

ABSTRACT

Organisations today are increasingly faced with pressures of the so-called knowledge economy where technology and knowledge have become the key drivers of competitiveness. Consequently, organisations have been forced to focus on the management and support of their different knowledge processes i.e. knowledge creation, use, storage, and transfer.

This master thesis examines an area where knowledge management does not offer sufficient support, that is, the transferring of knowledge, which is not easily articulated i.e. experience, skills and know-how. We argue, that one way of overcoming the challenges of knowledge transfer is offered by the community of practice approach, which recognises that knowledge resides in people and therefore requires social interactions for its creation and transfer.

Based theoretically on key notions of knowledge transfer theory (such as *organisational context*, and *inter-personal relations* like *trust and motivation*) and on Wenger's communities of practice framework, this master thesis sets out to explore empirically this framework and its indicators (*social learning, common sense of purpose, ongoing social interactions, and shared knowledge resources*) on the case study of [REDACTED], an informal network for engineers at [REDACTED].

Firstly, the aim is, through analysis of [REDACTED], to understand and document the specific features of this informal network, its abilities to transfer knowledge and finally to establish if [REDACTED] is in fact functioning as a community of practice. Secondly, we want to investigate in what way and to what extent [REDACTED] achieves its three main objectives so as to determine whether its current format provides the right setting and tools for knowledge transfer.

Our empirical findings suggest that the workings of [REDACTED] in many ways are consistent with indicators from the community of practice framework such as *common sense of purpose, social interactions* and *learning*. However, the informal network fails to meet its potential for knowledge transfer, due in particular to inappropriate and limited knowledge transfer structures.