

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Learning communities are groups of people who support each other in their learning agendas, working together on projects, learning from one another as well as from their environment and engaging in a collective socio-cultural experience where participation is

transformed into a new experience or new learning (Rogoff, 1994; Wilson & Ryder, 1998). Learning communities represent an intentional restructuring of students' time, credit and learning experiences around an interdisciplinary theme to foster more explicit intellectual and emotional connections between students, between students and their faculty, and between disciplines (MacGregor, Smith, Tinto, & Levine, 1999). Learning communities act as academic and social support structures that allow students to learn in more authentic and challenging ways. They are considered informal learning environments, moving the emphasis from teaching to learning. Communities of practice and knowledge building communities are synonymous constructs however, the term learning communities may be perceived as a broader or more loosely defined term that encompasses any social network or infrastructure that brings people together to share and pursue knowledge.