



# **Collaborative Community Mentoring Program (C<sup>2</sup>MP): Addressing the changing demands of a professional community of learners through engaging digital networks**

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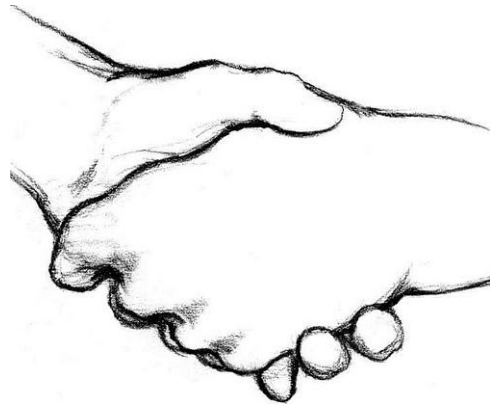
The notion of  
mentoring is  
ancient



MENTORING  
BOOTH

There are few experiences as powerful as **connecting** with other people who are **united** by the need to work collegially and to **resolve** mutually shared **problems**

A mentor can offer  
knowledge, insight,  
perspective or wisdom  
that is especially useful  
to another person  
– the mentee



A high-angle, close-up photograph of several people's hands stacked together in a circle, resting on a white rectangular object. The hands are of various skin tones and are wearing different colored sleeves: a brown hoodie, a red long-sleeved shirt, and a black and white striped shirt. In the background, a red car is partially visible, and a person in a brown hoodie is holding a white document with pink and purple accents. The scene is outdoors on a paved surface with a yellow line.

What about collaborative mentoring?



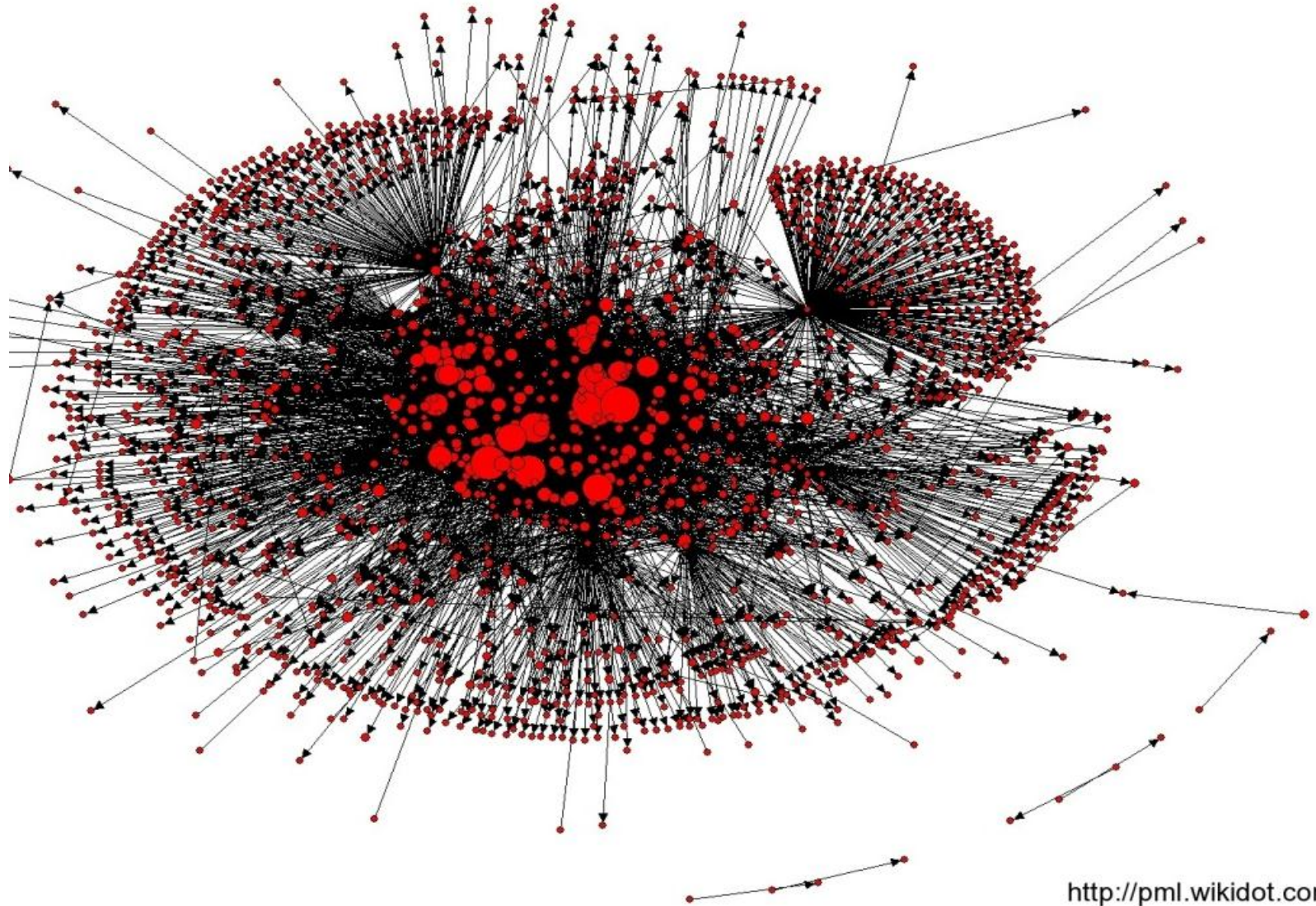
This talk will explore...

- The concept of collaborative mentoring – and in digital environments
- Tools and strategies to support collaborative mentoring
- Building a model for collaborative mentoring in digital environments
- ascilite collaborative community mentoring program (C<sup>2</sup>MP)
- program evaluation outcomes to date

# Collaborative activity:

- ✓ collaborative activity can help **alleviate isolation** by purposefully connecting scholars with one another.
- ✓ collaborative activity supports the **creation of community** (Palloff & Pratt, 2007) and the concept that: when I succeed, we succeed.
- ✓ Participants working collaboratively can engage creatively in **shared learning**, developing research questions and other challenges.
- ✓ scholarly **rigour** can be enhanced through working in interdisciplinary, collaborative teams.
- ✓ A community learning experience can offer more opportunities to extend and deepen understanding, test out ideas by sharing them with a supportive group, and receive critical and constructive feedback from a number of colleagues.

# What does collaborating in a digital environment offer?



- ✓ digital technologies provide significant opportunities to link dispersed individuals and groups for interaction and collaboration
- ✓ there are clear parallels between social constructivist models for online learning and collaborative mentoring
- ✓ digital technologies provide an excellent way to “capture” the interactions - VIP communication: **Visible, Intant and Permanent (Reushle, 2005)**



Collaborative activity

+

Mentoring

+

Digital environments

+

Community of Practice model....

= .....

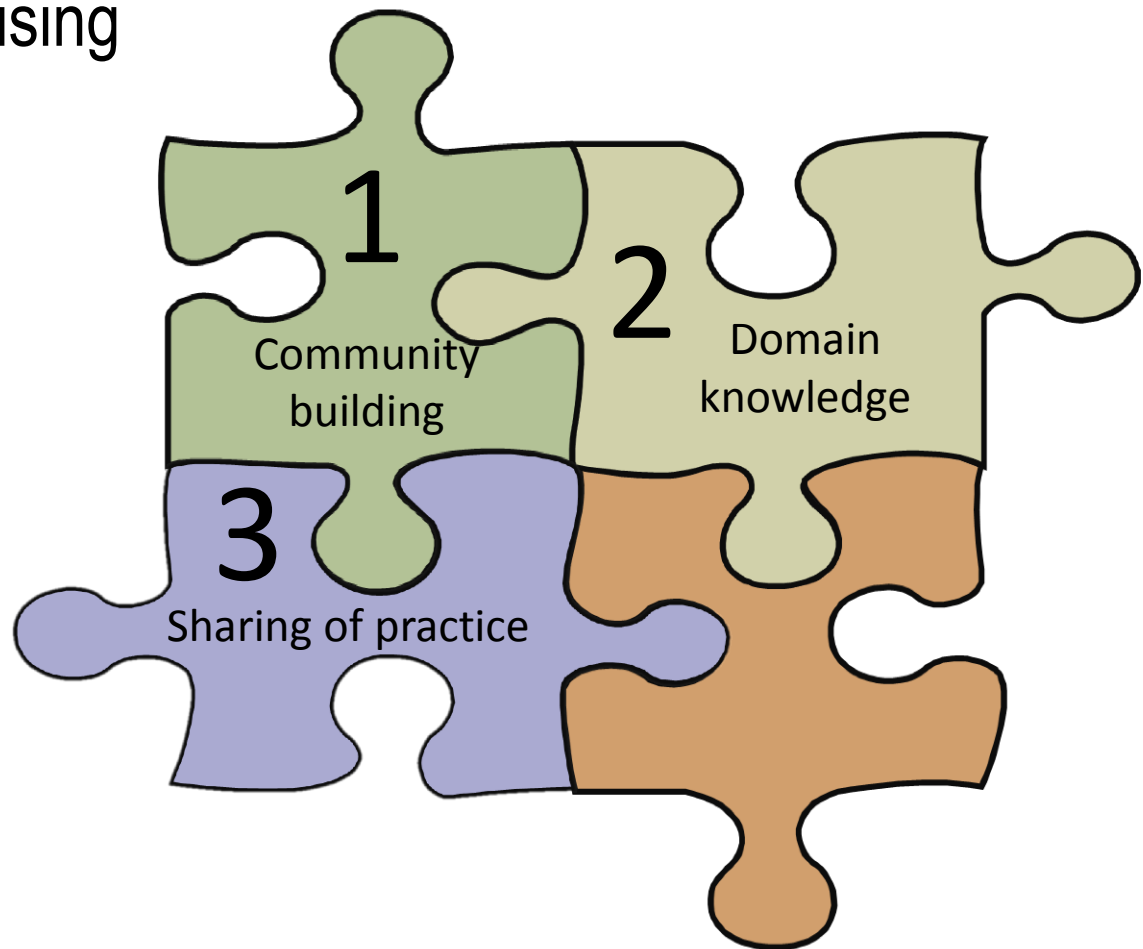


# Communities of Practice (CoP) defined...

CoPs are 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 interacting on an ongoing basis

(Wenger, 1998)

Community of Practice theory  
applied to the USQ Higher Education  
context, with three elements  
providing organising  
structure:



McDonald, J. (2010)  
adapted from Wenger, E.  
(1998). *Communities of  
practice: Learning,  
meaning, and identity*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge  
University Press.

# Elements of communities of practice...

- A *domain* of knowledge that creates a common ground and sense of common identity (builds member capacity)
- A *community* of people who care about the domain and create the social fabric of learning (grow a learning community)
- A shared *practice* developed to become effective in the domain (innovations noted and this saves reinventing the wheel)

# ascilite Community Mentoring Program (CMP)

- Commenced in 2003
- 40 members taken part over the eight years
- ascilite membership survey (2010):
  - 59.6% of respondents regard CMP as a worthwhile
  - 36% not sure about the value of continuing the program
  - 82.8% have seldom or never engaged with the program.
- To increase engagement and spread the “reach”:
  - pilot collaborative CMP program (C<sup>2</sup>MP) trialled in 2011 to run parallel to the existing CMP.

The Collaborative Community Mentoring Program aims to....

- ... build upon the strengths of the Community Mentoring Program;
- ... extend the reach and benefits of mentoring across the ascilite community;
- ... explore the affordances of collaborative mentoring in a digital environment.

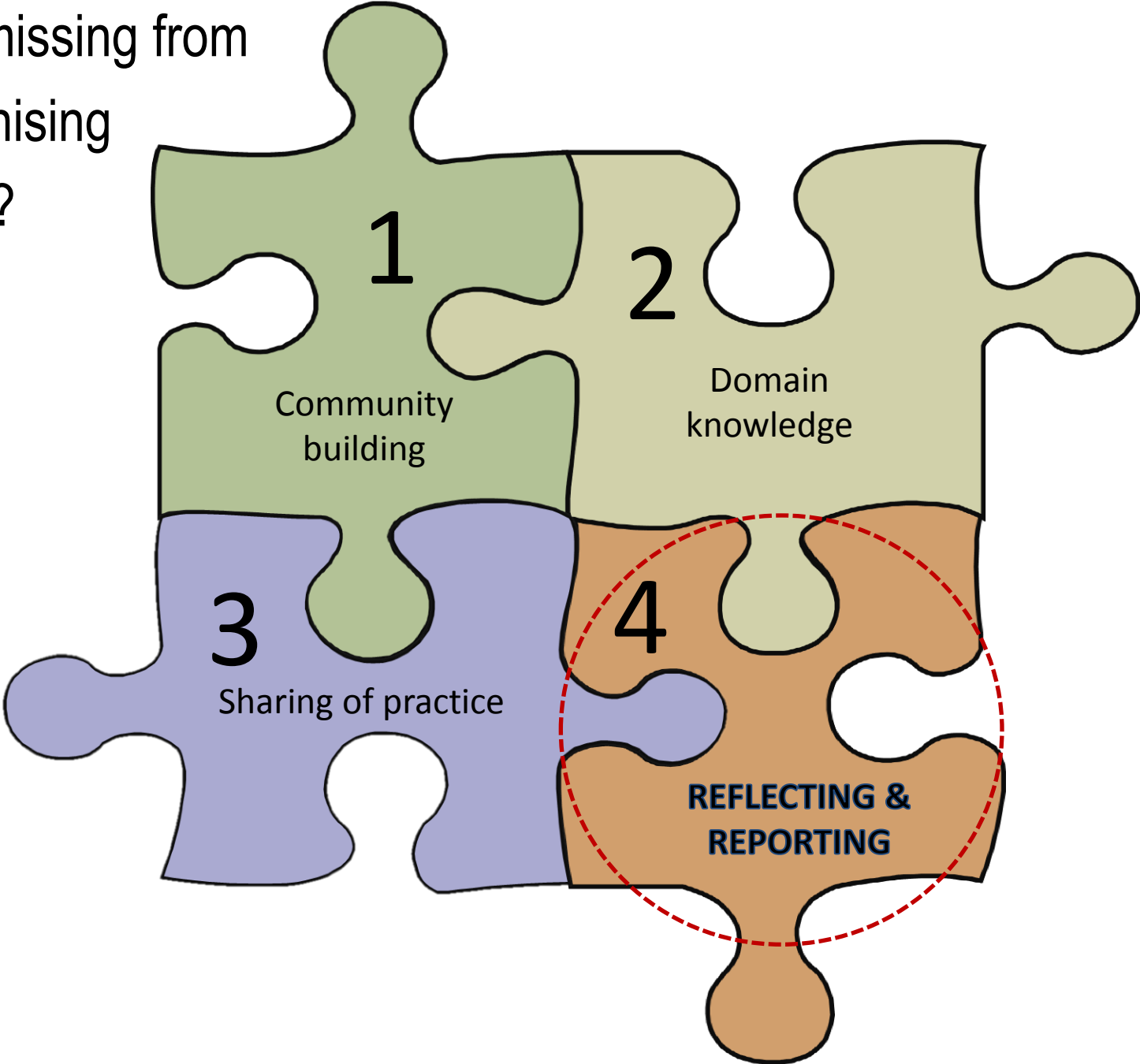
# The 3-element CoP model applied to the C<sup>2</sup>MP:

Synchronous activity (web conference), e.g.:

| MEETING | DAY, DATE, TIME, TIMEKEEPER                       | COMMUNITY BUILDING   | DOMAIN KNOWLEDGE                | SHARING OF PRACTICE  | OTHER                          | NOTETAKER |
|---------|---|--|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-----------|
| 4       | Thurs, 18 Nov, 2-3pm<br><br>Mentee H - timekeeper | Mentee M – share example of icebreaker activity – how can it be used in a digital context? | Mentor M - "Mixing it up" paper | Mentee S presenting feedback application, principles, and research | Mentor S – extending the model | Mentee H  |

(Occurs approximately every 3 weeks)

What is missing from this organising structure?





# Asynchronous activity:

Moodle site - collaborative knowledge building:

- Discussion forums
- Wikis

Resource sharing

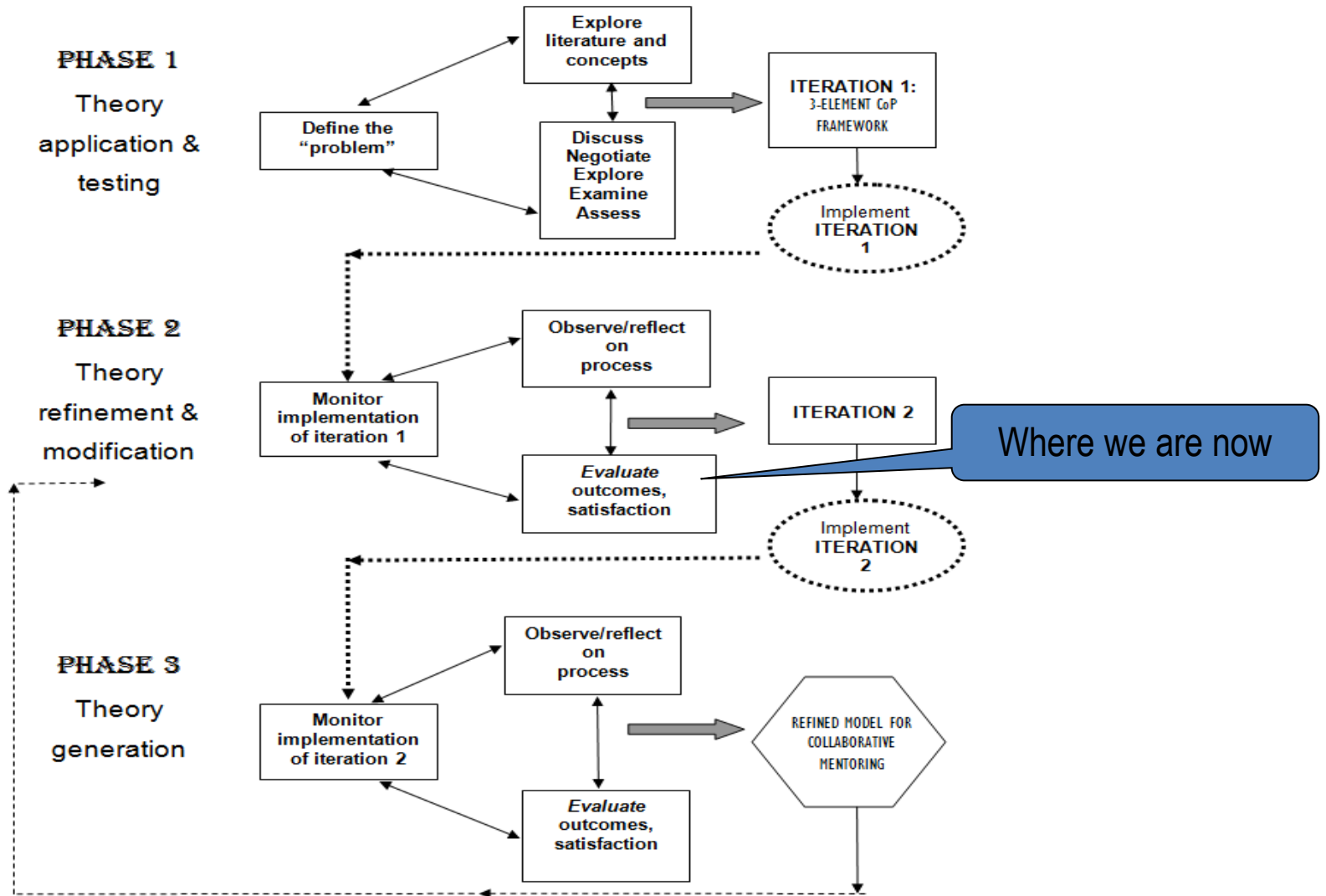
Reflect on process; identify applications to practice

Use of other technologies: Skype, googledocs, Twitter, Facebook

Other means to share resources: Diigo, Flickr, Scoop It

Report on integration into practice

# Evaluation process

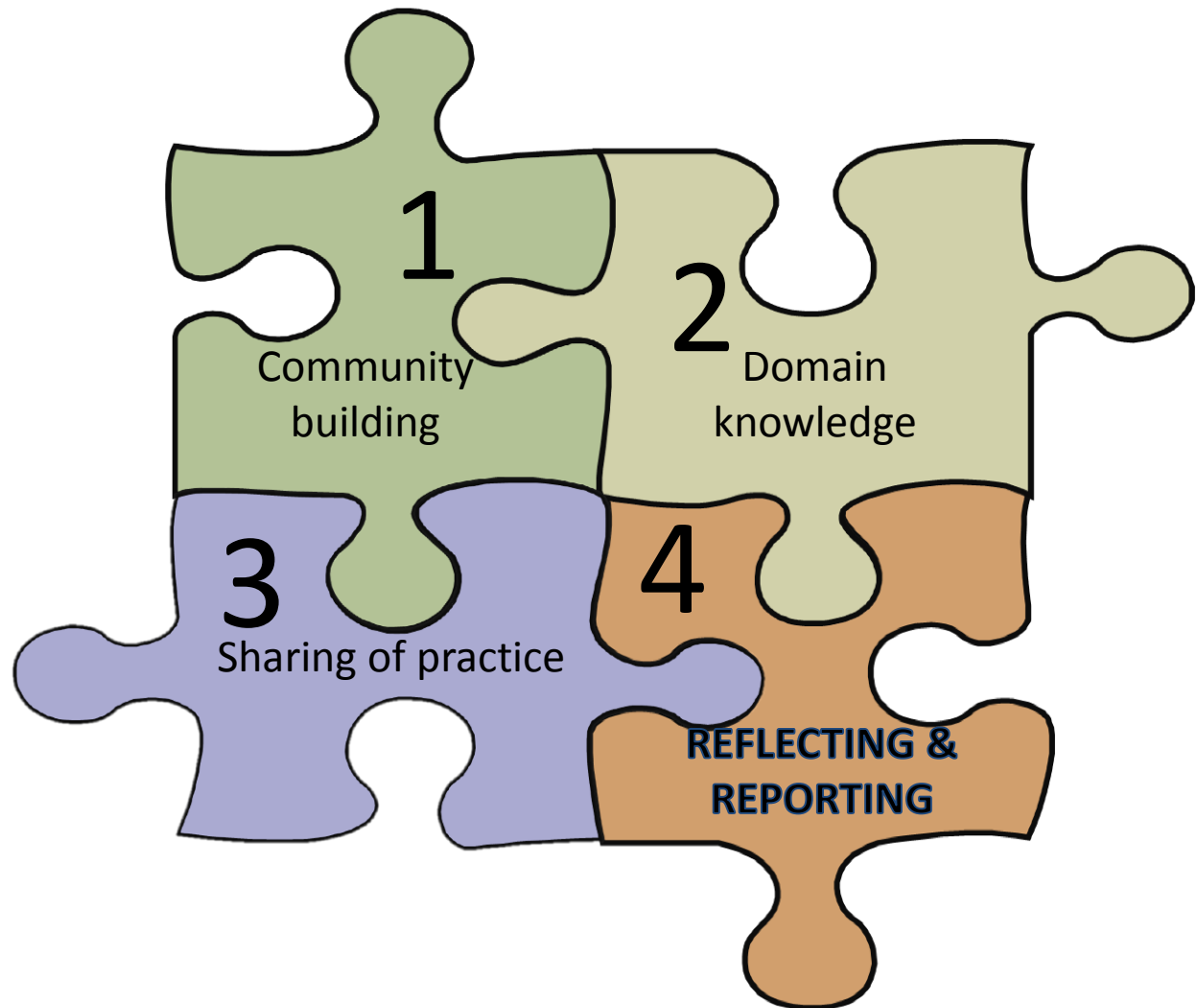


- Question 1 - What key ideas have emerged this year in the Programs?
- Question 2 - What key challenges have emerged?
- Question 3 - What key successes have emerged?

# Preliminary findings...

- Most (if not all?) mentees are tending to be professional staff rather than academics - why is this? Is this indicative of the career paths of mentors? Of mentees?
- The C<sup>2</sup>MP digital community doesn't seem to flourish on its own – who needs to drive the environment? How can motivation be sustained in such a “voluntary” environment?
- Should there be incentives provided to the mentors too? (Mentees are given free registration to the subsequent ascilite conference)
- How can we support motivation in the Program - how can we encourage participants into the online area more? What will draw them in and convince them to stay?
- How can mentors and mentees engage more with the online environment – should this activity be incentivised too?

# Questions...





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