

## Package One: Communities of Practice in Early Learning and Care

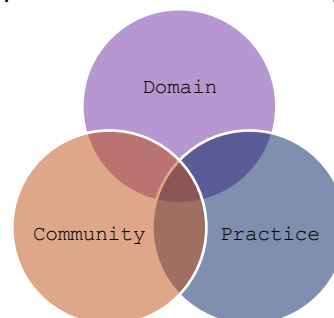
**Package Duration:** 10 hours

### Objectives

- To develop a shared understanding and common baseline of their area. This will over time enable them to focus their creative energies on more advanced issues of practice and explore new possibilities in practice.
- To foster their professional identity, develop competencies and manage knowledge. To maintain expertise in topics important to the job.
- To intentionally cultivate a space where the learning they do is valued, and where they prosper.
- To nurture participation through providing a social forum that supports the evolving nature of knowledge and the sharing of tacit knowledge through interactions, storytelling and conversations.
- To develop internal processes for managing the value they create within the community (for example: Journals, planning templates)
- To become an effective knowledge resource to its own members and others
- To support autonomy and a climate of informality, pursue, plan, direct and organise their own activities and interests over time.

### Summary of Content

Research suggests that Communities of practice (CoP) are a joint enterprise, with a shared repertoire and mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998). Lave and Wenger (1991) conceptualise identity and participation within CoP in order to develop a social learning theory. Experience is considered to be the best teacher of knowledge, however, Rogoff et al (1996) claim that we cannot experience everything. Other people and their experiences become the replacement for knowledge. CoP provides a social forum that supports the evolving nature of knowledge (becoming) and the sharing of knowledge. Wenger et al (2002) stress this sense of identification/identity within a specific area of practice and a mutually negotiated competence



as essential elements of CoP. By negotiating and developing a shared understanding of their domain, members such as Inclusion Co-ordinators (Inco's) will begin to build a mutually negotiated competence around their shared practice. Wenger et al (2002) suggest that the 'community' element needs attention, organisation and nurturing.

The intentional cultivation of CoP is important where the provision of comfortable spaces that encourage autonomy, within an arranged time, with resources available and barriers removed provide the careful seeding for CoP to develop (Wenger et al (2014)). This needs to be balanced however by supporting members to take charge of what knowledge they share, develop and document and any projects they might want to undertake over time. CoP members become stewards of knowledge as well as generators of new knowledge for their practice.

The knowledge and information gleaned from engaging with web-based material and resources that relate to the CPD packages will be the catalyst for discussion, the sharing of practice and generating new ways of working.

The CPD packages will include

- Leading Inclusive Early Learning and Care Settings: The Role of the Inclusion Coordinator
- Supporting Children's Social and Emotional Development
- Family and Community Partnerships
- Creating Early Learning and Care Environments where Everyone Belongs
- Observing, Documenting and Planning for Inclusion

### **Key References/Sources**

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Wenger, E., McDermott, R. and Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Business School Press.

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