronous discussions the collaboration is identified between the tutors and the consolidation of the identity of the group of tutors of the institution.

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