

Reward modulates the mirror neuron System in schizophrenia: A study into the mu rhythm suppression, empathy and mental state attribution

Elliot Brown

Impairments in the mirror neuron system (MNS) have been implicated as a possible underlying neurological basis for deficits in higher-level social cognition in schizophrenia. Previous work testing this hypothesis has used the electroencephalographic mu rhythm as an index of MNS activity, with studies showing mixed results. Here we investigated the role that reward plays in modulating the mu rhythm, and its association with empathy and emotional mental state reasoning. A group of schizophrenia patients and a healthy control group completed an action observation paradigm in which they watched actions that were financially rewarding, punishing, or neutral. Patients showed intact reward-related modulation of the mu rhythm, and greater mu suppression was associated with greater negative symptoms. There was also a trend for reduced mu suppression in patients. Furthermore, both empathy and emotional mental state reasoning were associated with the degree of mu suppression, but only in healthy controls. These findings confirm the association between the mu suppression and high-level social cognition. It is possible that schizophrenia patients utilize different cognitive routes to infer mental states. The demonstration that reward influences the degree of mu suppression in schizophrenia patients may help to account for previous conflicting findings in the literature.

To read more on this research view this link:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278331555_Reward_modulates_the_mirror_neuron_system_in_schizophrenia_A_study_into_the_mu_rhythm_suppression_empathy_and_mental_state_attribution



Out of the Shadows: How information provision by broadcasters can support people affected by abuse and violence

Natalie Quinn - Walker



The aim of the project for the campaigning organisations, to advocate for Ofcom and TV companies to adopt these guidelines. Thus, making a national significance to survivors, with the introduction of support details on programmes demonstrating any violence or/and abuse, could encourage victims to report or seek support.

6.3% (2.4 million) of adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year (1.6 million women and 786,000 men) (Office of National Statistics ONS 2019). An estimated 28.9% of women (4.8 million) and 13.2% of men (2.2 million) aged 16 to 59 years have experienced some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years (Crime Survey of England and Wales - ONS 2018). ONS (2020), estimates that one in five adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced at least one form of child abuse, whether emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or witnessing domestic violence or

If you require further information, advice or need support, please contact one of the following organisations:

Rape Crisis: Helpline 0808 802 9999

www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Victim Support: Helpline 0333 300 6389

The Survivors Trust: 0808 801 0818
www.thesurvivorstrust.org

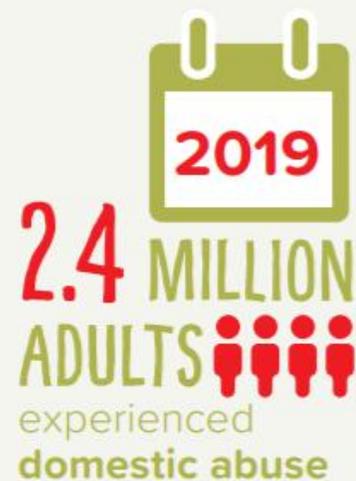
Survivors UK - Male Rape and Sexual Abuse Support www.survivorsuk.org

What is the impact of broadcasting incidents of abuse and violence?

We know that watching programmes that feature abuse and violence can cause distress to victims, triggering traumatic memories. It also helps survivors to recognize that what happened to them was abusive and enables them to come forward for help. This is evidenced by accounts from survivors and the increase in calls to helplines and support services (UK Says No More 2019).

Action Line received 50% more calls following the television story on three girls, focusing on the sexual abuse in Rochdale and Apple Tree Yard.

The Rape Crisis Helpline experienced a 132% increase in calls after the showing of Broadchurch (The Survivors Trust). Calls to the ManKind Initiative domestic abuse helpline trebled when their helpline was featured after a Coronation Street domestic abuse storyline.



Out of the Shadows: How information provision by broadcasters can support people affected by abuse and violence Cont'd



I was the first person to take the first call after the first screening. The caller said 'I just saw Broadchurch, I saw your number and that's why I've called you.' This sentiment was echoed by many callers and they found that often they were providing support to people who were calling about abuse that had happened decades earlier. The screening of the programme, along with the support information obviously helped a lot of people to come forward and seek support.
Helpline worker, Rape Crisis

Ensuing helplines are published straight after a show finishes can save lives. In the split of a second there can be a moment of realisation that there is help out there and that means someone will instantly pick up the phone. It can make all the difference.

Mark Brooks, Chair of the ManKind Initiative Charity

When do we need warnings & screen cards and what information should we provide?

Survivors tell us that it is important to have a warning before all scheduled programmes and have information cards after every programme and relevant news items. These should name the main issue (e.g. "for support around domestic abuse and any other issues raised..." as this helps victims to recognize their experience and raises awareness amongst the public. Information should be spoken and written, provide websites as well as helplines and a range of generic and specialist agencies.

Full report available here
<https://nataliequinnwalker.com.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/survivors-voice-media-guidelines-report-.pdf> :

50%
MORE CALLS 
To Action Line focusing on the **sexual abuse**

132% 
INCREASE IN CALLS
To Rape Crisis Helpline

COVID second wave: Risk of an NHS walkout



Rosina Godfrey

2020 was quite challenging for people, in-particular impactful on the healthcare services. On 23rd March, the UK went into 'Lockdown' with many Doctors and nurses called out of retirement to fight on the frontline. Even before Coronavirus became 'big news', the health service had been buckling under pressure. Although nurses and other healthcare professionals provide a life-saving and vital role to our society, they have been underpaid for years.

Even before the difficulties that 2020 has brought, figures in the UK showed that 1 in 10 was leaving the nursing profession, well before their retirement age to seek employment in different fields, feeling like they had been bled dry. This rose to approximately 20% in 2012-2013. These figures suggest that an increase in professionals completing their qualifications than entering the profession (BBC, 2020).

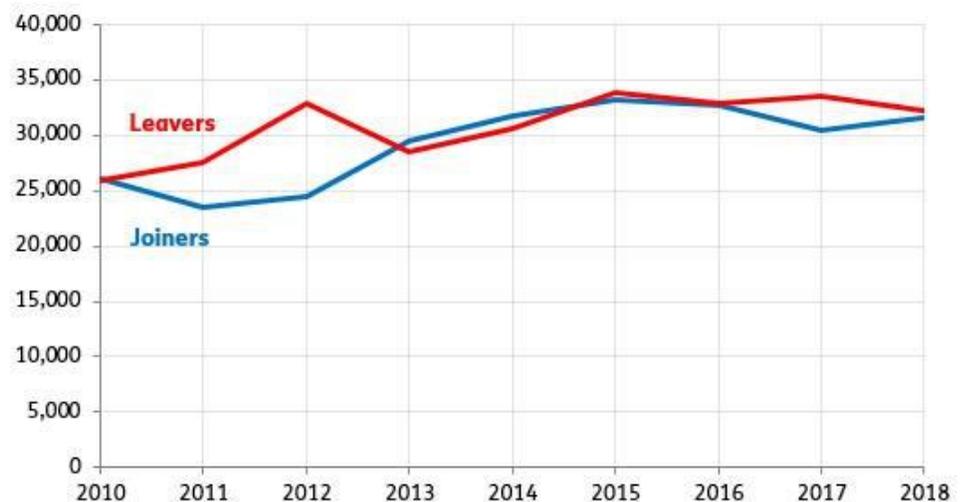
The six C's of the NHS are Care, Compassion, Courage, Communication, Commitment and Competence. These C's can and should extend to the staff themselves and the aiding in boosting their morale, aiding their retention in their given field and helping to keep them enjoying their jobs.



It is important to note that staff leaving has many different implications on the profession, it has cost implications in the employment of new staff, training up into their given position of new staff, as well as a change of dynamics in the department. Although it is often said that new blood is good for any establishment; senior staff will provide vital knowledge and experience to new members of staff.

NHS turnover

Total number* of nurses and health visitors leaving and joining NHS hospital and community health services in England, each year ending September



* figures are a headcount and leavers include those on maternity leave or on a career break

Source: NHS Digital, Supplementary information files, Joiners of and leavers from the NHS that were nurses and health visitors September 2009 to November 2018



COVID second wave: Risk of an NHS walkout

Cont'd

Supporting the mental health of all those working in healthcare is vital, as they are the frontline support for our nation. Coronavirus provided the nation with the reminder of how testing the healthcare service can be on someone's mental and physical health. The topic of mental health and well-being has been highlighted as a much-needed focus during the times of 'lockdown'. The mental health of healthcare professions is just as important during these times.

In order for an employer, to be a good employer, their staff must have a support network around them that is both practical and also emotionally supporting. During the height of the pandemic, many employers put measures into place that were designed to support its staff. However, this needs to continue, ensuring that the well-being of their staff is cared for beyond the current situation.



As the community, showed its respect for those frontline staff, the weekly hand clapping and other acknowledgements, employers must show their respect and acknowledgement for their staff. Without this support healthcare staff will continue to leave the profession and with it those staff who have a vast amount of knowledge. Staff retention and staff support are vital, like never before.



The Business Student's Roles Within Higher Education



Dr Alison Watson



Joseph and Joseph (1998), and Waimer and Vining (1999) explain how the student has now become perceived as the customer. Armstrong (2000) also asserts that students today are seen as consumers and as such their role within the higher education sector has changed. The researcher focuses on the quality of the educational experience of business undergraduate students. Creating value for students is derived through the integration of various functions. These include, (although are not limited to), faculty staff and skills development, among other things.

Fromm (1976) argues that students are submissive to external forces in society and this directs their choice of programme towards their future career. Pillay (2004) examines the perceptions of students and finds that they expect the course and curriculum to reflect the skills required within a certain industry. Some students consider attending a university as being an extension of a 'career' service. Grosjean (2004) observes that students' perceptions of vocational courses are that they are an initial entry into an industry, and that they provide an advantage over others pursuing similar employment. However, Beaty, Gibbs and Morgan (1997) indicate that some students do still want to immerse themselves in theory and subject content, together with reflecting and engaging with academia.

Mulya (2019) posits that the student-faculty partnership role enables the students and faculty to work together, not only on developing vocational skills, but also personal growth and social development. This is certainly a key objective for Arden University's business school. An observation of marketisation is that the motivation of a number of students could have changed to a primary focus on job-related skills. Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion (2009) conclude that students' view a 'good' education today as being based on economic growth, profit and satisfied students-consumers rather than developing pedagogy and reflective practice. There appears to be less inclination to study subjects for their own intrinsic values.

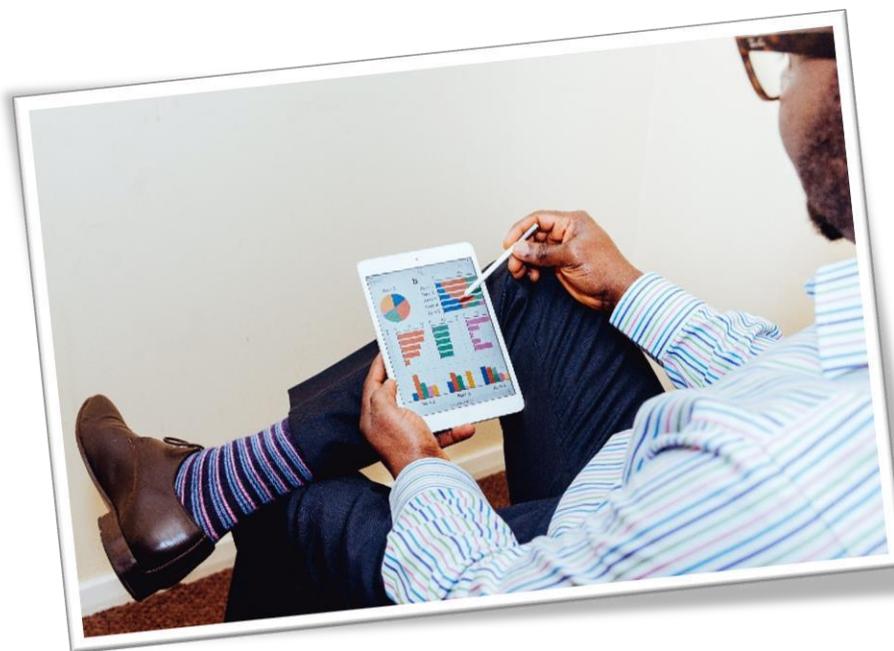




The Business Student's Roles Within Higher Education Cont'd

Interestingly, a study by Cardoso, Carvalho and Santiago (2011) brought a different role of the student into view. In one role, the student is seen as an actor seeking information about the HEI and degrees, that is, the student is engaging with HE institutions in the traditional sense. However, these researchers also provide a dichotomous alternative, that of being the 'individualised one'. This is a term very similar to that of the 'consumer' or 'client'. The results of the research indicate two nuances in student perceptions of courses. These are defined as 'tradition' and 'neutral'. The former draws on the role of the actor searching for information on programmes before selecting their degree; and the latter refers to the potential client or consumer, who is rather more pragmatically searching for a 'service'.

Cardoso, Carvalho and Santiago (2011) indicate that the predominant approach of the two is the neutral one. This is where students are drawn to social and economic influencers when it comes to their choices of study programme. In this way, marketisation, they suggest, has transformed the student into perceiving him/herself as the customer. According to Wong and Chiu (2017) the tutor is considered to be the service provider. This provides a contrasting role to that of educator and developer of pedagogical content. Fromm (1976) suggests that the tutor role is more of a mentor, shaping the student to achieve and guiding the student to deliver on his/her expectations. Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion (2009) argue that HEIs also promote teachers not solely as academics, but also experts from industry. This reassures students into believing that they will be acquiring industrial skills and being work ready.



Would you like to feature in our next newsletter?



We are looking for writers for article pieces, and I know what you may be thinking, more writing!

Many of you may have to complete dissertations later in your degree, and this opportunity provides you a chance to test the water out with your topic. It allows you to see whether you enjoyed writing on the topic and whether you can source a research question.

This opportunity does not have to be in relation to your potential dissertation / final project. It can be focused on a topic you are passionate about; wish to share a training conference you have attended or wish to express your feelings on a topic.

You may be questioning why this idea is being pitched, and there are a few reasons:

- It's an excellent opportunity for you to get a publication under your belt.
 - Looks great on your CV.
- Opportunity for you to branch into an area you may wish to explore later in your degree or in your career.
 - It's a great talking point for interviews.

Articles need to be 700-1500 words.

It needs to be referenced following the Arden Harvard Referencing convention (allowing you to practice your skills).

The article will be published in Arden's Perspectives in Business and Healthcare Management Newsletter, which is promoted across a variety of Arden University's Social Media.

If you are interested or have any questions on writing an article or wish to bounce ideas and thoughts off one of the editors, please get in touch via email:

perspectivesbhm@arden.ac.uk

Deadline Date 28th February 2021

Your articles will be proofread, and recommendations / suggestions can be made to support your development.

Presentation Style for Research and Factual Articles for the Newsletter



Research Article Structure-Extended Abstract

To assist with your development for articles for the newsletter. The editorial team has created two structures to follow. This one refers to factual pieces or research article. If you need any support or wish to share and discuss ideas, don't hesitate to contact us via email.

Title:

- Should be concise, informative, cover all the key features of the article and interesting.

Abstract (10%):

- Concise summary of research purpose, context, methods, key results and conclusions.

IMRaD (80%) (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion):

Introduction (10%):

- Make a case for the importance of your research.
- Must include research question, aims, objectives and a rationale for your research.
- Provide a summary of current research/literature review to provide context.
- Reveal the gap or problem you are filling or solving.

Methods (20%):

- **What did you do?**
- Discuss and justify your research design, sampling and method(s)
- Outline the procedures followed, provide sufficient information for replication of the research.
- Usually written in past tense and passive voice.

Results (35%):

- **What did you find?**
- Present the research findings and outcomes using appropriate illustrations such as well-labelled and self-explanatory tables and figures.
- Report and comment on the results-highlighting key trends or themes.

Discussion (15%):

- **What do the results mean?**
- Summarise the main findings of the study and connect to literature and other research.
- Ensure any claims you make are supported by results.
- Discuss flaws/limitations in the current study and suggest future research.
- Discuss the implications of research to literature, practice and society and public policy.

Conclusion (10%):

- **What are the key lessons drawn?**
- This section should tie together all the elements of the paper by:
- Concluding against each research objective/question.
- Concluding against the overarching research aim/question.

Presentation Style for Opinion Pieces

Articles for the Newsletter



Opinion Piece Article Structure

To assist with your development for articles for the newsletter. The editorial team has created two structures to follow. This one refers to opinion pieces. If you need any support or wish to share and discuss ideas, don't hesitate to contact us via email.

Title:

Should be concise, informative, cover all the key features of the article and interesting.

Introduction (10%):

Sum up the purpose of the article and the key issues to be address.

Make a case for your topic. What is the importance of it? Why does it need to be discussed?

Main Body (80%)

Present and discuss your themes and arguments.

Provide visual to illustrate your topic (please ensure you are providing the reference for graphs, tables, charts and images).

Make it inclusive, avoid jargon.

Keep sentences short and to the point.

Add contextual links to direct readers to relevant and interesting full content.

Conclusion (10%)

Summaries the key points.

Make a call for actions. What do you want the reader to do after they have read this article?

Reflect; Respond with feedback; Read further articles on this topic.

List of References:

- Avoid plagiarism-reference using the AU Harvard Referencing convention.

Presentation Tips



- Demonstrate your passion of the topic, making the information engaging by adding activities or case studies or examples can engage the audience. Be creative, use images, videos, charts and explain these.
- Avoid adding too much text to your presentation as this may be quite difficult for the audience to read before you move to the next slide. Often the audience may disengage with vast amount of text on the screen.
- Ensure you are focusing on the audiences requirements, what are they expected to learn from the session. Think about the language you are using, avoid using jargon.
- At the end of the presentation, conclude what has been said and ask the audience whether they have any questions or there is any segment that they wish to revisit.

Healthcare Training & Educational Opportunities

- Inequalities series in accessing palliative care services (mental health and prisons) 24th Feb 1pm - 3pm <https://www.events.england.nhs.uk/events/inequalities-series-in-accessing-palliative-care-services-105146>
 - Inequalities series in accessing palliative care services (BAME and travelling communities) 24th March 1pm - 3pm <https://www.events.england.nhs.uk/events/inequalities-series-in-accessing-palliative-care-services-105146>
 - Culture, health and wellbeing international conference and exchange. 21st - 23rd June <https://www.rsph.org.uk/event/culture-health-wellbeing-international-conference-and-exchange.html>
 - International conference on digital healthcare and technology. 24th - 25th May 2021 <https://waset.org/digital-healthcare-and-technology-conference-in-may-2021-in-london>
 - Handling information at work - Online training https://www.learningcurvegroup.co.uk/landing/skills-toolkit-handling-information-at-work?utm_source=dfe&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=s handling information
- Vaccine Development: Finding a vaccine for COVID-19 and future pandemics. Available at- <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/vaccines-covid-19>

Government Skill Tool Training



Late 2020, the Government introduced several online training sessions. Below is a link to their web development training, which can assist you into learning how to create your own website.

- Understanding the basics of code available at:
https://learndigital.withgoogle.com/digitalgarage/course/basics-code?utm_source=nationalcareers.service.gov.uk&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=skillstoolkit

Business Training & Educational Opportunities

- How to create a brand that stands out in your market: multiple dates available:
https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/extreme-branding-how-to-create-a-brand-that-stands-out-in-your-market-tickets-123432406651?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1
- Business development workshops - weekly - https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-development-workshop-tickets-118239135437?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1
- An introduction to Organisation financial management - Online training
https://finance.corndel.com/?utm_source=ncs&utm_campaign=ol&utm_medium=everydaymaths
- Introduction to business management - Online training
https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/introduction-to-business-management?utm_source=nationalcareers.service.gov.uk&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=skillstoolkit
- Become a sales representative - Online training
https://opportunity.linkedin.com/skills-for-in-demand-jobs/sales-representative?trk=li-jobsindemand-customer-en&wt.mc_id=AID3020626_QSG_476098
- Digital skills: social media (for business) - Online training
https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/digital-skills-social-media?utm_source=nationalcareers.service.gov.uk&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=skillstoolkit
- Become a better presenter: Improve your public speaking skills. Available at:
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/become-a-better-presenter>

A study of stakeholder experiences of community services provision in Gatuanyaga Town in Kenya: Water Project Dissertation - Susan Njuguna

Susan is a Management Consultant & Accredited Mediator. She is an experienced professional with a demonstrated history of working in the Corporate & Non-profit organization management industry. Skilled in Leadership, Customer Care, Event Management, Managing a team, Coaching, Team Building and Facilitation. Strong operations professional with relevant qualifications and a variety of training courses. She has just completed her MBA at Arden University and looks forward to continuing with her Consultancy work.



My dissertation was inspired by the experience of community services provision with a primary focus on a water project in Gatuanyaga Town in Kenya. As a stakeholder, discussions and challenges faced by the community will help to collectively articulate social anxieties about the unclear roles of the government in managing and implementing projects. It also depicts the effect of such conditions on individual persons and local stakeholder experiences. The project demonstrates how the local government as a firm, can strengthen its corporate-community relationship and fulfil society's obligations through service delivery. The study identifies challenges in implementing, monitoring and evaluation practices and aims to identify and improve best approaches to apply in the water project. The other challenges include access to safe drinking water under acceptable economic and social affordable circumstances.

According to Furr Youngman (2019), Coleridge's ancient mariner learned that, as much as the earth's surface is covered by water, only a small fraction is drinkable or usable for swimming or fishing and only 1% is available for human consumption. One of the United Nations sustainable development goals is to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all (United Nations, 2020). This means that uncontaminated water suitable for drinking is scarcer than demand, making it less accessible. The population in the world has more than tripled, and the earth has 7.6 billion thirsty people with only 2.5% of the water being fresh water, and 1% is safe for human consumption (Montoya, 2018). The ecological conditions of Kiambu county where Gatuanyaga Town is located has two principal sources of water - surface and subsurface. Of that, 90% comprises of both surface and round water potential (County Government of Kiambu, 2018). Therefore, the management of drinking water supplied to its residents is not just influenced by the need of physical water scarcity but a problem of economical water scarcity. Besides the rising rate of water consumption, the global crisis must address both water mismanagement and other ecological resources.

A study of stakeholder experiences of community services provision in Gatuanyaga Town in Kenya: Water Project Cont'd



The United Nations World Water Development Report states that 'water crisis is essentially a governance crisis' (Montoya 2018, p182). Gatuanyaga Town water project study highlights the lack of adequate water institutions as well as fragmented institutional structures which must be addressed. The research aimed to qualitatively investigate stakeholder experiences of community service provision, using a grounded theory approach, through an auto-ethnographic study, following devolution in Kenya by using the provision of water services in Gatuanyaga Town, Kenya as a case study.

The researcher is a resident of Gatuanyaga who has experienced difficulties in accessing water due to limitations on the implementation process. According to World Health Organisation & UNICEF (Van Houweling, 2017), there is still an astonishing 663 million people in the world who rely on unsafe and distant private water sources despite the progress made towards global water access. However, according to White (2000), Maslow's hierarchy of needs, water is a basic human need that should be provided by public services, and that necessitates looking at stakeholder involvement.



Public service provision is usually analysed from a perspective of customer satisfaction or the particular school of thought of public sector management, such as Public Administration Theory. New approaches focus on the centrality of citizens in the process of public decision making, not as customers, but as stakeholders. Thus, enter a new application of stakeholder-based theories.



A study on stakeholder experiences of community services provision in Gatuanyaga Town in Kenya: Water Project Cont'd

When applied to the issue of water resources, then corporate social responsibility theory with its emphasis on integrating environmental and social concerns also becomes relevant to the theoretical basis of the topic. Thus, this research was grounded in theories of corporate social responsibility as applied to the public sector, with a focus on stakeholder theory. According to Carroll (2010), organisations must take immediate actions today to ensure long term feasibility and equally to have a healthy climate to function in future. It is argued that this is in their long-term self-interest to be socially responsible and obligations towards society extend beyond their economic and legal obligations. Evidence of the Corporate Social Responsibility concept and organisations' society concerns has been traced for centuries although CSR in the modern era began in 1950s. This was not directly related to CSR but was considered with social responsibility, and definitions became more specific in the 1970s (Carroll, 1999). CSR even though still popularly used, other complementary concepts such as, sustainability, stakeholder theory and corporate citizenship compete to become a widespread descriptor of the field and most accepted (Carroll, 2010).

As a resident, the researcher's initial conversations with a small number of stakeholders generated potential interest in the research project and its practical approach involving real people. The study expanded on the issue of poor access to water, ineffective implementation and management of the project by the organisations involved where their corporate social responsibility did not address stakeholders' needs. Their stories echo the experiences of other marginalized communities left behind. This study adds to the literature that helps improve understanding of the importance of the effects of water insecurity. The flow of water in Gatuanyaga project was to create indirect wealth which would then provide sustainable growth, especially in day to day use by residents easing long, costly and timely journeys in search for water.

A related water project study illustrates how a local community from southern Mozambique led to community conflict, and power relations affected a rural water project when the water point was viewed as challenging the traditional leadership (Van Houweling, 2017). That community elites can play a potentially destructive role through monopolising decision-making in water management and excluding access for specific community groups (Van Houweling, 2017). Suppose projects have locally-driven implementation and share similar goals. In that case, the local community is empowered because they recognise the importance and need of the project, can transform their capabilities in constructing and completing the project (Amanios 2012,).

Collaboration between agricultural and environmental managers can help in prioritising water delivery and infrastructure to provide water supply throughout the years (Sterle, K. et al. 2019). The County government can adopt this, and a new regulatory structure can be adapted and flexible using skilled staff to improve their understanding of water supply.

The influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Social Media on the Strategy Formulation Process.

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²Dr Dominic Appiah is a Business Lecturer at Arden University



Abstract:

The paper aims to show that social media is an inclusive tool because of the duplex communication techniques that enhance it. CSR is complementary to building a robust strategic planning process in strategy formulation. There is currently a limited understanding of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social media strategies that could develop the strategy formulation process to improve strategic outcomes. The paper adopts a qualitative case study methodology using a reflective perspective based on a complete participant observation method. The results demonstrate that there are challenges in operating a strategic planning process situated in an uncertain, volatile and dynamic business environment; it requires an integrated partnership between the inter-organisational actors and other stakeholders. Social media is the integrator of resources, and CSR helps build relationships, acting as a reinforcer of trust (Bowen, Appiah and Okafor, 2020).

Introduction:

Strategic planning tends to focus on environmental analysis or competences analysis or a combination of both (Barney, 1991; Bowen et al., 2020; Porter, 2008). Environmental conditions triggered by the global pandemic suggest that business leaders need to align their thoughts on finding and refining opportunities to rescue businesses. However, using familiar strategic formulation approaches may not be sufficient for the 'new normal'. Pressure is building for business leaders to change how they do business by incorporating and focusing on environmental and ethical behaviours. The change required must start with the way strategic decisions are formulated and how consensus is achieved with stakeholders to establish agreed sustainable long-term relationships (Innes, 2004; Moisander and Stenfors, 2009).

The Covid-19 pandemic impacts are long term; thus, the old approach of analysing businesses through the environmental and competence lenses will not be adequate. This paper contends that the new lenses should adopt a stakeholder approach that refines the 'old normal' by incorporating corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical leadership in developing sustainable business strategies (Bowen et al., 2020). Bowen et al., (2020) argue that there is a "limited understanding of how corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social media strategies could develop the strategy formulation to improve strategic outcomes. The input into the strategic formulation process does not" consider customers' inclination for CSR practices and policies. The paper aims to advance a new way of thinking about strategy formulation in the new normal. The paper's objective is to reflect on how the current situation requires businesses to adopt new strategic working practices to enhance the robustness of strategy formulation processes.

The influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Social Media on the Strategy Formulation Process...Cont'd

The paper reviews literature on social media and decision-making (Frow et al., 2015; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2003; Singaraiu et al., 2016; Yoo et al., 2012), CSR mediating strategic planning (Almeida et al., 2005; Mahmood et al., 2020; Sousa Filho et al., 2010), governance and strategic planning (Bovaird, 2005; Eriken et al., 2006; Roebroek, 1992; Mahapatra et al., 2010), business analytics and strategic planning (Agarwal and Dhar, 2014; Davenport, 2006; McAfee and Brynjolfsson, 2012; Raguseo, 2018).

Methods:

An interpretive philosophy underpins the paper. The study adopts a qualitative, case study strategy using a reflective perspective based on a complete participant observation method over two years. The strategy gives the researcher considerable insight and understanding of the strategic planning process. The strategy is appropriate based on normative theory, which suggests that judgement on values is best done in case studies by combining facts with ethical judgements (Lincoln et al., 2020).

The case study is a telecommunications company based in North America that operates in five regions: North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia Pacific, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) and Australasia (Bowen et al., 2020). The researcher collected observable data related to existing theory through purposive interactions for two years. The researcher recorded actions that could not be observed without immersing in a focal and intentional observation. Hence the researcher moved between insider-outsider sensibilities and monitors observations that include personal biases or prejudices (Ravitch and Carl, 2019).

The paper uses structured reflexivity (Ravitch and Carl, 2019) allowing the observer to collect data, reflect, refine thinking, and interpret over time (Maxwell, 2013; Ravitch and Carl, 2019). The data collected included PowerPoint, charts, emails and field notes by the observer.



The influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Social Media on the Strategy Formulation Process...Cont'd

Results and Discussion:

The case study results demonstrate challenges in operating a strategic formulation process in turbulent and dynamic business environments; it requires an integrated partnership between the inter-organisational actors and other stakeholders. The paper argues that social media is the integrator of resources, and CSR helps to build relationships, acting as a reinforcer of trust. The paper splits the discussion into three themes; the strategic planning process, its strengths and the limitations. In the context of the strategic planning process, the results reveal that the process is instigated twice a year over cycles of six months. Typically, environmental scans start every September based on reports produced by sales and marketing. The resulting draft strategic plans are reviewed by CEOs of strategic business units and vice presidents to build consensus on strategic business targets. Adopting the strategic plan requires the agreement and commitment of the central office, facilitated via conference call iterations. In this context, the paper notes that the process could be strengthened through decentralisation and de-coupling from the central office.

Concerning the strengths of the strategic planning process in the case study, the paper highlights several positives. First, the paper acknowledges a strong senior management commitment to the process. Second, there are indications that management deliberately avoids the pitfalls of an incremental approach by adopting an environmental scanning approach to ensure a comprehensive analysis of forces for change. Third, the results reveal that the process adopts a stakeholder approach to ensure robustness and balance in perspectives. Also, the results indicate that senior managers actively use strategic plans as motivational and communication tools. In the context of limitations, the results indicate several flaws in implementing the strategic formulation process, including a lack of alignment of CSR issues with strategic objectives. The results show that although the case study uses embryonic CSR practices through sponsorship, there is no link to the strategic planning process. The paper reports challenges related to implementing the stakeholder approach in that gaining stakeholder face time proved challenging, negatively affecting the planning process' timeliness. The paper notes inadequacies in the triangulation of data resulting in stakeholder input being taken at face value. Also, margins of error are not explored and evaluated, which has implications on the reliability of the information used in strategic decision-making.

Observations at the case study show that the strategic planning process is an ad hoc process lacking documentation, which has business sustainability implications. The results indicate an over-emphasis on products and services at the expense of customer metrics and lack of in-depth competitor analysis. The results also indicate that the case study is slow in understanding the benefits of and adopting the internet and social media as strategic management tools.

The influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Social Media on the Strategy Formulation Process...Cont'd

Conclusion:

The paper draws several pertinent conclusions and makes recommendations for improving the strategic planning and formulation process. These are summarised in this section. The paper concludes that the case study's strategic formulation process is flawed in that it operates as a standalone milestone with marginal impact on business performance. The paper contends that the process is driven more by opportunistic ventures than rigorous evaluation of business opportunities. The paper points out that decentralisation and streamlining of the governance structure and decision-making process based on sound ethical and moral leadership are needed at the case study to ensure organisational responsiveness and sustainability. The paper suggests the adoption of the social contract model (Bowen et al., 2020; Gray et al., 1996) to address this issue.

Bowen et al., (2020) conclude that proper implementation of a stakeholder approach and adopting the CSR philosophy, internet and social media as strategic drivers of strategy formulation could yield benefits for the case study. This paper contends that social media use improves the quality of information and information flow, which should improve strategic outcomes. Involvement of multiple stakeholders and a strategic planning process that is engineered on CSR will be more responsive to the new normal. The paper suggests that to overcome the uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic will require the engagement of multiple stakeholders.

Adopting CSR practices and embedding them in the strategic planning process is important because it signals a new way of doing business in a positive all-embracing sustainable way (Bowen et al., 2020). The paper argues that organisations whose core values are based on ethics and morality will achieve better sustainable competitive advantages. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement will improve data integrity and information for decision-making through the triangulation approach, thereby building trust among stakeholders. However, embracing a wider range of stakeholders will require recognising suitable governance structures in managing stakeholder interactions and big data analytics.

In terms of research limitations, the paper acknowledges that while a case study approach provides deep insights and understanding of the organisation, generalising the findings to a wider population is challenging. Therefore, further research is proposed using other data collection methods and in different contexts. In the final analysis, the conclusions and recommendations made in this paper have important implications for practice and theory in the context of strategy formulation processes.

List of References: provided upon request from Editors at perspectivesbhm@arden.ac.uk

The full article can be accessed through the following link:

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Communities of Practice (CoPs), a concept whose time is long overdue in Blended Learning.

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Introduction:

This paper aims to revisit the concept of Communities of Practice (CoPs), remind those in the know, create awareness to those unfamiliar, and challenge the organisation, staff and students into mutually beneficial collaborative actions. The premise of this paper's argument is that CoPs present a fertile opportunity to address a multitude of social and academic issues including support during these challenging Covid-19 times, students attainment, retention and progression- academic excellence. In that context, the paper will explore the definition of CoPs, discuss the importance of CoPs in higher education, how they operate, the benefits that accrue to stakeholders and how to cultivate them.

What is a Community of Practice?

A community of practice (CoP) refers to an *informal* group of people bound together by the *genuine* care and *passion* for real-life problems or hot topics, who regularly interact to learn together and from each other (Wenger et al., 2002).

Typically CoPs are characterised by self-organisation, free-flowing and creative knowledge-sharing that promote new approaches to challenges and tend to resist supervision and interference. CoPs are created for various reasons ranging from maintaining connections with peers, developing people skills, sharing best practice, responding to changes in the environment, solving problems, improving organisational performance to meeting new challenges (Wenger & Snyder, 2000), thereby driving organisational outcomes. However, despite its importance, implementing the concept of CoPs in organisations remains problematic and challenging (Addicott et al., 2006; Pyrko, Dorfler and Eden, 2017; Waring and Currie, 2009). There is a paradox associated with CoPs. Despite their self-organising, resistance to supervision and interference nature; they require managerial efforts to cultivate and integrate them into an organisation. Only then can their potential be fully realised and leveraged.

The importance of CoPs in Higher Education (HE) Teaching and Learning.

The CoP concept is underpinned by the social learning theory adopted in Higher Education Institutions (HEI). In the context of learning, Wenger-Trayner (2015) defines a CoP as:

“a self-governed learning partnership among people who share challenges, passion or interest, interact regularly, learn from and with each other, improve their ability to do what they care about and define what counts as competence in practice.”

CoPs are transformative through a trans-personal knowledge sharing process of 'thinking together' (Pyrko et al., 2017). Thus, CoPs play an important role in creating, sharing, and managing knowledge that the universities' community members own (Wenger, 2012). Similarly, Dei and Van de Walt (2020, p.1) argue that universities are naturally suitable for the application of CoPs for the following reasons:

- They usually possess a modern information infrastructure.
- Knowledge sharing is natural for their members.
- Knowledge acquisition is a natural desire of students, lecturers and administrators.

Communities of Practice (CoPs), a concept whose time is long overdue in Blended learning...Cont'd

Several studies in HEIs confirm this viewpoint. Sanchez-Cardona et al., (2012), concur that HEIs are natural environments for the development of CoPs. McDonald and Star (2008) argue that a CoP approach to teaching and learning offers staff and students opportunities to reflect and improve current teaching and learning practice collaboratively. McDonald et al., (2008) demonstrate how a 'CoP of professors in a business school enhanced professional support and development, dialogue and communication as well as generating a sense of mutual trust.' Similarly, Baker and Beames (2016) report the successful implementation of a CoP to support and retain Widening Participation students. These studies demonstrate that it is possible to cultivate CoPs in teaching and learning and highlight the potential to improve student achievement, retention and progression.

How do CoPs operate?

Wenger-Trayner, (2015) provides a simple model of CoPs as the cornerstone of a social discipline of learning to help with implementation (see Figure 1, below).

**Figure 1,
CoP Model**

A social discipline of learning
social learning capability in communities



[Source: Wenger-Trayner, 2015]

The model demonstrates that the CoP concept is organised around three structural elements: domain, community, and practice (Wenger et al., 2002). According to Wenger Trayner, (2015), the three core elements define the CoP as a social learning context; they are mutually defining and operate together as a set; each one is an aspect of the social discipline i.e.

“Domain- ‘what we are about, the definition of the area of shared inquiry and the key issues’;

Community- ‘the relationships among members and the sense of belonging; how we form a community and who should be part of it’ and

Practice- ‘the body of knowledge, methods, stories, cases, tools, documents; what application (practice) do we need to get better at’”

According to Wenger-Trayner (2015), the four arrows represent four distinct perspectives of constituencies for whom the CoP is important. Participation and leadership are within the circle of the CoP because; participation, ‘the “what’s in it for me,”- the learning imperative of members is the foundation of the social energy of a CoP’. In contrast, leadership, ‘having members who are ready to go the extra mile to nurture the community’ is a key success factor. The arrows outside the CoP circle ‘sponsorship and support need not be, and usually are not, performed by members.’ Essentially, support and sponsorship are avenues through which organisations can cultivate CoPs without directly supervising or interfering with their affairs...Cont'd

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The seven elements in the model represent developmental factors one must pay attention to when cultivating CoPs (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Also, Wenger (1998) emphasises that a robust learning design should involve:

- interactive technologies, communication facilities, joint tasks, availability of help, and peripherality (an indication of engagement);
- transparency, explanations, reflection, and pushing boundaries (an indication of imagination); and
- common focus, direction, plans, standards, policies, and distribution of authority (an indication of alignment.)

Thus, recent developments in technology, internet and social media favour the establishment of virtual learning CoPs.

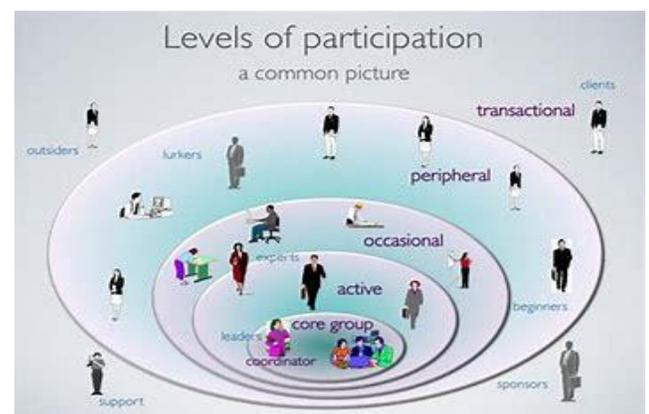
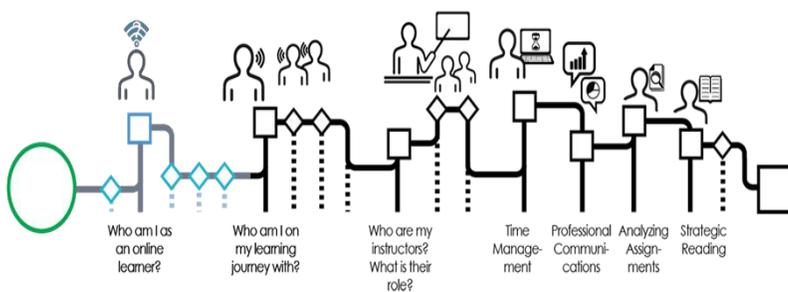
What are the Values of CoPs?

Gannon-Leary and Fontainha (2007) posit that engaging in CoP benefits both students and lecturers as it improves the teaching and learning environment. Johnson (2001) explains that:

“the learning that evolve from these communities is collaborative, in which the collaborative knowledge of the community is greater than any individual knowledge.”

Winkworth & Gannon-Leary's (1999), research using a virtual CoP discussion list to supplement their research, provides an example of this. Jashapara (2010) explains that the increasing interest in CoPs is that they offer significantly better benefits to organisations than more formalised networks. These synergistic assertions bring to mind notions of 'TEAM-Together Everyone Achieves More' and echo the African proverb, which says 'If you want to walk fast, walk alone; if you want to walk far, walk together.'

However, the irony is that while students' learning is enhanced through engagement with others through the extension of their capabilities to new higher levels' (Vygotsky, 1978), most students dislike working in groups. Hence, they decide to 'walk alone, but not going far' with their learning. In that context, this paper argues that there needs to be a shift in learners' mind-sets to embrace group work. Wenger et al., (2011) define five value-generating cycles within CoP; immediate, potential, applied, realised and reframed value. Smith et al., (2017), posit that the primary recipients of the values are the participants of CoPs, but value also accrues to organisations within which the CoPs operate and sponsors. Wenger-Trayner (2015) summarises the potential short-term and long-term benefits to both members and organisations (see Table 1 below)...Cont'd



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Table 1: The benefits of Communities of Practice

	Short-term value	Long-term value
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with challenges • Access to expertise • Synergies/Confidence • Edification, knowledge sharing • Fun with colleagues • Meaningful work • Trust • Sense of identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal development • Reputation and network • Professional identity. • Marketability • Voice and influence • Cyclical, fluid knowledge development • Reflective practice • Reflexivity
Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-solving • Time-saving • Knowledge sharing • Synergies across units • Reuse of resources • Recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic capabilities to drive strategy • Keeping abreast • Creativity and innovation • Talent retention • New strategies • Transfer of best practices

[Source: Adapted from Gannon-Leary & Fantainha, 2007, p.6; Wenger-Trayner, 2015]

Wenger and Snyder, (2000) emphasise that CoPs should not be confused with workgroups, project teams and informal networks as they are characteristically distinct. The authors provide a comparative table of the different groupings-see table 2:

Table 2: characteristics of formal and informal groupings in organisations

	Formal groupings		Informal groupings	
	Workgroup	Project team	Informal network	Community of practice
What is its purpose?	To deliver a product or service.	To accomplish a specific task.	To collect and pass on business information.	To develop members' capabilities; to build and exchange knowledge.
Who belongs?	Everyone who reports to the group's manager.	Employees assigned by senior management.	Friends and business acquaintances.	Members who select themselves.
What holds it together?	Job requirements and common goals.	Project milestones and goals.	Mutual needs.	Passion, commitment and identification with a group's expertise
How long does it last?	Until the next reorganisation.	Until the project is completed.	As long as people have a reason to connect.	As long as there is interest in maintaining the group.

[Source: Wenger & Snyder, 2000, p.142]

How to cultivate and influence CoP

As alluded to earlier, there is a strong consensus in the literature that any attempts to manage CoP from outside will be counterproductive (Hislop, 2013; Jashapara, 2010; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Direct control by management is arguably the most significant inhibitor to CoPs since they resist any attempt to supervise them. Hence, management should avoid attempting to initiate CoPs, but seek to facilitate those that already exist. Hislop (2013), identifies two approaches that management can adopt. First, he proposes a '*light touch*' approach by developing natural CoPs without formalising them- tending and nurturing them without controlling them...Cont'd

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Second, he advises that management attempts should aim to sponsor and reinforce features that support CoPs. Specifically, such attempts should:

- Emphasise peer-supported learning methods instead of formal classroom-style learning (Stamps, 2000),
- Ensure specific persons within the community take organising roles that sustain and develop the CoPs (Borzillo et al., 2011),
- Provide and strengthen the infrastructure that will enhance the CoP's means of interaction and ensure sufficient autonomy (McDermott 1999; Wenger and Snyder, 2000) and
- Use non-traditional means to assess the value of CoPs to the organisation (i.e. one way is listening to members' stories in a systematic way' (Wenger and Snyder, 2000).

Cultivating CoPs is not easy; it requires deliberate organisational decisions to educate, support, experiment and integrate into organisations. Table 3 below contains a summary, curated from the literature, of key success factors (CSF) and barriers that anyone wishing to initiate or cultivate CoPs should review and evaluate. A detailed discussion of the CSF and barriers is beyond the scope of this paper.

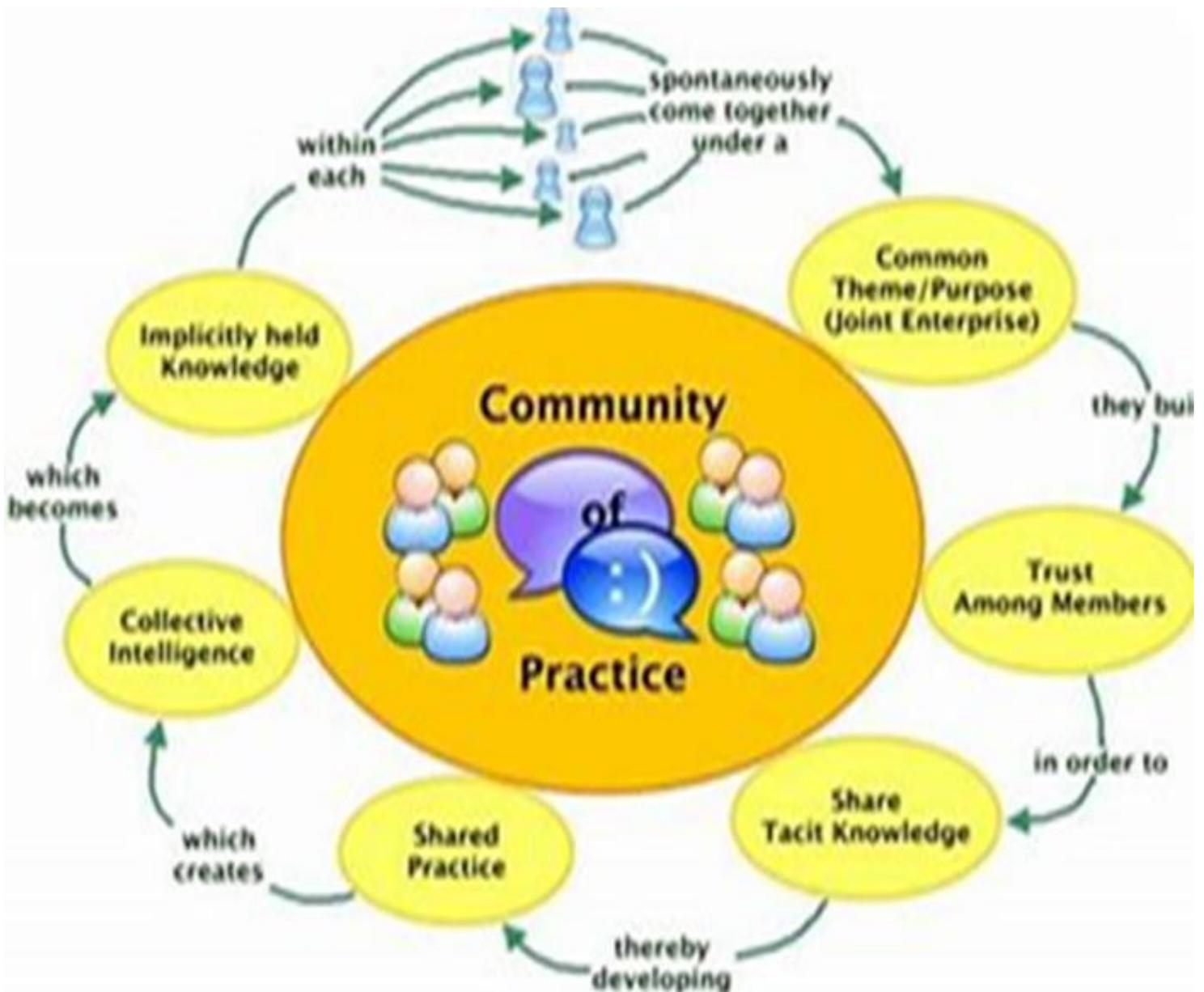
CSF Community	CSFs Organisation	Barriers/Failure risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domain that energises a core group • Skilful & reputable internal leadership • Involvement of experts • Focus on real issues of practice • Right rhythm & mix of activities. • Learning need overrides power relations • Trust • Cultural awareness • Sense of purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic relevance of domain • Visible engaged management sponsorship without micro-management • Adequate infrastructure & technological resources • Skilled support • Consistent attitude & trust • Institutional skills training-ICT & digital • Cultural awareness • Institutional acceptance of ICTs as communication media • High value for time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of organisational time allocation • Command and Control • Culture of independence • Disciplinary differences • Lack of face-to-face interactions to break the ice • Hidden identities • Shifting membership • Perpetuation versus change & diversity. • De-energising tasks and red tape • Complicated IT logistics • Leader neglect

[source: adapted from Gannon-Leary & Fontainha, 2007, p.6; Wenger-Trayner-2015]

In conclusion, the key take away from this review is that CoPs present a fertile organisational form (Wenger and Snyder, 2000) that provides a powerful avenue for establishing truly inclusive and mutually beneficial partnerships between students, academics, administrators and HEIs. Potential benefits can accrue to academic excellence in common interest areas such as teaching and learning design, assessment and feedback literacy, quality assurance and student support. Improvement in these common areas of interest will, in turn, drive the employability agenda, student achievements, retention and progression. The paper notes that the application of CoPs is fraught with implementation challenges. However, the paper contends that the challenges are not insurmountable; certainly, the benefits outweigh the costs...Cont'd

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As pointed out in the review, HEIs are better suited to apply the CoPs concept. They have all the requisite element within their control; modern ICT infrastructure, membership where knowledge sharing occurs naturally, knowledge acquisition is a natural common desire among stakeholders and trustful atmosphere. Hence what is needed is a deliberate strategic decision to cultivate or nurture CoPs by setting the right context that avoids any attempts to command or control them. Only then can the full potential of CoPs be unleashed and fully leveraged. Finally, this paper calls for action on your part by inviting you to contribute to this discussion, whether in agreement or disagreement. Here is your chance to contribute and edify the community that sustains this newsletter; will you take up the challenge?



In the next newsletter



Leadership in Healthcare

**Society influencing
people's ideals of the
perfect body**

Training Opportunities

**Creating demand in the
marketplace**

Upcoming Webinars

**Are male domestic abuse
victims' voices heard?**

**Effect of Strategic
Advertising on Sales
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