Regional Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Learning Networks have been established around the globe as platforms for PACs to convene, as a community of practitioners, to identify common challenges and share information about national, regional and global practice. Each learning network is as different as the community that makes up the network. This Discussion Note provides a comparative snapshot of Pacific PACs and background information on the science of network learning.

This document has been prepared as a contribution to the Stakeholder Consultation in Suva, Fiji on 18 March 2013. The Stakeholder Consultation brings together interested parties to consider the process for developing a Pacific PAC Learning Network.
# Contents

1. Regional Network Learning for PACs ................................................................. 2

2. Public Accounts Committees in the Pacific ...................................................... 4  
   A. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 4  
   B. The literature on public accounts committees ............................................. 5  
   C. The Organizational Characteristics of PACs ............................................. 6  
      Size of the Committee .................................................................................... 6  
      Partisan Affiliation of PAC Membership .................................................. 6  
      Size of the Staff Supporting the Functions of the PAC ............................. 7  
   D. Powers, Responsibility and Functions of the PAC in the Pacific region.. 8  
      Right of Access .............................................................................................. 8  
      Accounts and Operations ............................................................................. 8  
      Relationship with the SAI ............................................................................. 9  
   E. PAC Performance ............................................................................................ 10  
   F. Conclusions ..................................................................................................... 11  

3. Features of CoPs: Strengths and Limitations ................................................. 12  
   A. Overview ....................................................................................................... 12  
   B. CoPs’ Characteristics: Different Views .................................................... 13  
   C. Concluding Remarks ..................................................................................... 17  

4. Bibliography ...................................................................................................... 19
1. Regional Network Learning for PACs

World Bank Institute (WBI): WBI’s Parliamentary Strengthening Program (PSP) empowers parliaments in client countries with practical knowledge and technical skills in order to enhance country systems. WBI mobilizes different institutions and stakeholders within parliaments to act collaboratively in order to achieve this objective. The Program does this by strengthening parliamentary networks and CoPs, as platforms for sharing experience on the “how” of reform. In doing so the PSP helps translate global and regional knowledge into country level action.

Parliament and the Budget: The national budget is one of the most powerful development tools at a country’s disposal. The allocation and implementation of public resources are essential in facilitating citizens' understanding of their government’s plans for development and poverty reduction. Enhanced transparency, participation and accountability around the budget process are all essential components of any sound public financial management system.

External audit of budget implementation is another crucial component of any public financial management system. External audit and oversight ensures the government is held accountable for effectively implementing the budget, and achieving a country’s poverty reduction objectives. For the purpose of this Discussion Note, a PAC refers to any institution, formal or informal, within parliament, designated with the responsibility of considering the national audit reports and scrutinizing government’s implementation of the budget.

Parliamentary Networks: Parliamentary networks refer to formal associations of parliamentary institutions that are characterized by a set of relationships, personal interactions, and connections among participants. These connections are viewed as a set of nodes and links, which place an emphasis on information flow and helpful linkages (Wenger, Trayner, & Laat, 2001). A good example of existing parliamentary networks would be the regional PAC networks. Often parliamentary networks are served by a secretariat of varying degrees of institutionalization.

Regional Network Learning Strategies for PACs: Regional capacity support can be provided to PACs by fostering and strengthening learning networks. Techniques for strengthening learning networks and the capacity of the members of the networks include:

- Institutional and organizational support to network secretariats to assist them in stewarding learning networks and communities
For instance: network working groups focused on specific topics, or network organizational issues such as communication strategies.

- Facilitating learning between networks
- Knowledge exchange activities within the network
- Peer exchange/assist
- Structured learning
- Integrating networking and community strengthening elements as part of traditional knowledge exchange and structured learning activities
  - For instance: surfacing common topics of interest/concern during knowledge exchange activities; and helping to design community learning responses to build and share experience on the topic through the network, and independent of formal training events.

- Action-orientated planning
  - For instance: convening PAC Members, Committee Clerks and other parliamentary institutions, to collaboratively develop approaches to performance challenges

- Participatory knowledge capture techniques
  - For instance: using Wikispaces during knowledge exchange and structured training activities, to create a shared memory and understanding as to technical content and experience shared.
2. Public Accounts Committees in the Pacific

A. Introduction

In spite of the fact that the PACs in the Pacific region operate in very small jurisdictions, they have been the subject of several studies. In fact, there have been, at least two waves of studies of PACs in the Pacific Region. The first study was produced in the mid-1980s, while the second was produced in the first decade of the 21st century. Both studies raised concerns about the performance of the PACs (and legislatures) in the region, though they invoked different reasons to explain why the performance of PACs (and legislatures), was suboptimal. For instance, studies from the first wave claimed that PACs could not work because of ‘genetic’ reasons, namely: (i) the lack of local solutions to local problems; (ii) they were designed to operate in very different settings; and (iii) the reforms were not ‘owned’ by the stakeholders. It was argued that as a result of these generic reasons, capacity support and PAC reform was not likely to result in positive outcomes.

Studies from the second wave argued instead, that the performance of PACs in the Pacific region was (negatively) affected by a variety of factors. For instance, Rawlings argued that PAC performance was detrimentally affected by what Stapenhurst (2011) defines as the external factors and facilitating conditions—namely the presence of other oversight bodies, the nature of the relationship between the PAC and the other oversight institutions, the availability and the quality of staff, and the access to information. By contrast, Pelizzo (2010) found that the performance of PACs in the Pacific region was negatively affected by the range of formal powers at their disposal.

Ultimately, the main regional comparative studies reinforce that the most common trait of Pacific PACs, is that they are all very different in terms of performance, oversight capacity, or the range of powers and organizational characteristics. Accordingly, a singular capacity building model aimed at strengthening PAC performance in the region is not suitable. The variable success of different capacity building initiatives over the last decade supports this assumption.

¹ The PEFA reports produced for the countries in the Pacific region show not only considerable variation across countries but also across time. For instance, the legislative scrutiny of the external audit reports was given a score of A in Samoa in 2006, of C+ in the Solomon islands in 2008, of D in Vanuatu in 2006 and of D+ for Samoa in 2010.
This Comparative Analysis will review each of these features to try to identify the conditions affecting the performance of PACs in the Pacific region. In doing so, the Comparative Analysis employs the data collected by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in collaboration with WBI in 2009, when the two organizations collaborated to design and administer a survey on PACs in several Pacific Island nations. Specifically, CPA and WBI gathered information from eight PACs from the Pacific region: Bougainville, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu. The survey asked respondents to answer 87 questions on the power and responsibilities, membership and leadership, processes and working practices, and access to resources and support. By re-analyzing the data that has been collected previously in tandem with the recent survey data, it is argued that it is possible to develop a more refined understanding of the organization, the mandate, the responsibilities, the functioning, and the overall performance of PACs from the Pacific region. This Comparative Analysis is not meant as a substitute for strong case-by-case analysis; however, can be informative in understanding some of the substantive and institutional issues a learning network should seek to address.

B. The literature on PACs

The publication of “The Overseers” by McGee (2002) ignited a new global wave of research on PACs. Some of the research applicable to the Pacific used a case-study approach; meanwhile, others undertook regional and/ or Commonwealth comparative analyses. Some studies relied on survey data, others relied on evidence generated by field work. That said, all studies sought to identify the conditions that make PACs work effectively.

From a global perspective, there are three main drivers for effective PACs. A stream of research, which originates with McGee, holds the view that PAC success depends on their organizational characteristics. Specifically, McGee (2002) suggested that: the size of a PAC; the partisan affiliation of the PAC Chairperson; and the size of the staff at the disposal of a PAC; are largely responsible for its success. Building on the work by McGee (2002), Pelizzo (2011) suggests that the partisan composition of the PAC membership, that is whether opposition forces are adequately represented in the committee, is also very important.

A second stream of research suggests, instead, that PAC success depends on institutional features such as the way in which PACs are institutionalized (created), and the range of powers at their disposal. While a third stream of research (McGee, 2002; Stapenhurst et al., 2005), suggests PAC success depends on the way PAC members act and interact with one another.
The results of these global research initiatives are informative, and have proven to be invaluable in designing capacity support programming for PACs in other regions of the world. However, it is still unclear, especially in light of the observations above concerning the Pacific, whether these organizational, institutional and behavioral approaches, provide us with a proper framework to understand the functioning of PACs in the Pacific region. To address this question, this comparative analysis will explore the organization and institutional characteristics of PACs in the Pacific, and suggest which of them provide the best explanation for how these Committees work in the region.

C. The Organizational Characteristics of PACs

The Pacific region displays considerable variation in PAC characteristics. McGee (2002) noted that the three important organizational features of PACs are: the size of the committee; the partisan affiliation of the Chairperson; and the size of the staff. To this list, Pelizzo (2011), added a fourth organizational characteristic, that is the proportion of opposition members serving in the Committee.

Size of the Committee

The most recent data gathered by CPA and WBI show that the size of Committees vary from a minimum of three Members of Parliament (MPs) in Kiribati and Tuvalu, to a maximum of 14 MPs in Papua New Guinea (PNG), with a mean of 7.12 MPs per PAC. In the majority of cases, MPs serving on a PAC do not serve on other committees, with the exception of PNG and Tuvalu (while Bougainville did not provide any evidence in this respect).

Partisan Affiliation of PAC Membership

In the Pacific region, the data at our disposal reveals that there is limited variation in how well opposition forces are represented on the PAC itself. In fact, while two legislatures (Fiji, Solomon Islands) reported that the opposition controls 33 per cent of the seats in the PAC, two other legislatures (Samoa, Vanuatu) reported that the opposition controls 43 per cent of the seats, while Bougainville, Kiribati, PNG and Tuvalu did not provide any indication of whether and how the opposition is represented on the PAC.

While opposition forces control, on average, only 41.2 per cent of the seats in Pacific PACs, they control 50 per cent of the PAC Chairpersons. In fact, while a government Member Chairs the PAC in Bougainville, Kiribati, PNG and
Samoa, in the remaining cases (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) the PAC is chaired by an opposition member.²

**Size of the Staff Supporting the Functions of the PAC**

In the Pacific, there is a greater discrepancy between the number of dedicated staff supporting the PACs functions, and staff more broadly at the Committees’ disposal, than in other parts of the world.³ It is unclear whether this is attributable to the size of the parliament, as a whole, the number of committees, or if it is a reflection of local labor force limitations. In terms of dedicated staff, the data indicates that the number varies from a minimum of zero in Kiribati and Tuvalu, to a maximum of four in Samoa. In terms of total staff, this value ranges from a minimum of two staffers in Kiribati, Vanuatu and Tuvalu, to a maximum of six in PNG. Table 4 below outlines the results of the data as it relates to staffing support for Pacific PACs.

**Table 1: Organizational Characteristics of PACs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Size of the PAC</th>
<th>Can members serve on other committees?</th>
<th>Percentage of opposition members</th>
<th>Is Chairperson an opposition MP?</th>
<th>Number of dedicated staff</th>
<th>Total staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bougainville</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuvalu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.125</strong></td>
<td><strong>41.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.57</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.71</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: n.a. = not answered; * = Vanuatu responded that all the parliamentary staff assist all committees including the PAC.

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² In Samoa, the Chair is not simply a member of the government party; he is actually the Associate Minister for the Ministry of the Prime Minister.
³ Total staff refers not to the number of dedicated staff, staff shared with other committees, staff provided by government departments, staff provided by the AG and staff provided by other institutional sources.
D. Powers, Responsibility and Functions of the PAC in the Pacific Region

The questionnaire designed by the CPA and WBI asked respondents to provide information with regard to the powers, responsibilities, functions, and mandate of PACs in the region. Powers, responsibilities, and functions, were grouped into three distinct sets of powers, which deal respectively with: the PACs' right of access to information held by government agencies or public entities; the accounts and operations of the PAC; and the relations with the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI). The evidence generated from these groupings of questions is important for two reasons. First, it enables us to map the capacity of PACs in several jurisdictions, assessing strengths and weaknesses, and detecting variation in the region. Second, it enables us to test the proposition in several studies inspired by McGee, and the near unanimous view shared by PAC chairpersons in the Commonwealth, that a broad mandate is a necessary and essential condition for the successful performance of a PAC. In other words, the recent data allows us to assess the breadth of the mandate of Pacific PACs, and test whether PAC activity and performance is related to the range of powers, responsibilities and functions that PACs have.

Right of Access

The results suggest PACs in the Pacific have a fairly unconstrained right of access, especially compared to other regions such as the British isles, South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand, the Caribbean and Africa. Pacific PACs have access to virtually all the information at the disposal of government agencies within the finance portfolio, government agencies outside the finance portfolio, statutory authorities, government owned corporations, local government authorities, Parliament (and its expenditures), parliamentarians’ expenditures (eg. Staff), government service providers, and government funded non-government organizations.

Accounts and Operations

The accounts and operations of a PAC relate to the activities performed by said PAC, namely whether it can examine accounts; consider budget estimates; assess the efficiency, economy and effectiveness of a given policy; examine the efficiency and the economy of policy implementation and the effectiveness of policy implementation; and whether it has the power to undertake self-initiated inquiries. PACs can enjoy these powers unconditionally, conditionally or not at all.
While PACs in the Pacific region are very well endowed in terms of rights of access, they are considerably less so in terms of their ability to oversee accounts and operations. In fact, while all the PACs in the region unconditionally enjoy several rights to access information and data, the only power that all Pacific PACs enjoy unconditionally is that of examining accounts and financial affairs. All the other powers are enjoyed unconditionally by a fewer number of PACs. For instance, only 37.5 per cent of the PACs are able to examine budget estimates, 42.8 per cent of them have the right to undertake self-initiated inquiries, 57.1 per cent of them oversee the efficiency economy and effectiveness of government policy, and 71.4 per cent of them have the power to assess value for money and delivery of outcomes. In other words, except for the power to oversee accounts and financial affairs, all the other powers are only enjoyed by one-third to three-quarters of the PACs.

The purpose of a PAC is to oversee whether money is spent for the purposes for which it had been appropriated; however, they are not involved or consulted in the drafting of the budget, they traditionally do not assess budget estimates, and they lack an ability to initiate inquiries or instruct the SAI to conduct inquiries (Yamamoto, 2007). The data collected by CPA and WBI does not simply indicate an institutional weakness of PACs in the region; it shows Pacific PACs depart in significant ways from the archetypical PAC. Pacific PACs depart in significant ways from the archetype described by Yamamoto: nearly 38 per cent of them look at budget estimates, nearly 43 per cent of them have the power to launch their own inquiries, and they can exercise ex ante oversight and initiate inquiry processes.

**Relationship with the SAI**

The data sought to identify three formal powers that help define the relationship between the PAC and SAI, namely the power to: (i) examine SAI compliance audit reports; (ii) examine SAI performance audit reports; and (iii) refer matters to the SAI for investigation. PACs can enjoy each of these powers unconditionally, conditionally or may not enjoy it at all. Table 5 below outlines the extent to which each of the respondents enjoys these powers.

**Table 2: Formal Powers with respect to the SAI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Examination of AG compliance report</th>
<th>Examination of AG performance report</th>
<th>Power to refer matters to the AG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bougainville</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Conditionally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In four (PNG, Solomon islands, Vanuatu, Tuvalu) of the eight cases, the PACs enjoy these three powers unconditionally. In two cases (Fiji, Kiribati) the PACs enjoys two powers (to examine the compliance reports and to refer matters to the SAI for investigation) unconditionally. In one case (Bougainville) the PAC lacks the power to examine both the compliance and the performance reports drafted by the SAI, while it conditionally enjoys the power to refer matters to the SAI. In one case (Samoa), the PAC lacks all of these powers. Further data will need to be collected in order to identify whether there is a correlation between the power, or lack thereof, to examine different audit reports and the types of audit conducted by audit institutions in the region.

E. PAC Performance

In many parliamentary studies, activity is used as a proxy for performance. It is notoriously difficult to obtain regional comparative data on performance, therefore, the CPA and WBI survey elicited information about the activity of the PACs in the Pacific region. PACs were asked to indicate the number of: meetings and hearings each held in each of the previous three years; inquiries they had been able to complete; and reports that had been released.

There is considerable variation between the numbers of meetings held by each PAC. Vanuatu reported holding 0 (zero) meetings in 2006-07 and in 2007-2008, while Fiji reported holding 87 meetings in 2005-06, 41 in 2006-07, and daily meetings in 2007-08. If instead of looking at yearly values, we consider yearly averages, the data displays considerable variation. The average number of meetings varies from a minimum of 0.3 meetings in Vanuatu to more than 30 meetings a year in Samoa and to the nearly 83 meetings held on average in Fiji. Not surprisingly, the number of inquiries completed by the PAC also showed considerable variation. On average the number of completed inquiries varies from a minimum of 0 (zero) in Vanuatu to a maximum of 22.6 in PNG.
Most of the indicators of PAC activity are not affected either by the range of the powers at the disposal of the committee or by the organizational characteristics. As far as the Pacific region is concerned, there is a correlation between the extent of access powers PACs have, and the number of reports produced. However, it is unclear whether a causal relationship exists. Moreover, contrary to general thinking, the number of dedicated staff is not significantly related to any of the measures for PAC activity. Finally, the presence of an opposition chair is negatively related to all the indicators of activity. In particular, those PACs with opposition chairs have fewer committee meetings, fewer inquiries and produce fewer reports. These findings run counter to general assumptions regarding the impact the size of the committee and its chairmanship have on PAC Performance (McGee, 2002). This reinforces that when it comes to PAC design and operation, the Pacific should have devoted regional programming to adapt content to the Pacific situation and employ a tailored approach that reflects the distinct nature of PACs in the region.

F. Conclusions

A regional comparative analysis is a useful guide as to trends and possible relationships between powers, organizational features, activity, and performance. Pacific PACs have broader rights of access to information than PACs globally. The comparative data also suggests Pacific PACs have smaller committee sizes; however, there is better representation of opposition Members on the committee and, unusually, government chairpersons are associated with higher levels of activity. The data also supports the commonly held perception that there is a rich diversity amongst Pacific PACs. The diversity amongst PACs in the region supports a focus on a blended capacity building strategy, which employs horizontal regional learning strategies such as practitioner networks, in addition to established structured learning approaches.
3. Features of CoPs: Strengths and Limitations

A. Overview

CoPs have become a central tool for Knowledge Management in modern knowledge-based organizations, as they provide a means to broaden access to knowledge beyond structured learning activities. Further to that, the methodology recognizes that vital experience exists within broader practitioner groups and horizontal learning networks, which presents an opportunity to harness this knowledge as organizational capital. There has been a growth in the use of CoPs in development projects, as learning networks are able to collect both tacit (informal) and explicit (formal) knowledge from individual experts from diverse sources and from, potentially, remote locations, in order to benefit the learning community. This makes this methodology particularly applicable to regional initiatives aimed at strengthening capacity amongst peers. The objective of this Discussion Note is to highlight the genesis of this approach to knowledge exchange, and provide a common framework for discussing how to design and nurture a regional CoP of Public Accounts Committees (PAC) in the Pacific.

This Discussion Note adopts with a well-accepted definition of CoPs by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), which defined CoPs as:

Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by inter-acting on an ongoing basis

Concepts such as: “groups of people”, “passion”, “deepen knowledge & expertise”, and “interacting”, are common elements in definitions of CoPs. The confusion around this capacity building methodology stems, to a large extent, from different authors classifying similar concepts in various ways; hence, why it is important to synthesize the prevailing literature as a preparatory step for technical discussions around the design and development process of a new learning network. For instance, the term “group of people” has been defined by some academics as a “group of professionals” (Hidreth & Kimble, 2004) or “group of practitioners” (Fischer, 2001). As a result, different organizations have characterized CoPs based on the organizational requirements, structures, and the way the respective organizations need
CoPs to perform. It is hoped this Note will bring together these divergent concepts under a single framework for discussion.

B. **COPs’ CHARACTERISTICS: DIFFERENT VIEWS**

The growing interest in CoPs has resulted in a variety of definitions and classifications. Classification of different learning communities has traditionally been based on the membership of the different communities (ordinary people, experts, practitioners), their purpose, what binds them as a community, and the level of formality/informality, etc. Accordingly, these are the factors that will be used to compare different schools of thinking around CoPs. In particular, Archer, Pór and van Beckkum, Herranz, and Burrus will be compared.

Archer (2006) identifies four classifications of CoPs, namely as (a) entirely within individual organizations, (b) spanning organizations that are linked through mergers, acquisitions, or by formal business partnerships (network organizations), (c) formal networks that span organizations but are not part of other formal relationships, and (d) self-organizing networks of individuals with ad hoc relationships and no formal ties.

Archer further explains each classification in detail, and elaborates on their mutual and different features, arguing that certain types of CoPs differ from each other to a larger or more visible extent. These features are summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 3: Archer Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Internal Network Organization</th>
<th>Formal Network</th>
<th>Self-organizing Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Product, service (technical, management skills, processes)</td>
<td>Product, service (technical, management skills, processes)</td>
<td>Management skills, processes; operational, product knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desired objective or outcome</strong></td>
<td>Innovation in products, services, improved management practices</td>
<td>Innovation in products, services, improved management practices</td>
<td>Improved management practices, products, services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>Shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual property</strong></td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Shared by formal agreement</td>
<td>Controlled by a network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Managed jointly as component of organizational agreement</td>
<td>Externally managed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13
### Professional expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispute resolution</th>
<th>Internal management</th>
<th>Legally resolved</th>
<th>Withdrawal</th>
<th>Withdrawal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential knowledge contribution</td>
<td>Unlimited from internal sources with need to know</td>
<td>Limited by formal agreement</td>
<td>Determined by numbers: No min. or max. limit</td>
<td>Determined by numbers: No min. or max. limit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Common benefits

*Developing and sharing formal best practices, learning and sharing tacit and explicit Knowledge, benchmarking, innovations in management, operations, and processes*

### Potential Gain – Shared Knowledge of:

| Innovations in products, services | Innovations in management practices, innovations in products, services | Innovations in management practices, innovations in products, services |

### Common problems

*Unpredictable payback, initiating and maintaining interest, building and maintaining trust, encouraging steady flow of information and knowledge among participants, divergence of objectives, lack of common participant language (natural and/or professional), ensuring payback to all participants*

### Potential problems

*Reorganization may be required to improve knowledge sharing and learning*, *Limitations of formal agreement*, *Ensuring knowledge contributions from all members*, *Unknown value of knowledge communicated; hard to reach contributors*

### Remediation of operational problems

| Attention from moderator or managers | Attention from moderator, managers, or legal resort | Attention from moderator | Targeted attention from membership |

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### Archer’s (2006) Classification of Communities

Alternatively, Pór and van Beckkum (2004) provide a broader view by expanding their characterization to include teams and knowledge/learning networks. They make a distinction based on the objectives of the communities, time frame, participation (by invitation or voluntarily), leadership, reward systems, and other various factors. A summary of their classification is provided in the Table 2 below.

### Table 4: Pór and van Beckkum Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project teams</th>
<th>Communitie s of practice</th>
<th>Strategic communities of practice</th>
<th>Leadership communitie s of practice</th>
<th>Innovation communitie s of practice</th>
<th>Project communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliver</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Domain</td>
<td>Better strategy</td>
<td>Better leaders</td>
<td>Innovating the innov. process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Deliver on time, on budget</td>
<td>Improve the practice</td>
<td>Support strategic objectives and initiatives</td>
<td>Enhance leadership performance</td>
<td>Augmented innovation performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Invitational</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importantly, a distinguishing feature of Pór and van Beckkum’s conceptualization is that they focus on elements that could lead a CoP to serve as a means to support innovation. They argue CoPs indirectly spur innovation by:

- Shaping the organization’s culture
- Developing productive conversations
- Attracting key talents for innovation
- Acting as a competitive advantage in the world of business alliances

Therefore, according to Pór and van Beckkum, strategic communities of practice are the optimal type of CoP to achieve institutional and organizational objectives.

Herranz’s et al. (2012) definition of CoPs is consistent with Pór and van Beckkum’s; however, they introduce an additional concept of Communities of Interest (CoIs). They argue that CoPs and CoIs aren’t different, rather the space between these communities should be understood as a continuum. The main quality that defines where on the continuum they would be mapped is their level of formality. CoPs, generally, are thought of as being more formal than CoIs.

Herranz’s et al. argue a CoI is a community where members share the same interest and wish to have access to the information within the community. Membership is usually open to everyone interested in the knowledge and information shared in the CoI. However, the involvement and engagement of the members in the CoI is on an ad hoc basis. It is different from a CoP in terms of scope (CoPs fall at the formal end of the continuum and CoIs at the informal end), and exhibit certain characteristics summarized in Table 5 below.
### Table 5: Herranz et al. Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>CoP</th>
<th>CoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>To create, extend and exchange knowledge to learn and develop individual capabilities. Learning and sharing best practices.</td>
<td>To be informed, discuss and share understanding about a specific topic or concern that interests the community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is it about?</strong></td>
<td>Joint enterprise about a specific domain of knowledge</td>
<td>No enterprise. There is a shared common interest formed by multiples domains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How does it function?</strong></td>
<td>Mutual engagement builds a collaborative relationship based on negotiated rules</td>
<td>It is not regulated. Suitable to encourage creativity and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Produce any capability</strong></td>
<td>Shared repository of common resources that serve as future practice. Store of knowledge</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who belongs?</strong></td>
<td>It is based on expertise and passion for the topic</td>
<td>Whoever is interested in the common shared topic or concern; Stakeholders from different domains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What holds them together?</strong></td>
<td>Commitment, identification with the group, expertise</td>
<td>Access to information and participation about a collective interest, or concern with the resolution of a particular problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Membership</strong></td>
<td>Depends on expertise, passion for the topic and participation</td>
<td>Dynamic and depends only on participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lifespan</strong></td>
<td>Evolve and end organically. They are usually longer-lived than CoIs</td>
<td>Evolve and end organically. More temporary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Herranz et al. (2012)*

Accordingly, CoIs are recognized as a form of knowledge/learning network, which provide an opportunity for community members to acquire a piece of information at a particular point in time, and thereafter have the option of never participating in the CoI again. This is contrast to a CoP, which is held together by a commitment of the members, their expertise and their vision to achieve a loosely defined identity. Therefore, CoIs are generally not considered an optimal model for knowledge sharing in institutional and organizational situations as they fail to galvanize their membership around a unified purpose or identity. Meanwhile, CoPs shape communities in order to serve pre-defined goals. In a parallel and even more recent view, Burrus (2013) claims that CoIs are merely shaped for people of the same hobby-type interest, and may not even lead to achievement of a collective or individual goal.
C. Concluding Remarks

In addition to the authors outlined above, various studies have proposed different types of communities of practice, noting several distinguishable features. Having reviewed these classifications, there are recurring qualities/design features that can be grouped around the following attributes:

- Size (number of members)
- Purpose or objective (achievement of a mutual goal)
- Degree of formality (informal ↔ formal)
- Level of members’ commitment
- Leadership (the degree of sustained leadership by members, for instance if the CoP is based on distributed leadership in which multiple core members serve as leaders)
- Self-organizing vs. sponsored

Different learning networks share, to a varying extent, these different features. What is certain is that the way these attributes are either incorporated as purposeful design elements, or nurtured as organic/emerging characteristics, has an impact on the success and sustainability of the network. Applying the above design framework can assist founding members of the community develop a clear vision as to what kind of learning network should be shaped, in order to effectively support the organizational and development goals of the community members.

In terms of size and the number of members of a CoP, it is preferable that organizations attract more professional members, rather than a large number of participants who lack required knowledge, skill and expertise (i.e. quality over quantity). Irrespective the size of a CoP, its success is determined by the number of professional members compared to the total membership. Professional members are experts in the focus area of the learning community, and act as poles of distributed leadership that help forge strong horizontal links between participants. Both research and anecdotal experience indicate that CoPs based on traditional top-down views of leadership, are far more likely to fail.

The number of committed members is another factor of success. The more committed and purposeful participants are, the better the results will be. Although most types of learning communities are based on voluntarily participation, CoPs sponsored by organizations are more selective in terms of the level of knowledge and expertise of their members. As a result, the members of sponsored CoPs are known to show a higher level of commitment and active participation.
Although most organizations tend to want to formalize the establishment of their communities, informal networks can also provide positive results (especially virtual CoPs that work on open-source software such as Linux). However, virtual CoPs’ lack of formality deprives the members of learning opportunities that come through face-to-face meetings, which provides a common time and space when participants can interactively engage in formal and informal discussions with community members. For instance, in CoPs that hold meetings/events, members can simultaneously participate in conversations that are part of a formal agenda, as well as on the shoulders of the formal face-to-face gathering. This can be compared to virtual CoPs where communication between members is bound by time and lack of physical space. For this reason, connections between individual members in sponsored CoPs, which hold face-to-face meetings, are stronger than those of virtual networks. Finally, one type of community does not automatically preclude the existence of the other. For instance, informal and virtual networks can also exist within larger more formal networks.

Decisions regarding the features/qualities outlined in the design framework determine whether a CoP achieves its objectives. However, these features interplay to such an extent that focusing on just one aspect, cannot guarantee the success of the CoP in and of itself. For example, it could not be argued that informality or the commitment of members is enough for a learning community to succeed. Therefore, a holistic vision and approach is necessary for success.

Finally, it is important to understand some CoPs owe their success to certain features that are less visible or less tangible, and might be considered less important, but in the course of nurturing a learning community, are critical to the success of the CoP. For instance, although the goal of a CoP should be for it to be self-managed, it may need the full support of top management (especially in the nascent stages). This include providing resources in terms of budget, time, participation of senior leaders, as well as providing technological infrastructure and mentoring.
4. Bibliography


Por, G. and van Bekkum, E., (2004), Liberating the Innovation Value of Communities of Practice [Electronic version], Amsterdam: Community Intelligence Ltd.


