

Community of practice

The concept of a community of practice (often abbreviated as CoP) refers to the process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in some subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions, and build innovations. It refers as well to the stable group that is formed from such regular interactions.

Newsletter

A newsletter is a regularly distributed publication generally about one main topic that is of interest to its subscribers. Newspapers and leaflets are types of newsletters. Additionally, newsletters delivered via email (e-newsletters) have gained rapid acceptance for the same reasons e-mail in general is gaining popularity over printed correspondence.

Notice Board

A notice board is a place where people can leave public messages, for example, to advertise things, announce events, or provide information. Each Learning Space has an online notice board so that the education community can keep up to date on events current in their field.

Discussion list

On a discussion list (also called a mailing list), a subscriber uses the list to send messages to other subscribers, who may answer in a similar fashion. Thus, actual discussion and information exchanges can happen. Discussion lists are usually topic-oriented (for example, Assessment), and the topic can range from extremely narrow to whatever you think is of interest. Depending on the software, subscribers do not necessarily have to be online to post messages.

Online forum

An online forum is a web application for holding discussions and posting user generated content or simply forums. The terms "forum" and "board" may refer to the entire community or to a specific sub-forum dealing with a distinct topic. Messages within these sub-forums are then displayed either in chronological order or as threaded discussions.

Blog

A blog is an online journal website where entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as personal online diaries. A blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of blogs.

RSS Feeds

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content including, but not limited to, blog entries, news headlines, and podcasts. An RSS document (which is called a "feed" or "web feed" or "channel") contains either a summary of content from an associated web site or the full text. RSS makes it possible for people to keep up with their favourite web sites in an automated manner that can be piped into special programs or filtered displays.

Podcast

A podcast is a collection of digital media files which is distributed over the Internet, often using syndication feeds, for playback on portable media players and personal computers. The term podcast, like "radio", can refer either to the content itself or to the method by which it is syndicated; the latter is also termed podcasting. The host or author of a podcast is often called a podcaster. Podcast listeners can listen in one of three ways: through a specialised hardware device called an MP3 player, on a computer using media player software, or with VoIP technology by calling to a virtual phone number. Podcasting is becoming increasingly popular in education.

Wiki

A wiki is software that allows users to easily create, edit and link pages together. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites. They are also referred to as wikis; for example, Wikipedia is one of the best known wikis. There are many publicly available "wiki farms", some of which can also make password-protected wikis. PeanutButterWiki, Socialtext and Wikia are examples of such services. Free wiki farms generally contain advertising on every page. Wikipatterns is a guide to the stages of wiki adoption and a collection of community – building and content building strategies.

Definitions sourced from Wikipedia [online] accessed 30 March 2008 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page



Curriculum

This is the core engine of Thutong and provides access to a variety of resources, tools and services available in Learning Spaces. Learning Spaces provide for communication, collaboration and sharing through Communities of Practice.

Professional development

This section provides teachers and managers access to resources, tools and services that are designed to facilitate their ongoing professional development. It is designed to support the Department of Education's policies on Continuing Professional Development (CPTD).

School administration

This section provides administrators access to resources, tools and services. A key focus is on supporting rollout of the South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS).

Education management

This section supports school managers.

Thutong is a free and open resource for anyone who is interested in the South African curriculum, including parents/guardians, education specialists and the wider community

Thutong also provides:

- the official textbook catalogues for Grades 10 -12
- a directory of quality assured textbooks and educational software
- an Examination Centre
- Curriculum support tools e.g. a lesson planning tool, assessment tools and self-study guides
- a place where all ICT related policies and documents are available
- a site to support Inclusive Education



Teachers

- find useful and relevant resources for teaching and learning
- have the opportunity to share resources that have been locally developed
- collaborate with other teachers and experts through learning spaces
- communicate with other teachers through the communication tools available

Learners

- find useful and relevant resources for learning, assignments and projects
- collaborate with other learners and experts through learning spaces
- communicate with other learners through the communication tools available

Community

Thutong is a free and open resource for anyone who is interested in the South African curriculum, including parents/guardians, education specialists and the wider community.



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Communication



Communication has been made easy through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The challenge is to harness all the above and use the opportunities new technologies offer. Thutong offers a vibrant online Community of Practice in Education using:

➤ Newsletters ➤ Notice Boards ➤ Discussion lists ➤ Weblogs or Blogs ➤ Online forums ➤ RSS feeds

Connectivity



Connectivity has made collaboration between people easy. Thutong offers a platform to share expertise and work together. You can use tools like wikis to collaborate in clusters, working groups or subject groups to develop materials, build on new ideas or improve current available resources.

Creativity



Teaching is one of the most creative professions – and teachers are masters in creativity. Teachers are constantly using new ways to acquire skills, knowledge and information to stimulate their creativity and to give more to their learners. Thutong offers:

- Access to a myriad of resources (video, audio and print) that can be used creatively to generate a wonderful learning experience in the classroom
- Access to tools that make the presentation of lessons in the classroom a true learning event like never before
- Access and share creative and innovative teaching ideas, methods, examples and materials between teachers.

Courage to share



Teachers learn better by sharing teaching experiences and teach better by sharing learning experiences. Around the world teachers are discovering the advantages of sharing – both for themselves and their learners. Sharing creates understanding - even when contexts are not the same - the world becomes the global village as people in diverse situations share experiences with each other.

Thutong creates a safe and secure environment which allows for the sharing of teaching and learning resources, examples and ideas. Have the courage to share your materials with others by uploading them to Thutong – in any language. Through this, we will collectively create a significant pool of locally produced, quality resources for teachers and learners.

Curriculum



Thutong supports the National Curriculum Statement: GET Learning Areas, FET Schools subjects and FET Colleges NC(V) Learning Programmes. Thutong makes available a range of resources within the framework of the curriculum. These have been carefully identified and sourced by curriculum specialists and teachers. The resource pool is relevant to the curriculum and more resources are being added by teachers, specialists and even learners.

Technology supports the Critical and Developmental Outcomes of the Curriculum:

Critical Outcomes

- Problem solving, decision making, critical and creative thinking
- Work effectively in a team
- Organise and manage themselves and their activities
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information
- Communicate effectively
- Use science and technology effectively
- Understanding that the world is a set of related systems

Developmental Outcomes

- Use a variety of learning strategies
- Participate as a responsible citizen
- Cultural and aesthetically sensitive
- Explore career opportunities
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities

Content



The Internet offers a vast range of resources - from text based information through to multimedia clips with graphics, sound, animation and photographs. It is however, very often not appropriate to the South African curriculum or context.

Thutong makes available relevant resource material that complements and enhances the National Curriculum. It provides a platform for local material to be created and shared.

Community of practice



Thutong creates a platform for teachers to communicate, collaborate, share ideas and contribute to learning. Join our community of teachers – gain “critical friends” and open up the world of teaching and learning for yourself.

Learning Spaces offer a place for teachers to discuss, debate and throw new ideas around. Don't miss the opportunity to be part of the Thutong Community.

