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A Link between communities of practice and the world of social capital

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ABSTRACT

Communities of practice (CoPs) highlight the personal foundation upon which relationships are formed, disregarding geographical, functional boundaries or unit constrictions, but instead by the tasks, contexts and work interests in action. It represents how individuals perform their jobs on daily basis contrary to the formal policies operated. CoPs are claimed to be effectual organisations for knowledge creation versus their former counterpart. The concept that facilitates the co-operation within groups; social capital allows access to the information and knowledge shared by others. An entity's action is a critical part in understanding the dynamics of the exchange or combination of intellectual capital resulting in understanding organisational learning process. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate the link between CoPs and social capital, in an attempt to justify why certain networks are more prosperous compared to others.

Keywords: Communities of practice, social capital, knowledge generation, structural Dimension, relational Dimension, Cognitive Dimension

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and the continuous changing organisational structures are bound to affect the modes by which knowledge is formed and shared. Therefore, in a medium where knowledge is the main structural driver, sustaining and continually leveraging intellectual capital of firms has certainly befitted a complex and striving undertaking [1]. To innovate and

constantly improve the ability to adapt to new challenges and learn methods to face those acquiring technical and interactive capabilities is crucial in such organisational environments.

There is a formal well documented structure in every organization via policies and procedures which might be contrasted with an environment based more on self-organized group interactions, shared knowledge, and exchange of insights. CoP play a critical role when appropriately supported by formal organizations since they are a major building blocks in terms of creating, sharing and applying organizational knowledge [2]. Therefore the concept of CoP is to overcome resulting hindrances through such channels and creation of collective intellectual capital.

When the concept of CoP is considered, a related topic emerging in economics and sociological literature arises: social capital. Social capital denotes the resources individuals inside a community relate to and provide value to themselves and their organizations. Examples of such social resources include mutual identity, understanding, reliance, as well as a degree of shared language and context between them. These resources are apparent in a variety of ways, involving reducing the time it takes to position an expert within an organization, reducing the costs associated with validating proficiency, and decreasing the effort and time associated with developing and monitoring an agreement between individuals in an organization. Therefore such activities enable an organization with an enhanced management of its knowledge resources. Social capital can be adopted and appointed where needed in a similar manner to financial or human capital, enabling individuals to execute their tasks more professionally. Social capital has been shown to have a directly proportional relationship with the positive impact on multiple sides of the organisational life including success, reimbursement, employee recruitment, helpfulness, resourcefulness, product innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as external relationships with other networks [3,4]. High levels of social capital along with higher levels of cooperative spirit, goals levels of trust could result in better levels of knowledge, reduced transaction and turnover costs, along with greater consistency of action [5], and greater intellectual capital [1].

2. COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

It's a challenging task when it comes to defining the concept community of practice (CoP). Many practitioners and academics have addressed this matter, defining the CoP notion in various ways. Although the community of practice idea has been coined in recent years, the term refers to an age-old concept. Etienne Wenger, an educational theorist and computer scientist and Jean Lave, a cognitive anthropologist, explain that the concept has existed for as long as human beings have been learning and sharing their knowledge using what is called storytelling. The first knowledge-based social structures are some examples of CoP, back when humans beings lived in caves and mountains; artisans in the Middle Ages; the corporations in ancient Rome; priests and nuns or physicians and nurses in the late Middle Ages and afterwards; communities related to industries or organizations (whether formally identify or not) According to Lave and Wenger (1991) communities of practice have always existed everywhere in every aspect of human's life and still do in recent times. We all belong to many communities of practice- at school, at work, in our hobbies at home. Some of the CoP have a name, others don't. Part of them remains largely invisible and other we recognize. We are occasional participants of some and core members in others.

No matter what form our participation takes, most of us are familiar with the experience of belonging to a CoP [6]. Wenger and colleagues developed the community of practice characteristics into domain as the area of knowledge that conveys the community together along with an established matter that fellows need to address. Community of people refers to the social structures that encourage learning through interaction and relationships among its members. CoP is a set of collective repertoires of resources including experiences and methods of addressing recurring problems. In further part of this paper those characteristics will be well explained. Wenger clarifies what community of practice is and what it is not using those three constituent elements. Table 1. Explains the distinctions between CoPs and other social structures such as formal departments, operational teams, project teams, communities of interest and informal networks.

Table 1. Communities of practice and other structures

| Structure (How clear are the boundaries?) | What's the purpose | Who belongs? | What holds them together? | How long do they last? |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Communities of practice (Fuzzy) | To expand, great and develop individual capabilities and to exchange knowledge | Self – selection based on passion expertise or for a issue | Identification with group and its expertise, commitment, and passion | Evolve and end naturally (last as long there is value and importance to the subject and interest in group learning) |
| Formal departments (clear) | To deliver a service or product | Everyone who reports the group's manager | Common goals and Job requirements | Designed to be permanent (but last until the next restructuring) |
| Operational teams (Clear) | To take care of an open-ended operation process | Participation assigned by management | Shared responsibility for the task and operation | Intended to be ongoing (but last as long as the operation is needed) |
| Project teams (Clear) | To manage a specified task | Everyone who have a direct role in carrying out the project | The project's tasks, goals and milestones | Predetermined ending (ends when the project has been realized) |
| Communities of interest (Fuzzy) | To be informed | Whoever is interested | Sense of like - mindedness access to information and | Evolve and end naturally |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Informal networks (undefined)</p> | <p>To receive and pass on knowledge and information, to know who is who</p> | <p>Business acquaintances friends and, friends of friends</p> | <p>Relationships and mutual need and</p> | <p>Never really start or end (exist as long people remember each other or keep in touch)</p> |
|---|---|---|--|---|

Source [6].

In 1991, Lave and Wenger were the first to use the concept of community of practice which originated from the theory of “situational learning” with the intention of discussing the notion of reasonable peripheral participation [7]. The concept’s application was then prolonged to other fields. CoPs simple definition by Wenger is “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 as they interact regularly” [8]. The essence of this theory is that it defines learning as a social process where in the extent power of individual members determines their participation in the particular field of community work. Hence, participation in the community is voluntary, meaning no commitment to implementing executive orders. The principle of CoPs is to discover and create one's own common reality [9]. Over time, communities develop a unique perspective on their practice through a variety of techniques including but not limited to discussing developments, mapping knowledge and identifying gaps etc. where they may even acquire a common sense of identity. Therefore, this type of collaboration focuses on solving a specific problem and aims at creating new knowledge, exchanging ideas, and seeking creative solutions [7,9].

The traditional approach perceives learning routes as isolated unitary processes, whereas in reference to CoPs interdependence between the exchange of knowledge and the process of learning action is assumed in specific situational conditions. Many processes related to the creation, use and internalisation of knowledge take place in the learning cycle through action. The learning process takes place within the network between the participants in the environment of a culture or social community. A fundamental factor in the development of the knowledge of the individual participants is the learning process. It works to build a specific identity of the community and to develop the roles of its participants. The acquisition of knowledge by a new contributor takes place through the so-called: Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) [10]. Legitimacy is related to authority and the community’s ruling power and the periphery, while adjusting the status of a new participant in its structure. The position of a new member depends on his/her activity, the more their involvement in the community, the higher the position in the hierarchy of power [9].

Anthropological perspectives on technology adoption, and knowledge management had come to view that learning was not entities’ property, but rather a more relational property of individuals, central to human identity in context and from their interaction with one another (the situated view) [11]. Long-term cooperation enables the formation of the community focusing on a domain of knowledge. It is expressed through continuous interactions between individual members of the community and aims to solve a specific problem, generate new tacit knowledge, and discuss community-critical issues. Participation in the community of activities means co-participation in the process of group learning, hence creating a space for group (creation of knowledge) as a result of the (cooperative) action of its individual

members. The process of acquiring knowledge involves the shaping of uniqueness for its participants, since participating in the community means identifying with it, becoming one of its parts, i.e. integration [12].

2. 1. LOOKING INSIDE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

After defining the concept of CoP, we could further the insight into the communities to better understand certain clearly identified characteristics including the domain, the community and the practice [6]. As Wenger (2011) states, not all communities are communities of practice that is because a key element is the presence of a “community” i.e. what a group of people who share apprehension for something encompass. Alongside the community of people two other elements are important as well: the domain of knowledge and shared practice. Figure 1. represents the three key characteristics of community of practice (CoP).

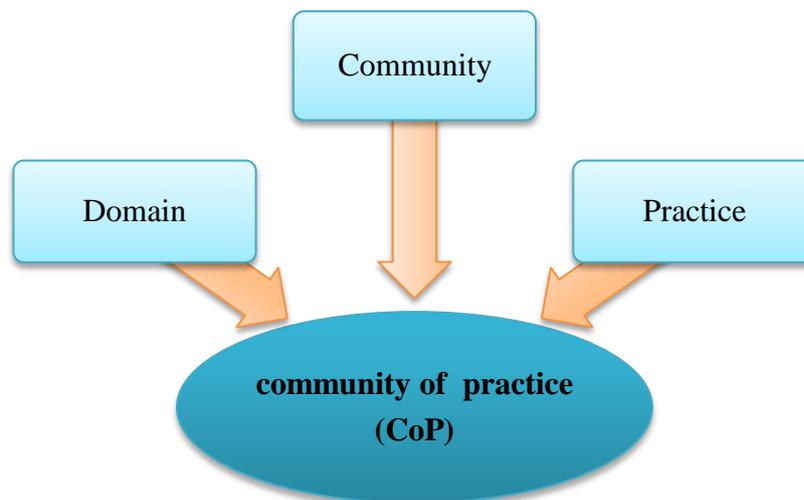


Figure 1. Characteristics of a Community of Practice (CoP) [8].

Wenger et al. (2002), defines a **domain** as the area of knowledge that conveys the community together along with an established matter that fellows need to address. Inside the communities a domain guides the enquiries, consequently motivating members to present their ideas for and contribute to the matter. As well as facilitating the learning process amongst people. Therefore a “common ground” as well as a sense of common identity is formed by the domain which outlines the boundaries enabling to judge what is noteworthy and how to better present their approaches [13]. As referred to by the learning theory, we better understand who we are and what community we belong to therefore when proceeding in a community, members develop a sense of association hence are more inclined to identify with the community itself [14]. Wenger (2004) suggested that an identity is defined through the knowledge that is explored and developed rather.

Whilst this domain creates the common ground of a CoP, the **community** in itself refers to the social structures that encourage learning through interaction and relationships amongst

members. The community which is a crucial element for an effective knowledge structure as suggested by Wenger et al. (2002). Alongside the practice and knowledge sharing, it is comprised of members who interact and build interpersonal relationships on matters vital to their domain.

The community evolves via the foundation built up on interpersonal relationships upon which the community evolves. Through a community people help each other expand their knowledge regarding a specific practice. Social dimension is a requirement yet alone not sufficient to build a CoP, though if kept up regularly enable discussion and debate amongst members nurturing ideas and developing a sense of belonging and commitment. Wenger et al. (2002) assumes that the interactions amongst community members must have some continuity to build a CoP. Meeting regularly to discuss a topic does not establish a CoP but rather interactions must be regular, enabling members to develop a shared understanding of their domain and an approach to their practice [9,6].

Finally, another crucial element for constituting a CoP is the practice itself. Gherardi and Orlikowski (2002) define practice as a context to enable people to obtain knowledge. Wenger et al. (2002) explains that the **practice** is a set of collective repertoires of resources including experiences and methods of addressing recurring problems. This enables the members to develop a shared repertoire of assets. Thus, the practice is not more than a specific knowledge owned, developed and shared by members within a CoP. To highlight the “knowledge grounded in site-specific work practice” (Sole and Edmondson 2002) practice-based perspective is approached defining practice as “doing and involves awareness and application of both explicit (language, tools, concepts, roles, procedures) and tacit (rules of thumb, embodied capabilities, shared worldviews) elements. “Central to the practice perspective is acknowledgement of the social, historical and structural contexts in which actions take place” [15]. Hence, practice-based perspective provides additional insights and dimensions of knowledge developed into a context in which practice is performed [15,16]. Conclusively, the practice-based approach concentrates on how people construct their fitness in practice [17]. Allowing this approach, knowledge is therefore structured in practice, objects and outcomes that demonstrate achievement in creating, measuring, or manipulating artifacts that people work with [17].

3. SOCIAL CAPITAL

In earlier time, the development of human capital takes a major and serious attention considering how individual’s skills, background and education are needed to be productive and effective in a very high competitive labor market. However, sociologists such as Ron Burt, James Coleman and Mark Granovetter argue that individual characteristics alone are not enough to explain the variation in individual accomplishment. This school of thought explains that “even in recent institutional economics we can observe a failure to recognize and identify the value of networks of relations and concrete individual (personal) relationships and ...in establishing expectations, in generating trust, and in creating and enforcing norms” [18].

To address these issues in classic economic theory, notion of social capital, the “web of social relationships that effect individual attitude and behavior and by that affects economic success” [19] were discussed and developed. Social capital concept has been used to give an

explanation for some of phenomena, ranging from economic development in to social policy issues with public housing projects [19].

In recent years there has been an increased usage of the concept of social capital even though the theory of social concept is not new, and is vastly popular in a wide range of social disciplines. Social capital became a widely accepted concept in most fields including politics, economy and sociology on the basis of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putman's work [20,19,21]. The concept has deep roots in theorists including James Madison, Alexis de Tocqueville amongst others in the American political science tradition [22]. There does not seem to be a single social capital theory, alternatively there are several contradicting theories that try to establish what it really is [23]. There doesn't seem to be an unambiguous classification of this concept although it has received much attention in research [24]. Putnam (2000) refers to social capital as "the connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" [23].

Social capital is what provides access to resources embedded in social relationships enabling people to facilitate action via mobilising these hidden assets. The concept has given an indispensable formative principle for several studies including schooling and education, community life, and economic development [3]. Putnam's explanation of the concept incorporates factors such as trust, norms, network structures which encourages cooperation amid subjects in a society resulting in mutual benefits[23]. To elaborate on the definition of the concept, appropriability; a primitive feature of the social concept referred to as according to Coleman is to be spoken of. Coleman states that appropriability authenticates a conceptual strategy by encompassing trust, social exchange, support and resources, culture of a topology all that has been studied under similar concepts. This is a core insight since others support - comprehended under social networking-is a treasured resource internally, externally or both to an organisation, as it affects the influence of resource's availability [25].

Since there is no legit measurement of the investment in the development of social capital, including building social networks, this distinguishes it from other assets [26]. This in turn makes the social capital concept recline squarely within the broad and diverse family of resources under the "capital" umbrella that might result in a risk due to its vagueness. Therefore, its conceptualisation as a resource results in commentators taking different positions on its outcomes. Gabbay and Leenders claim that overinvestment in social capital could possibly change a productive asset to a constraint as well as a liability. This also poses negative consequences for the wider groups in which the object addressed is measured, especially when analysing complex organisations. According to Coleman, Burt and Granovetter there is more than just the individual characteristics involved to explaining their success, but that the importance of personal relationships and the network's topology that create trust, norm and establish expectations [27,28]. In an attempt to tackle the pitfalls in standard capital resulted the development of the social capital concept known as "the web of social relationships that influences individual behaviour and thereby affects economic growth" [29]. It has then been identified to be different dimensions including structural, relational and cognitive, stating that individuals ought to interact with others in an organization to obtain resources they might not already have [1].

Structural dimension involves individuals reaching out and forming a network since it is a crucial part in developing social capital, as is interpersonal dynamics in a complex where it is believed to be reciprocated as referred to by Fukuyama 1995. The structural dimension of social capital comprises the relationships amid the network actors, where the network's ties-a

fundamental aspect of social capital are related to the factors creating opportunities for social capital transactions [3]. Such network ties amongst members are established as a result of interpersonal relationships developed via informal social gatherings and meetings [30,31]. It is essential to note that the term network describes collaborations process between individuals within organizations and therefore is used variously than normally in public administration researches and studies. Research has argued and shown how networks ties, network configuration and high levels of social interaction between individuals are correlated with more easiness of knowledge exchange and flexibility within an organization [32] Burt (1992), for example, shows that personal contacts between individual can have positive “timing effects”, due to the fact that network not only enhance access to knowledge and information but also makes it more likely to be informed directly and quickly.

The resources that provide shared meaning and understanding between the network members are called cognitive dimensions and have two facets: shared goals and culture [1]. The point to which network members allocate a mutual understanding and approach to the achievement of network tasks and outcomes are representative of shared goals while the degree to which norms of behavior govern relationships are shared culture. [33]. The process of sharing of the same goals between individuals carried out either through narratives, codes and language, or a combination of both. Language is the essential mechanism for exchange in social relations and interactions among individuals. Codes support the mechanism of creation a common language that assist the process of communication and interaction itself and the capacity for people to understand each other. Therefore, shared codes and language “may provide a common conceptual apparatus for evaluating the likely benefits of exchange” [1]. Also, shared narratives such as “stories myths, and metaphors produce powerful means in community for creating, exchanging, and protecting rich sets of meanings.” [1].

Relational is the term used to describe the type of personal relationships people develop with each other through their time of interaction [34]. This relational concept focuses on the precise interactions people have including respect and friendship influencing their behavior accomplishing social motives including sociability, approval, and prestige. This relational dimension addresses matters related to shared norms and values, trust and expectations and identification, obligations that are fundamental in developing social capital among individuals of a group. Francis Fukuyama, in his recent book *entitled Trust*, states, “trust is the expectation that arrives within a community of honest, cooperative and regular behavior, based on mostly shared norms on the part of other individuals of that community... Social capital is the potential that emerge from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it. It can be embodied in the most basic and smallest social group, the family, as well as the largest of all groups, the nation. Social capital differs from other forms of human capital inasmuch as it is commonly created and transfer through cultural mechanisms like tradition, religion or historical habit.”

According to Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998 four variables are influenced by these three dimensions, positively influencing the intermediate variables and successively impacting the creation and sharing of organizational knowledge. These include: the exchange or combination of intellectual capital, the anticipation of its value, the motivation of individuals via its access, the motivation of individuals to combine or share intellectual capital and the ability of the organization to change according to the needs of its outside influencing environment. In social relations the capital lies in enhancing the outcome of actions, whether of a firm or an individual [18]. That is pointed in the way social capital has been used to

describe not only the benefits of social relationships, likewise the norms and cultural values inherent within facilitating the actions of individuals in that structure as part of the social structure. Hence leading to the extensively recognized division of the various aspects of social capital that will be explained further later on: the structural dimension- properties of the social network, the relational dimension-exchanged transactional content, and the cognitive dimension-shared sets of systems for interpretation and mutual understanding dimensions [1, 35].

4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

An illustration of how CoP serve as a vehicle for building capital could be explained via the three previously mentioned dimensions (structural, relational and cognitive) these dimensions play a serious part in the development of social capital. The relationship between Community of Practice and Social Capital can be represented as Figure 2.

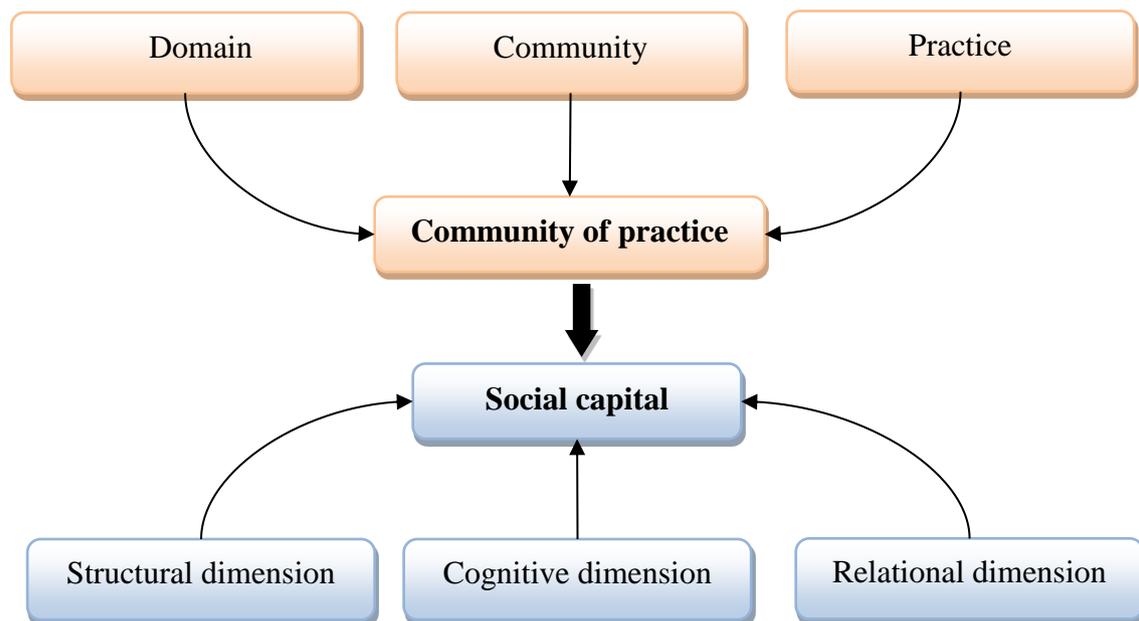


Figure 2. The relationship between Community of Practice and Social Capital.

4. 1. SOCIAL INTERACTION: THE STRUCTURAL DIMENSION

Structural social capital refers to the “configurations of linkages between people and units” [1]. The structural dimension describes the properties of the social network with an organization as a whole and point out the overall pattern of links and ties between individuals which in turn indicates who and how individuals reach for different social resources they need. Important aspects of this dimension include the absence or presence of ties between individuals (actors), and network configurations [36,37,38]. Through CoP members are

provided with the opportunity to develop a network of individuals with similar interests through several ways. First, through the identification of those with relevant knowledge to make connections with one another; mainly appreciated as the organization grows and goes (virtual) and individuals find it increasingly problematic to relate to one another. In addition, the community acts as a reference permitting individuals to assess the knowledge of other members without having to individually contact each member. Finally, CoP helps connect outside individuals to those who are already identified as community members. For new employees this role can be critical as it helps identify individuals who hold the firm-specific knowledge needed to be successful in their new roles.

4. 2. TRUST: THE RELATIONAL DIMENSION

Fragile and resilient trusts are two different types of trust that affect shaping organizational social capital.[39,40].Fragile trust refers to trust that takes place within relationships built on contractual and formal basis and does not remain after a transaction between people has been finished [40].Resilient trust is built due to the beliefs about moral integrity of the individuals working in the same organization, thus on the other hand, resilient trust is based on the beliefs about moral integrity of the people belonging to an organization, thus build much solid and permanent links [40]. According to Leana and Van Buren (1999): “Organizations with strong social capital will show resilient trust, even between individuals linked generally rather than privately or personally. Organizations with weak social capital, conversely, will be characterized by fragile trust (if any), even between individuals who frequently and directly interact [40].” High levels of trust among members and organizational leaders may foster collaborative action in the absence of needed formal systems and tool for that purpose and may allow the transfer of sensitive knowledge and information [18], and reduce individuals resistance to organizational change [41].

CoPs promote interpersonal interactions essential to build a sense of trust and obligations crucial to building social capital. Trust could be defined as the “positive expectations individuals have about the intent and behaviors of multiple organizational members based on organizational roles, relationships, experiences, and interdependencies” [42]. Through the ability to bring people together creating and sharing relevant knowledge allows the community to create the condition where individuals can “test” the trust worthiness and commitment of other community members; building an “informal currency”, with norms and values that are commonly held and terms and conditions of validation that are generally accepted.

4. 3. COMMON GOALS AND VALUES: THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION

The cognitive dimension defines the perceptions which are made by people on others in addition to the perceptions that they take from others. Boland and Tenkasi (1995) point out the value of perception taking and perception making in a social context and fundamental role it plays in knowledge creation and sharing. They note that during the process of perspective making the information and knowledge needed for carrying out a complicated process called knowledge-intensive known by actors is perceived collectively by the social network.

Cognitive social capital denotes to the capacity of the organization to share similar vision and goals amongst members [43,44]. Cops are contributory in maintaining the shared

“vernacular” since they are organized around similar issues. This is because CoP help shape the actual language used by group members in everyday work discussions. In add-on, they create and share the knowledge objects or “artifacts” amongst members. Likewise, communities produce stories that communicate the norms and values of the community and of the organization as a whole. Thus enabling new members to take prompts from more experienced personnel allowing the development of a community recollection that perpetuates itself long after the original community members have departed.

Lesser, Eric and Prusak postulate that CoPs contribute to the development of the social capital accordingly making communities of practice valuable, and likewise social capital is a compulsory for the creation of knowledge and its interchange [45]. Moreover, communities of practice construct organisational values via theorising that a community serves as a source for the development of social capital [46]. A relation between communities of practice and social capital could be described in the behavioural changes brought about from social capital, which positively influence an entity’s performance hereafter the organisation’s CoPs. To elaborate further, interactions via an entity’s community of practice serving as the medium facilitating and pressuring the collaboration and interchange between diverse subjects in an organization. To my knowledge, no one investigated the confinements resulting from this dynamic. I assume that social capital impacts an entity’s members in their relation to CoPs. Communities of practice (CoPs) are formed as a group that adheres through sustained mutual engagement in a collective learning process on native enterprise via interacting forming relationships and “transactive” memory, linked to the concept of learning organisation through which people appropriate a task creating a repertoire [47]. Wenger’s concept of ‘in what way’ bonds emerge from joint practice is a rich statement. Nevertheless, the complex description of a unit produced from the theory makes it difficult to identify. Yet, if Wenger’s indicators that of socio-technical interaction, and the ‘boundary object’ that draws a number of disciplines in the interests of improvement - have been applied along with Davenport and Hall’s suggestions there would have been a tighter definition of the CoPs concept for analytical use [48]. Although nowadays there is a shift in the literature from using the term “community” there are still existing roots to the concept, and if Wenger’s concept may be used along with other ideal types of modes of belonging, CoPs would be associated the idea of interpersonal relations to interpret their relationship to more extended social categories, enabling community members to more effectively manage their organisational knowledge.

4. 4. CULTIVATING COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE- IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND MANAGERS

Communities of practice (CoP) play an instrumental role in developing the structural, relational and cognitive dimensions of social capital. These three dimensions increase the effect the creation, sharing organizational knowledge. Organizations seeking to increase and develop the level of social capital through communities of practice should take by consideration the following rules:

- a. Identify communities of practice that impact the organizations key goals.** Within one organization we can find a big number of existing communities of practice. Many of these communities have been established independently. It is very important when considering communities of practice to which support and resources should be

implemented, the organization should select CoPs that have a critical and direct influence on the organization's key strategic goals. For example in a pharmaceutical company, a community of practice deals with regulatory approval problems could be considered for organizational support. Another example could be a software development company - a community of practice around a programming issue might be a likely candidate for organizational support and resources.

- b. Arrange face-to-face meetings for different communities with different locations belonging to the same organization.** Communities of practice exist in geographically dispersed organizations characterize with lack of direct connections which in turn unable the formation of the three dimension of social capital. Enabling people to meet face-to-face will have positive affect in the area of building network of contacts between individuals within the given community of practice, foster interaction essential for trust building, and share information and knowledge, stories and artifacts that allow building common context and understanding among individuals within a given community. Lack of face-to-face meetings will have negative impact on the process of community of practice (CoP) cultivating as well on the lack of benefit that comes from its existence within given organization.
- c. Building tools that allow and help the community of practice to identify new actors and support the interactions among existing individuals.** Different kind of technology play crucial role to the community of practice. Tools such as web pages, knowledge maps and directories of expertise allow members of the community to identify others with similar experiences and interests, which in turn foster building the structural (network) dimension of social capital. Videoconferences and chat rooms allow for collaborative work that helps members within community to maintain interaction, strengthening connections that build trust and context sharing. Knowledge repositories play key role in maintaining and refine the community knowledge, allow community member to access representations of the community of practice memory easily and quickly.
- d. Select key knowledge broker (experts) within the community of practice and allow them to share knowledge and expertise with other members within the network.** Those knowledge brokers are groups of individuals that other actors in the community seek out for their support and their expertise. Knowledge broker play fundamental key of success of the community. They provide organizational wisdom and experience. Their role as intermediaries is based on directing members to other in the community who have more relevant information and knowledge. Knowledge broker (experts) often do not identify within formal organization coming from the fact that they perform this role in parallel with their formal work. Organization should identify these experts and give them support, time and resources to act more efficiently in the process of creation and sharing community knowledge with other members within given organization.
- e. Organization should take by consideration that capital, in social capital, implies investment model characterize with expected return.** Communities of practice (CoPs) spontaneously exist in all organizations. However for organizations to exploit the appropriate social capital for creation, sharing and using organizational knowledge, they require organizational support and resources for that purpose. Organizational investments allow the existing communities of practice to be more innovative,

effective and efficient. Investment in success of the communities of practice take many forms such as financial support for providing face-to-face meetings, technology need especially for distributed communities, to allow knowledge broker (experts) to support other members in the network. Appropriately focused tangible investments in the existing communities within organization allow the communities of practice to success and build the appropriate social capital.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The concept of communities of practice is a significant when trying to comprehend the complex relationships found between organizational members. It is essential to look at the three key characteristics i.e. domain, community, practice when trying to understand CoP. Where the domain of knowledge creates a shared ground, inspiring members to part take, guide their learning in turn giving them meaning to their actions. A strong community fosters interactions and encourages a willingness to share ideas. While the domain provides the general area of interest for the community, the practice is the specific focus around which the community develops shares and maintains its core of knowledge.

Communities of practice play a critical role in the day-to-day activities of organizations. One of their key functions is to build social capital among organization members, which in turn enables community members to more effectively manage their organizational knowledge. In this paper, i have attempted to illustrate the important linkages between communities of practice and social capital. I assumed that social capital is positive and focused on its positive impact on creating, using, and sharing knowledge along with the ways CoPs serve as a medium for building its development. I endeavoured to demonstrate the important connection between CoPs and social capital, as in my opinion groups within organisations who apply the concept of social capital manage to operate without the hierarchical boundaries and the application of CoPs achieve extraordinary innovative results along with knowledge productive learning processes. Community of practice play an contributory role in developing structural dimension- properties of the social network, the relational dimension-transactional content of what is exchanged in a particular relationship, and the cognitive dimension-shared sets of systems for interpretation and mutual understanding dimensions. These dimensions, in turn, lead to an increased ability to manage organizational knowledge.

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