

# What motivates academics to contribute knowledge in teaching communities of practice?

**Tracy, X.P. Zou**

The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong  
tracyzou@hku.hk

Communities of practice (CoPs) have gradually become a means of knowledge sharing and professional learning in higher education. Teaching CoP is one type of CoPs that attempt to address specific teaching challenges through engaging academics in an open and evolving community. A key component of CoPs is the domain knowledge since it provides the substance for exploration and discussion. However, many academics are unfamiliar with the form of knowledge sharing in CoPs. Some literature has even described academics as being highly independent and not willing to share knowledge. This study examines what motivates academics to contribute knowledge in teaching CoPs. Fifteen interviews were conducted with identified active knowledge contributors to teaching CoPs in a research-intensive university in Hong Kong. The results affirmed the literature that passion for teaching pedagogies was one important motivating factor. It also revealed a strong tendency of knowledge contributors to learn from others and generate new knowledge in teaching and learning through the knowledge sharing process. Knowledge sharing across faculties and disciplines was especially valued. This finding reflects the features in the sharing of teaching knowledge. Teaching innovations and practices could be potentially relevant to various disciplines and therefore teaching might more easily benefit from knowledge co-construction and interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation. Other motivating factors included participating in scholarship of teaching and learning, helping colleagues, enjoying social interactions, and fulfilling implicit job obligations. In addition, most participants were very concerned about the quality of the knowledge they contributed, which implied their pride as academics as well as uncertainties in the teaching and learning environment.