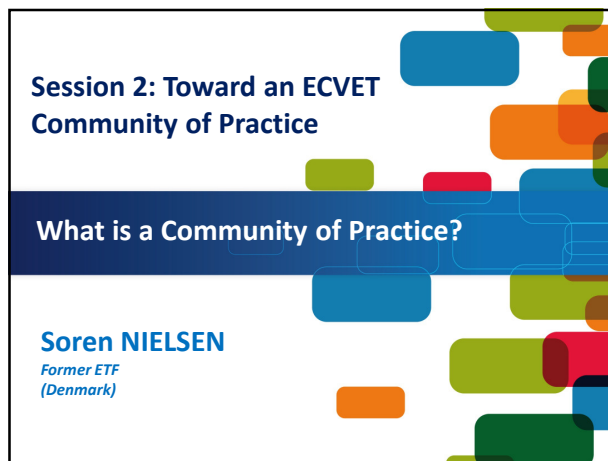




The Presentation

- Setting the context
- Why Communities of Practice (Cops)?
- What is a Cop?
- How – Experience in ETF
 - LEARN project 2007-09 (publication available from ETF)
 - TT project in Montenegro 2010-11 (manuscript in ETF)
- Some Barriers for Cops
- ECVET Network developing into Cops???

CEDEFOP ECVET

The Context

- ETF – countries outside the EU
- Transition countries
- Language and cultural barriers
- Policy learning approach
- Development of resourceful human beings (and not “human relations” or “human capital”)

CEDEFOP ECVET

Why Communities of Practice (Cops)?

- Old phenomenon but a new name

Cop – a general view today

- An important element in our understanding of how organizations learn
- Concerned about content rather than form
- Action-oriented
- Knowledge-based
- Uninhibited by organizational structures

Cop in the ETF “LEARN” project in the Western Balkans

- Groups of teachers, teacher educators and policymakers:
- With a common interest
- Who work together informally
- In a responsive
- Independent fashion
- To promote learning
- Solve problems
- And develop new ideas

WHY Cops – Summing up

- Old form of mutual/horizontal learning
- The “new” learning paradigm
- Vertical learning/conferences not enough
- Potentials for relevant/just-in-time learning for effective problem-solving among experts
- Better and cheaper

WHAT is a Community of Practice?

- A group sharing a specific practice
- A group interested in learning from each other – and together
- A group with an ambition to share ideas, papers, models etc. – in a specific area

■ Altogether:

Etienne Wenger's definition of a Cop

..... YOU?



Community of Practice – the elements

■ Domain

The definition of the area of shared inquiry and of the key issues

■ Community

The relationships among members and the sense of belonging

■ Practice

The body of knowledge, methods, stories, cases, tools, documents, etc.



Cop – the need for support

Communities of Practice will need some light-handed guidance and technology infrastructure

- *Provide some process support, coaching, and logistic assistance*
- *Identify needs and define adequate infrastructure without undue emphasis on fancy technology*



Cops - Encouragement

Practitioners usually see the value of working as a community but may feel the organization is not aligned with their understanding

- *Find sponsors to encourage participation*
- *Value the work of communities*
- *Publicize successes*



A platform and some support

- A room for the Cop where they can put documents and share experience
 - Could be in 'Moodle'
 - Could be in 'In-groups'
 - Could be 'Facebook'
- Good and valid experience should be made available for all by putting it on the website
- Authorities (EAC, CEDEFOP, Governments) should support the CoP and frequently show their interest – they could also ask the CoP to do something useful for the authorities

Critical success factors

CoP	Organisation/nation
▪ Domain that energizes a core group	▪ Strategic value and relevance of domain
▪ Skillful coordinator with good reputation	▪ Visible management sponsorship, but without micro-management
▪ Involvement of experts	▪ Formal and informal structures
▪ Address details of practice	▪ Adequate resources
▪ Right rhythm and mix of activities	▪ Consistent attitude among actors
▪ Communication opportunities	▪ NB! Transnational CoPs

HOW: The ETF 'LEARN' project

- Built on the ETF VET TT Network for the Western Balkans (2002-09) – a process of gradual community building
 - Forming* (Sofia, 2002)
 - Storming* (Dubrovnik, 2003)
 - Norming* (Skopje, 2003)
 - Performing* (Tirana, 2004 to Sakarya, 2009)
- Built on a policy learning approach

HOW: The ETF 'LEARN' project

8 countries – 4 levels (policy, provision, principal, teacher)

- **Domain:** improvement of teaching and learning in VET
- **Community:** policymakers, teachers, school leaders, VET Centres
- **Practice:** annual conference, workshops, national projects, exchange of good practice, electronic platform, visits to one another

HOW: The ETF 'LEARN' project



- CoPs place the responsibility for creating and managing knowledge in the hands of practitioners who use this knowledge in performing their tasks
- LEARN succeeded in creating a horizontal transnational learning platform in a context of top-down teaching being the dominant approach
- The project forged links between VET experts at different system levels from 8 countries with troubled recent histories



LEARN as a CoP – Lessons learned



1. When VET specialists are brought together and given a free learning space, they quickly realise how much they can learn from each other. A horizontal relationship develops with a focus on how their respective experiences can be made use of.
2. The web-based platform was the least used learning tool.
3. The CoP and the web-based learning networks will need to become closer linked



HOW: Horizontal learning in CoP in Montenegro 2010-11



- **Community:** A national project involving 20 teachers from 10 VET schools in Montenegro and the national VET Centre in a national CoP
- **Domain:** New approach to school-based teacher competence development
- **Activity:** Experience-sharing from local pilot projects in own schools
 - Learning from practice
 - Learning from each other
 - Learning from knowledge sharing
 - Learning from experts/facilitators

(Manuscript for a 'HANDBOOK' is delivered to ETF)



Barriers for CoPs



- Expectations!!!
- The balance between organiser (CEDEFOP, EAC) and participants (ECVET Network)
- Right timing of topics in relation to national problem-solving needs
- The need for careful preparation and agreement on support & resources
- The interplay between the *internal* networks and the *external* network



What I thought about the ECVET Network as a CoP?

- A group sharing a specific practice
- A group interested in learning from each other – and together
- A group with the ambition to share ideas, papers, models, etc. – in a specific area

Altogether:

- **A good example of a CoP**

In which area(s)???

Focus on you as a group

- To what extent are you a CoP?
- What would you call the domain?
- What practice do you have in common?
- What rules must be decided for the Community in order to function well?
- What are the valuable opportunities and which obstacles can be foreseen?

Let's start now....

- ***What are the issues?***
- ***How shall we engage?***
- ***What can we do?***

..... dialogue