

Start Talking in an E-Learning Environment: Building and Sustaining Communities of Practice

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Abstract : The purpose of this literature review was to identify the use of online communities of practice (CoPs) within e-learning environments as a method to build social interaction and student-centered educational experiences. A literature review was conducted to survey and collect scholarly thoughts concerning CoPs from a variety of sources. Data collected included best practices, ties to educational theories, and examples of online CoPs. Social interaction has been identified as a critical piece of the learning infrastructure, specifically for adult learners. CoPs are an effective way to help students connect to each other and the material of interest. The use of CoPs falls in line with many educational theories, including situated learning theory, social constructivism, connectivism, adult learning theory, and motivation. New literacies such as social media and gamification can help increase social interaction in online environments and provide methods to host CoPs. Steps to build and sustain a CoP were discussed in addition to CoP considerations and best practices.

Keywords : community of practice, knowledge sharing, social interaction, online course design, new literacies

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