Role of Transitory Communities of Practice in Business School Collaborative Knowledge-sharing Projects: from the partner's perspective

Christopher Brown, Philip Frame

[1]University of Hertfordshire, Marketing & Enterprise
[2]Middlesex University Business School, Principal Lecturer

Abstract
This paper explores the essential roles that academics, graduates/post-graduates and small enterprise owner-managers play when working together on knowledge-sharing projects The study uses six projects to explore the life cycle of these transitory Communities of Practice (CoP) and how they can provide an effective means for sharing knowledge and expertise. This investigation is significant as such sharing of knowledge and expertise is the basis of the increasingly informal knowledge management structures such as networks and open innovation communities. How this is achieved, we suggest is based on two factors: the stakeholders and the transitory CoPs. The stakeholders are the SME managers, academics and newly employed graduates (associates), who co-creat value by capturing, analysing and disseminating new-to-enterprise knowledge and experience. They achieve this via temporary CoPs which have their own life cycle of creation, growth and maturity/destruction.

1 Introduction

Collaborative projects between Business Schools (BSs) and the Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) community are a valuable way by which BS's support economic development and inform academics of current developments in the field of practice. This study explores the value of these projects for all stakeholders through the outputs of the CoPs they temporarily co-create.

Reports by Wilson and by Young have highlighted the importance of growing the SME sector to help rebalance the economy away from its previous over-dependence on the City (Leitch 2006; Wilson 2012; Young 2013). SMEs account for more than 99.9% of UK businesses, generating over £1.23 trillion in turnover and employing more than 13 million workers, as reported by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA 2006). The UK government is looking towards SMEs to help grow the economy and provide future employment (Young 2013). Yet these SMEs face particular

challenges in their ability to react quickly to the threats and opportunities in the marketplace. Many of the difficulties revolve around the very attributes that have previously made them successful and adaptable in the past, as reported by Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR, 2009:24):

- resource capacity and limitations on access to knowledge and expertise;
- enterprise culture that is most often dominated by the owner-manager;
- management practices that are both informal and tacit;
- lacking the ability in most cases to influence and shape their enterprise environment.

This paper identifies the learning associated with collaborative projects, involving the setting up of transitory Communities of Practice (CoP) between SME managers, recent graduates and business school academics. The term Transitory is used deliberately to capture the temporary nature of the community and its members. The authors particularly focus on the different member‘s perspectives and behaviours associated with development of these knowledge-sharing community. The analysis focuses on six case studies, two highly successful, two that met the original brief, and two that did not complete. The next section highlights the background research associated with the initial conceptual framework used to explore the collaborative projects.

2 Literature Review

Knowledge management (KM) is a critical skill that all enterprises need to manage in today’s knowledge economy (Dalkir 2005). All enterprises, throughout their life cycle, will face the challenge of pivotal points when what decisions are taken will determine the survival and growth of the enterprise (Phelps, Adams et al. 2007; Harorimana 2013). It is imperative that at these points enterprises can create or capture new knowledge to develop solutions to such challenges.

Since people are the most important conduits of information on knowledge and experience, then allowing employees sufficient time to codify these areas is essential. These knowledge workers are five times more likely to turn to another person, for such information, either inside or outside the organization, than to any formal database or KM system (Cross and Parker 2004). These learning activities whereby people engage in tacit-tacit, and explicit-explicit, knowledge-sharing are an essential part of building social capital (Cohen and Prusak 2001) and CoPs. Increasingly, such one-to-one organisational knowledge exchanges are hard to maintain in their traditional form, such as informal hall talks and coffee area small talk (Garavan, Carbery et al. 2007), because people may not be in close proximity to one another, or they work in small enterprises. Interestingly communities are still created, whereby partners exchange knowledge & experuence both within the organization and outside it. Yet there is little research that studies the dynamics of these community partners when the stakeholders are from very

diverse backgrounds such as private and public sectors. University-enterprise collaborative CoPs are special cases of CoP's where the initial intention is set up the community to service the needs of the project. The partners are also very diverse in their knowledge and experience areas: the SME manager with bespoke knowledge of the market and their business model; the academic with a wider knowledge based of multiple sectors and application of theory to practice; and lastly, the graduates (associate) with specially chosen skills in project management and knowledge dissemination.

2.1 Knowledge Sharing in the SME Community

Communities of Practice (CoP) are often formed and maintained by "a group of people having a common identity, professional interests and that undertake to share, participate and establish a fellowship" (Dalkir, 2005:112). These communities differ from other types of networks, such as "project teams", "cross-functional teams" and other inter-organisational teams (Probst and Borzillo 2008) in that the roles of partners are not formally assigned or specific to one task. Secondly, the community value is measured by the quantity and quality of the exchanges of knowledge, experience and skills. The authors assert that CoP's are usually expected to persist and grow, long after the initial rationale for the community has been reached. In fact, CoPs can be long-standing or transitory. They are frequently created for a specific purpose, such as the sharing of knowledge in respect of a specific area, thereby enhancing all parties' learning, and co-creating a value for this community from such sharing (Seufert, Krogh et al. 1999; Adams and Freeman 2000). This shared value is based on both knowledge in action of the partners (see below for a formal definition) and the formal propositional knowledge presented by the individuals to the community, during its life cycle.

CoP's between Business Schools and Small Enterprises are unique communities bringing together partners that would not normally share the same formal professional affiliations, or informal enterprise support networks. Yet they exhibit many of the basic characteristics or traits associated with general CoPs: a common goal (or joint enterprise), mutual engagement (overall commitment) and a shared repertoire (interest in finding solutions to enterprise challenges), see figure 1 below:

Fig. 1. Characteristics of transitory CoPs (adapted from Wenger, 1997)

A community only reaches it full potential when it has matured and stewardship of the different knowledge levels creates value for the majority of its Partners, trust and identity have been established and partners take on responsibility to embed the knowledge (Dalkir 2005). This suggests to us that communities, have a life cycle, one that involves creation, growth,l maturity and ending, very similar to a enterprises life-cycle (Lippitt and Schmidt 1967). The life cycle model of these CoP's must be aligned with the different Knowledge Management (KM) roles and responsibilities, and importantly needs of its community partners, adapted from Dalkir (2005) :

- Knowledge journalist – helps build, identify and extract valuable content from community members;
- Knowledge taxonomist – helps organize content once its produced;
- Knowledge archivist – helps store knowledge and experience, gaining support for changing enterprise processes, systems and strategy.

In the case of this specific study, the journalist equates to the academic, the taxonomist is the associate and the archivist is the company supervisor.

Maturity models have been used in knowledge management cycles for a number of years, reflecting the learning, competencies and enterprise strategy they encompass (Dalkir 2005). These maturity model often start with the realization for the need for new knowledge and that the existing structures are insufficient to support this need. As these structures develop so does the processes needed to support the capture, analyse and dissemination of this important knowledge and expertise. Later the processes are themselves optimized and refined, sometimes they may be terminated as and when the need changes. This model can also be applied to the CoP where the life cycle represents a road map which identifies the different stages these communities go through, from creation through to transition, transitioning into a more formal process/structure or termination (Dalkir 2005). Applying the roles of the different community members to the life cycle of the transitory CoP suggests the following:

- In the first phase the knowledge journalist helps to establish the parameters of the community's common goal and define the requirements for coalescing knowledge needs, to manage the knowledge acquisition against available resource capacity. Key to the success of the knowledge journalist is their ability to develop a successful relationship with the other members, where commitment and trust are central factors (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Commitment is the members desire to maintain an on-going relationship with the other members. Yet commitment is based on trust, defined here as the reliability and integrity of all members to deliver on the project goals;
- The second phase is driven largely by the knowledge taxonomist who then provides stewardship in organizing and establishing new processes/systems for retaining the knowledge;
- The third phase requires the knowledge archivist to transform this new knowledge into value delivering decision-making actions, and then link this with future enterprise strategy.

The development of the transitory CoP during these three phases is an iterative process (see figure 2).

Fig. 2 – Transitory Communities of Practice Life Cycle

The three phases typify the process of creation, growth and transformation in any community, but in the case of the transitory CoP represents a temporary structure, one that has a, initial limited timeframe. The temporal nature of the CoP's relates to the original common goal, to capture, analysis and disseminate new knowledge and expertise, upon which the premise of the CoP is often founded, that and creating competitive differentiation (Dobni 2012). The sCoP's life cycle resembles the organizational knowing framework where is this from? You, someone else are the three phases below the same as or relate to the three phases identified above? You may need to differentiate them a little more and then include in a third figure?, where knowledge is created, shared and stored by an integration of three primary processes:

- Sense-making – the understanding and interpretation that is undertaken as a shared community, agreeing to shared meanings of the action and outcomes undertaken by the community – this is aligned with Phase 1;
- Knowledge creation – new knowledge is acquired and shared across all community partners – Phase 2;
- Decision-making – shared decisions are made based on the shared knowledge and sense-making – Phase 3.

The sCoP life cycle is built upon the continuous process of learning and reflection of its members.

3 Research Methodology

When studying collaborative projects involving multiple partners it is important to understand the unit of analysis and then justify the appropriateness of the research methods chosen. Our subjects are the owner-managers of the small enterprises, the academics who were mentoring and coaching the owner-managers and the associates, and finally the associates themselves. Six enterprise collaborative projects were chosen from the many projects undertaken at the business school related to knowledge-sharing. Since the study is exploring the perceptions of these partners and the situated environment surrounding the projects, qualitative research presented itself as the most appropriate. as (Denzin and Lincoln 2011) testify:

> *"qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 3).*

In this study the authors used qualitative research to explore the assumptions and frameworks (Creswell, Creswell et al. 2013) identified in the literature review above to unwrap the research problem in order to understand and interpret the meaning these community partners ascribe to the benefits and costs associated with the projects and the situated environment within which these take place.

3.2 Research Strategy

To study these issues above, the authors use six case studies, where data has been collected from the informal discussions, project documentation and observations of the individual partners (equating to over 40 interview transcripts, 100 pages of project notes and observations). The project notes included the weekly progress meetings, the interim quarterly reports sent into the Technology Strategy Board as part of the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) management, and the end of project reports authored by the three principal partners in the project. The process of data analysis was one of collating and organizing the many different sources and then identifying the resultatnt themes by the systematic application of coding tools (Creswell, Creswell et al. 2013). Two principle analytical tools were used: Qualitative Research Software (QRS) l and cognitive mapping. Following core and axial coding, themes were grouped around the elements identified in our conceptual framework above, see figure 02. As the authors reviewed the texts they identifed text segments that related to the themes referred to above which created between 35 core codes. A further analysis of these core codes led to the creation of 8 axial codes, or central themes, that help combine and reduce the original core codes (Crabtree and Miller 1992). It is these 8 themes that then helped enable the writing of the final narrative in the discussion and conclusion sections of the study.

The analysis is supported by typical quotations from the stakeholders.

3.3 Case Studies

Six enterprise case studies were chosen. Table 1 provides some contextual details on the enterprises and the primary reasons behind the initial collaborative project.

Table 1: *Case Studies - For profit enterprises (on KTP or K4B schemes)*

The six case studies all involving enterprises seeking additional knowledge and experience in taking on a new challenge. These included introducing a new Information System (IS), new Information Technology (IT) processes, or determining a strategy to enter a new domestic or international market.

4 Findings

The research findings are presented using the three main themes from the sCoP's life cycle framework, see figure 2. above, and the axial codes.

Phase 1: Before Knowledge Exchange

The process starts with the recognition that the enterprises have a challenge that their current resources cannot solve. Of all the initial inquiries received by business schools, nearly 99% are initiated for one of four reasons:

- A recommendation from another enterprise colleague;
- They have tried everywhere else;
- They already have a relationship with the university;
- They have been attracted to talk to the university through the website or a cold call.

Almost all 'first contact' enquiries result in an initial scoping meeting where a enterprise-facing representative, knowledge transfer manager, brings together the enterprise representative with one or more academics. At this first, and follow-on, meetings, the discussion very quickly turns to the value deliverables: what can be delivered to the enterprise, to the academics and the potential value to the recruited associate, and what knowledge is needed.

Expected *Business Value* *– driven by the enterprise's enterprise model*

Enterprises A and C both came to the university because of the opportunity to work with academics and students on a new venture. The remaining four identified the university as a valuable institution by which they would be offered relevant information and advice to help achieve their particular goals and objectives. Key factors identified in the selection of the business school focused on perceived knowledge, credibility and certainty of delivery.

All enterprises highlighted the importance of their existing current knowledge, and its effectiveness in delivering enterprise value (revenue and profitability) to their previous success, yet equally they were aware of the need for new knowledge:

> *"We are very reactionary – we use our current knowledge to serve the customer, but it does not help create future business or even generate sustainable competitiveness ... [Enterprise Manager, Enterprise A]*

Most of the enterprises believed their success resulted from their customer relationship management and their market knowledge. Nearly all anticipated growing by 5% per annum over the next three years, after starting the project.

Associate/Recent Associate Value

Enterprise F had already had a successful project with the University, and so we had already built up an element of trust and loyalty. The associate exhibited high levels of motivation, and commitment to making themselves invaluable to the enterprise and putting into practice what they had learned based on previous action-learning opportunities within the business school programe – enterprise and employabilty modules are core in all three years of study:

> *"after my interview, I knew my insights and approach would work well alongside my company supervisor. I felt really confident in being able to make a real contribution" [Grad Intern, Ent. F]*

"half way through our original project, the orders dried up. So the business school was brought in to help develop new markets, this was new ground for me. I wanted to learn and develop new skills, and knew that my logical approach would be invaluable to helping to achieve the key deliverables." [Grad Intern, Ent. E]

Academic Value – *applying theory to practice*

Fifteen academics were engaged, directly or indirectly, in knowledge sharing over the lifetime of these collaborations. In the majority of cases the academics' primary goals were the opportunity to link theory with practice, to undertake action research. Many of them cited the value of bringing these experiences back into the classroom to demonstrate the value and contribution of Problem-Based Learning (PBL). These same academics were also research active, previously focusing on academic publishing where the readership is other like-minded academics. These same academics saw the opportunity to focus on publishing to practitioners, thus widening their audience and the implications of their research.

"this is the first such collaborative project I've engaged in. I can now see that one of the key outcomes for me will be the development of new skills in communicating my knowledge in a very practitioner friendly way." [Academic, Ent. A]

Phase 2: Knowledge Exchange to Create Value

Most of the enterprises that came to the university have characteristics that make them effective networkers:

1. They are often embedded in their local economy and SME community
2. They rely on reputation and trust in their enterprise transactions
3. They often have a strong commitment to their employees
4. They are also not solely focused on profit maximisation.

This networking capability is enhanced through the transitory CoP's activities. By searching for new knowledge and experience that will create value, they develop a shared meaning:– they coalesce:

"combining our existing knowledge of customer needs from different sectors with the academics skills of the processes to reach out to a significant number and thus provide the viability of targeting this sector as an income stream." [Enterprise Manager, Ent. E]

Business Value *– Using knowledge exchange to find new markets*

Four out of six projects were directly or indirectly seeking new markets. They all understood the transitions their respective industries were going through. Because of this

they were reaching out for new ways to create value that both increased their competitiveness and delivered new income streams.

> *"We need new markets to help us grow and develop our full capacity, and through these we will become stronger and more competitive …[Enterprise Manager, Enterprise A]*

Within the first six months of working with their respective academic partners they acknowledged how they have changed their opinions of academics, knowing that they don't all live in 'ivory towers':

> *".... I would have been the first to accuse academics of living in ivory towers, but I admit to being wrong. Within six months we had a strong working relationship that was delivering Quick Wins." [Enterprise Manager, Ent. A]*

Associate/Recent Associate Value

Over 55% of the associates (graduates) recruited to these projects had only one previous job following graduation. These associates along with the other more experienced graduates had ambitious aims around the opportunity to link previously taught theories and models with real practice. Many of them had not previously sought employment in the SME sector, because of perceptions around promotion, salary and diversity of job experience.

> *"three months into the collaborative project …. I've already had many of my previous perceptions of what working in a small enterprise would be like, blown away. What gets me rushing to work in the morning is the thought that another opportunity will come up where I can make a direct impact on the fortunes of the enterprise. " Associate, Ent. A]*

This second point supports the graduate value from engaging in strategic projects with small business, the idea of real impact of their work – the true contribution they make day-by-day.

Academic Value

Enterprise D are like most of the other enterprises who approach the university, they already have an idea at what they want, they are looking for a partner who can help deliver it. Yet, the outcome of this partnership is a healthier respect and trust in the value oft he academic involvement. In 50% of the projects we find the enterprise manager maintains the relationship after project completion, often involving a follow-on project. The academics can see the value, through enhanced enterprise skills and competencies, better understanding of the sector and respect fort he impact of their research on the small business community:

> *"working with this innovative enterprise has directly contributed to my core competencies and skills, I know that together with the other project partners*

we can really deliver value to the enterprise ……." [Academic Mentor, Ent. C]

Collaborative research and consultancy projects are emerging from this engagement with the SME community:

> *"small business brand management research emerged from our discussions with the enterprise, the importance of managing their technlogical innovative products, this is one side of their asset management, the other is the brand around this. We have used this along with other work in the technology-driven sector to create an applied research project ……." [Academic Mentor, Ent. F]*

Phase 3: Sustaining Community – Transformation of the Enterprise

Expectations were very high at the beginning of the collaborative projects about the attainment of this phase of the community's life cycle. Three primary goals are common across all enterprises that engage in the knowledge-sharing activities: opportunity to engage and benefit from open innovation, creation of a new resource capacity and enhanced skills and competencies.

Business Value *– good results and favourable actions*

All projects under knowledge-sharing at the Business School are front-end loaded with quick-wins, quickly achievable outcomes that add to the revenue and profit streams. It is through this that the projects achieve further ‚buy-in' from the rest of the enterprise. The long-term deliverables were more easily achieved through a general change in attitude of the enterprises' employees by:

- raising their overall aspirations of the expected project deliverables;
- having more confidence in both the associate and academic contributions;
- feeling more confident in using the new knowledge and experience to make difficult decisions which would have a positive impact on the financials of the enterprise

60% of the enterprises involved in these collaborative projects attested to the beneficial changes in their enterprise model as a direct consequence of the actions of the community. Most had accommodated changes in their enterprise processes to bring in the new learning.

> *"We have all learnt a lot during this project, and we now have a very useable formal structure to base our future foreign market developments. This has come about because of our deeper understanding of the important elements of our business model. Those components that deliver and add value to the customer journey, our customer relationship and channel management……[Director, Enterprise F]*

The anticipation of new revenue and profit streams is a key value for the enterprises. Ultimately this was a key component of the enterprises' case for the initial investment in the collaborative project.

> *"We were excited about working with the academic and the associate, we could see initial value in having a new set of eyes on the business. But we were also sold on the medium-term deliver of new markets to us, this would be additional revenue above anything we could have done……[Director, Enterprise A]*

Associate/Recent Graduate Value

Those enterprises that engaged and stretched out for new knowledge and experience, were surprised how quickly this came about because of the resident associate. Associates were heavily focused on initially delivering those quick wins, using their initial audit of the existing processes and systems to suggest easy implementable changes to improved effectiveness. This was highly beneficial for the associate as it boosted their confidence, and provided evidence of the value of their contribution to the enterprise. A secondary outcome of this was a confidence to suggest more risky changes and additions to the business model, one's that would deliverable higher returns. Most associates received an offer from the enterprises to stay on and head-up the departments they helped form or change. All the result of the enterprise having confidence in their ability and developed experience :

> *"my satisfaction levels are extremely high with regards to the outcomes of the project …. We did this during the recession when British manufacturing was on a downturn. This has given me massive amounts of experience that I could not get anywhere else. " [Associate, Ent. E]*

Academic Value

Quite often the academics noticed a transformation in the enterprise managers mindset. This transformational process was facilitated through three main interactional activities in all of the projects reported here:

1. To work with the enterprise manager to understand their perspective of the business model, and how it delivered value tot he enterprise?
2. To agree on those areas that needed changing, and to focus on those specifically suited tot he knowledge and expertise that the academic could contribute to?
3. To define the specific role and responsibilities of the academic in affecting the transformation?

The first task of these was always the hardest, to get the enterprise manager to open up to their perspective of the business model. Effectively helping them to understand the challenges and weaknesses of certain components:

> *"My first task was to understand the nature of the enterprise manager I was working with. Once I understood their concerns and character, then I felt*

confident that the solutions that the associate and myself were developing would work." [Academic, Ent. A]

The solutions had to be acknowledged by the enterprise manager as addressing those challenges that they themselves are top priority. That is the most challenging for the academic:

"I never had a problem with the company supervisors, it was the two sons oft he owner-manager. It was the owner-manager who refused to accept the need for change ....." [Academic, Ent. B]

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

In discussing the findings above, particularly the level of value generated as a consequence of the different collaborative projects, the authors have focused on the perceptions of the three key community partners: enterprise manager(s), associate(s) and academic(s). Enterprise managers often engage on these collaborative projects, accepting the need to create transitory CoPs as a discursive strategy, not really instinctively buying-in to need for it (Swan, Scarbrough et al. 2002). Previous general research on university-business collaboration have identified trust as one of the strongest mechanisms for lowering the barriers to effective interaction, but have not identified where trust is important o rat what phase of the collaboration (Bruneel, D'Este et al. 2010). This study identifies it as being particular important during phase 1 & 2, and particularly between enterprise manager and associate, again stressing the pivotal role that the associate plays in negotiating this trust and its impact on their ability to deliver on the tangible deliverables (increased revenue and profitability). Equally, the enterprise manager and academic need to share the role of sponsor in the first phase of the creation of this transitory CoP, the academic helping to assess and disseminate the value achieved in the short-term, and then devolve his sponsor role tot he associate. Previous research (Wenger, McDermott et al. 2002; Probst and Borzillo 2008) on CoPs has suggested that the sponsor assesses and control delivery of value. This study suggests that the sponsor is a dynamic role, often shared, that needs to change hands as the CoP develops in ist delivery of value. Established wisdom from previous research (Wenger and Snyder 2000) on the rational for the life cycle of CoPs suggests they survive until interest in maintaining or completion of the project terminates them. However, the findings from this study suggests that the original reason for the transitory CoP may still exist but that one or more sponsors may actually withdraw their support regardless of the continuing support from all other community members. In this study this happen in over 33% of the projects, and when drilling down deeper into the rationale, it was commonly driven by a conflict between the original goals of the CoP and the enterprise manager's perception of loss of autonomy.

The findings identified that over time some of these enterprise managers adapted their mindsets about the contribution available through the transitory CoP, and held these

beliefs beyond the project completion, employing the associate to maintain and embed this into the enterprises systems.

Additional outcome of this study is a new taxonomy of community learning for university-enterprise collaborative projects, see table 2 below.

Table 2: Taxonomy of the Business School/Small Enterprise Transitory Communities of Practice (CoP)

The transitory CoP's outcomes and deliverables during the initial phases 1 – 3 of the lifecycle are heavily influenced by the enterprise manager, acting as primary sponsor. Initially enterprise managers were highlight sceptical about the value of the graduates skills to helping deliver the project goals, instead depending on the supporting academics. In Phase 2 and 3, this situation flipped where nearly all enterprise managers depended more and more on the associates to deliver the final business value. Other research into graduate skills value to micro- and small enterprises has suggested that graduates are unlikely to want to work in these enterprises, and question their usefulness (Pittaway and Thedham 2005). The academics in these transitory CoPs play an equally valuable role in co-sponsoring the CoP gaining and building the value of its outcomes, the new knowledge and expertise. The academic offers additional support to the associate and enterprises manager who in the latter phases take on the co-sponsor role. They help them understand the wider value of the new knowledge and expertise, often around new management tools, and approaches to presenting this knowledge in ways to gain overall acceptance and appreciation of the wider business value. Existing literature on CoPs discusses the importance of sponsors, but does little to explore or quantify the skill shortages they have in re-presenting this new knowledge internally (Probst and Borzillo 2008).

In summary, this research has made a number of contributions to both theory and practice. First, in the taxonomy of a transitory CoP in linking the success/failure to transform enterprises based on the success/failure of the different community members to commit to their expected roles/responsibilities. Second, previous studies tended to assume an automatic life cycle of CoPs based on the initial creation need. This study suggests that there are two important transition phases that need to be achieved before real transition can be achieved. Third, that in addition to the three important roles required of community members, the role of taxonomist is a key role in the growth and establishment of this transitory CoP and the likelihood of it surviving beyond the project. Hence, the recruitment of the right graduate to undertake this role is critical.

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Tables, Figures

Table 1: *Case Studies - For profit enterprises (on KTP or K4B schemes)*

Type of Enterprise	No. of Employees	Reasons for the Project
Enterprise A Metals Recycling (K4B)	40 – 50 workers	New Competencies in Channel Expansion and Management
Enterprise B Printing (K4B)	30 – 40 workers	Market evaluation and development of a new enterprise model
Enterprise C Renovation materials (KTP)	10- 15 workers	New enterprise systems
Enterprise D Retail Systems Integrator (KTP)	100 – 120 workers	New marketing and CRM systems
Enterprise E Moulded Plastics (KTP)	20 – 25 workers	New Markets and Supplier Chains
Enterprise F Air Product Manufacturer (KTP)	40 – 45 workers	Product Portfolio Analysis

Table 2: Taxonomy of the Business School/Small Enterprise Transitory Communities of Practice (CoP)

Phase & **Key Activities**	**Key Community Members &** **Roles**	**Key Benefits (Value)**
One Common Goal, Identity, Trust	**Enterprise Managers** Expected to be fully engaged, commit resources, and have the ability to lead the longer term CoP goals and objectives. **Associate** Leader skills and competencies in using relevant tools, and taking on project management and leading change tasks. **Academics** Understanding of organisational issues relating to new CoP's – those cultural factors likely to implied its creation and growth.	**Enterprise** Initially linked to the Enterprises' overall strategic needs – from the original project aims. Including quick wins – linked to additional revenue and profit. **Associate** Opportunity of developing professional skills and competencies around managing disruptive innovation. **Academic** Gain experience as a mentor and coach to the enterprise manager to become both active sponsor and liaison to outside resources that will be needed later.
Two Creating Value	**Enterprise Managers** Interpretative skills and further resource recruitment, understanding what components of the business model are being challenged; **Associate**	**Enterprise** Accessing the wider university resource capacity, creating further value from additional knowledge and expertise. **Associate**

	Creative enterprise case presenter, active co-participant with the owner-managers in creating a enterprise case for growth and important attitudinal and behavioural change; **Academic**s Facilitator and arbitrator of knowledge-sharing conflicts – most often revolving around understanding the enterprise mindset, and then cajoling a change.	Positivist attitude towards working in small businesses. The opportunity represented by this type of collaborative project in providing strategic change opportunities. **Academic** Follow-on projects achieved once mutual trust and valued deliverables are demonstrated. Often further output for research output, thus helping to demonstrate research impact.
Three Stability, Extending the Community, New Community Partners	**Enterprise Managers** Visionary and strategic leadership, co-leading change in the business model and the business systems; **Associate** Disseminator and trainer of new community members to take over key functions/roles; **Academics** Further support and advice on opportunities for enterprise growth.	**Enterprise** Importance of knowledge exploitation and gaining wide-spread employee acceptance of value. **Associate** Knowledge, expertise and confidence in undertaking a enterprise-wide strategic project – involving leading change. **Academic** Managing an exit strategy, ensuring that the transitory CoP has the opportunity to survive and grow. Equally, assuring that if the associate leaves any processes/systems associated with knowledge capture, analysis and dissemination are documented and embedded in the enterprise.

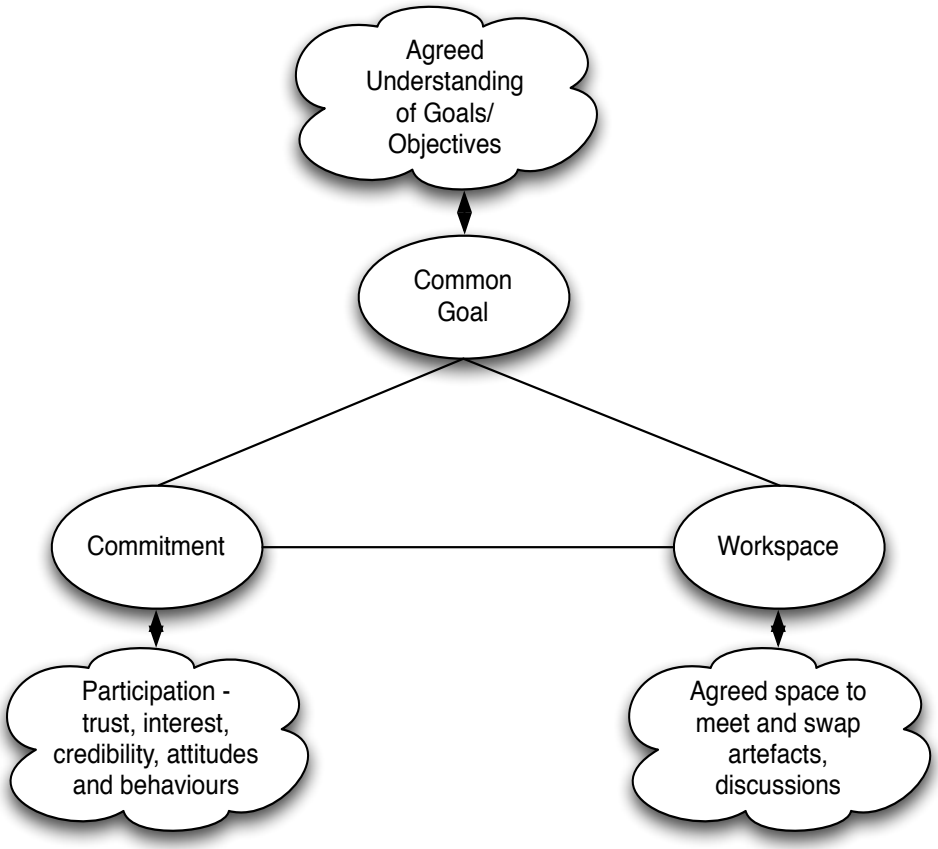

Fig. 1. Characteristics of transitory CoPs (adapted from Wenger, 1997)

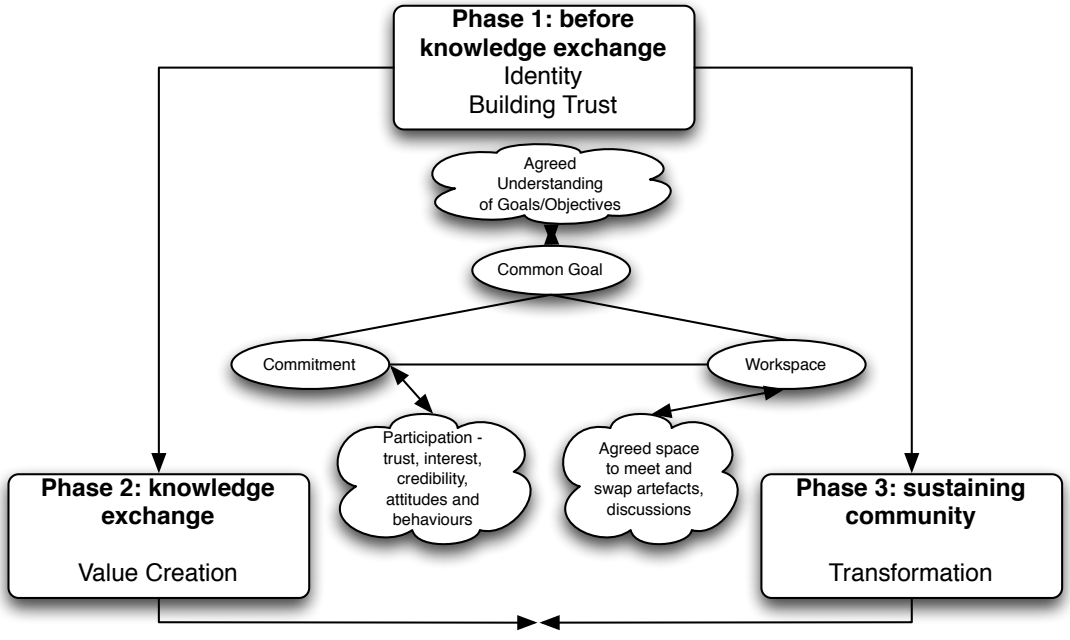

Fig. 2 – Transitory Communities of Practice Life Cycle

Keywords

Innovation, Collaborative Projects, Communities of Practice, Knowledge-sharing, Small Business