Preface

OVERVIEW OF THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE BOOK

Modern world is changing at a rapid pace. Rising economies such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) are emerging from the global recession with high expectations for growth. China has recently emerged as a major global economic power. One of the reasons could be that China is not interested in human rights and how countries run their internal business and politics but on mutual economic benefits. It is the world’s largest economy (on a purchasing power parity basis), manufacturer and holder of foreign exchange reserves (Morrison, 2015). These rising economies can be perceived as: new market, suppliers of raw materials and resources, ongoing access to lower costs and local knowledge. They also offer unprecedented opportunities to broaden the research and development efforts in the coming years. It is believed that the companies are doing enough R&D work in emerging economies. Additionally the collaboration tools utilized are relatively old-fashioned (e.g. frequent telephone and video conferences – 65 percent) and travel for face-to-face meetings (62 percent). High-performing actors were more likely to use central knowledge databases and global Communities of Practice to share information, in addition to those mentioned before (McKinsey, 2014). It is believed that such global Communities of Practice, interlinking developed as well as rising economies can be a very useful tool for increased innovation and knowledge sharing. For the participants from the developed countries they offer relatively easy access to local knowledge, while for the other they provide an opportunity to interact with experts in a given field.

Communities of Practice since their inception by Lave and Wenger (1991) have become an attractive way for competitive advantage. They are accessible both to experts and new members with diverse academic and cultural backgrounds and with varying social expectations and experiences. Despite these tremendous opportunities and benefits not enough is known about the usage of Communities of Practice in the Rising Economies and their potential to facilitate cooperation between experts from developed countries and rising economies. There is a growing need to investigate various aspects of usage of Communities of Practice in different industries and between developed countries and rising economies. In order to answer these questions it is necessary to look deeper into the concept of Community of Practice.

Community of Practice can be defined as a “system of relationships between people, activities and the world; developing with time, and in relation to other tangential and overlapping Communities of Practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). According to McDermott (1999, p. 34) CoP is “a group that shares knowledge, learns together, and creates common practices. CoP share information, insight, experience, and tools about an area of common interest.” In the last decade or so CoPs have gained ground and are considered as one of the best tools for knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is at the centre of
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A Cop and Skyrme (2011) modified the old credo ‘knowledge is power’ to one of ‘knowledge sharing is power’. Furthermore CoPs can cross organizational boundaries and can be geographically dispersed. This makes them a perfect tool to facilitate knowledge sharing and idea exchange between different countries and continents. This book presents the most recent trends on knowledge sharing between organizations from developed countries and rising economies using Communities of Practice.

DEVELOPED ECONOMIES AND RISING ECONOMIES COOPERATION IN THE WORLD TODAY AND THE ROLE CoPs CAN PLAY IN IT

Increased relationships between developed and rising economies lead to global wealth increase, an example of which is China. Before its accession to World Trade Organisation and liberalizing its policy it enjoyed a relatively slow economic growth, innovativeness and its industry was not very competitive on a global scale. Thanks to free market reforms and foreign western companies investing in its Economy it managed to rise steadily to become global economic superpower. It is believed that the free economy and the international division of labour can be a beneficial to all of the parties involved in the new global division of labour. Communities of Practice can play a facilitating role for knowledge sharing. Knowledge in turn plays a vital role in „shaping the identity of contemporary societies and in determining their destinies in a world characterized merely by quality and competitiveness in light of the knowledge and the scientific revolutions and tremendous techniques.” (Al-ghamdi & Al-ghamdi, 2015, p. 406). CoPs could be the breeding ground for new and innovative ideas and offer a way to quickly disseminate them in a multicultural and international context.

Furthermore, Communities of Practice can be perceived as social structures that allow to connect diverse expertise, knowledge and personalities. They encourage an understanding of new perspectives (or old perspectives viewed from a different cultural angle). They also stimulate individual and collective learning and knowledge discovery. Participants of the Communities of Practice can engage in activities that promote learning and innovation. Continuous interactions between community members and building of the strong interpersonal relationships leads to increased mutual trust, familiarity and respect among participants. This in turn encourages the exploration and use of new approaches and the questioning of the ideas. These contribute significantly to the improvement of an organization performance (Cardona, 2012). Communities of Practice can aid the advancement and diffusion of knowledge within an organisation. Due to its characteristics (such as continuous interaction and association) CoPs enable collaborative knowledge networks among organizational employees and promote new skills, capacities and innovations. These can enhance the development of new ideas, capabilities and relationships.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This book is primarily directed at those interested in the Communities of Practice and how they can be used as a competitive advantage by International Developed and Rising Economies. It covers both theoretical and practical aspects of the Communities of Practice. Therefore it can be useful for business practitioners, statesman, decision makers and educators working in such diverse fields as: industry,
public sector, education, R&D. It is hoped that this book can be utilized in order to improve the usage of Communities of Practice as well as increase the potential benefits from using them in both industry and academia.

**PROJECTED IMPACT OF THE BOOK ON THE ADVANCEMENTS IN THE FIELD**

This book tackles a very relevant and up-to-date research fields: Communities of Practice and Developed Countries – Rising Economies cooperation. Modern world undergoes a crucial change with rising economies playing more and more important role in the global economy. There is already a steady rise of China, but also other countries’ GDP increases: Brazil, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Mexico are only some to mention. It is believed that the growth of these countries is due to their exposure to the Western technologies and opening of their markets to the global economy. Countries from similar world areas and cultures that tend to be isolated are not as well developed (North and South Korea could serve as an example here).

Individual chapters investigate the most important aspects of the Communities of Practice and their usage in developed and rising economies. Deployment of Communities of Practice in the international, cross-cultural environment needs to take into account a variety of factors. This book offers an insight into a variety of risks, factors, barriers, opportunities and potential benefits associated with the usage of Communities of Practice to facilitate knowledge sharing between developed countries and rising economies.

All chapters in this book, have undergone a process of double-blind peer review, with each chapter being read by at least two reviewers.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK**

The book is organized into eleven chapters. A brief description of each of the chapters follows:

Chapter 1 *Transferring knowledge through cross-border Communities of Practice* investigates the use of Cross-Border Communities of Practice (CCoP) as a way for managing knowledge in a global socio-economic environment, mainly referring to the rising economies. Some issues related to the cross-border knowledge transfer are investigated as well as cultural diversities. The authors explain the roles that Global Managers have as “cultural bridges” in multicultural teams. CCoP is provided as a solution to facilitate knowledge transfer at international level between developed countries and emerging economies.

Chapter 2 – *Communities of practice in transition economies: Innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises* – explores the factors contributing to the success of CoPs as well as challenges that CoPs face in transition economies and the role of national and organizational culture on the functioning of CoPs in SMEs in transition economies. The objective of this chapter is to develop a framework that could be applied to CoPs in transition economies. This chapter also identifies the factors that might limit the work of CoPs in the context of innovation in SMEs in transition economies.

Chapter 3 *Mentoring Programs as a Basis for Creating Communities of Practices in Tourism* - presents the mentoring programs as a basis for creating Communities of Practice in tourism. Although this chapter is about CoPs in tourism there are many aspects in the chapter that can be applied in other organizations. It discusses the need for highly skilled and experienced employees with the right knowledge that can
be used in everyday work. Gaining knowledge and expertise and ability to transfer it to new employees in a situation when resources are limited is of a crucial importance. The authors discuss mentoring as a learning mechanism where a process of social participation results in the transfer of knowledge and skills. It presents a mentoring framework, which takes into account the different interested parties: educational institutions, tourism enterprises, mentors and students.

Chapter 4 *What can Reverse Mentoring Relationships Contribute to Communities of Practice involving Developed and Rising Economies* - investigates the reverse mentoring relationships and their contribution to Communities of Practice, which involve developed and rising economies. The authors argue that Communities of Practice are an effective mean of building cooperative knowledge sharing relationships between locals and experts from emerging and developed economies (including division within some multinational companies). The authors advocate the idea of reverse mentoring relationships complementing the work of Communities of Practice in fostering co-operative knowledge sharing between those in developed and emerging economies.

Chapter 5 *The Emergence of Women Entrepreneurs and Communities of Practice within the Global Context* – explores the emergence of women entrepreneurs across the Globe. The authors analyse the existent research and knowledge about Communities of Practice (CoPs) and information communication technologies (ICTs) and raise awareness of their role in supporting women entrepreneurs. They discuss the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in the developed and developing countries and note that CoPs and networking play an important role for women’s learning.

Chapter 6 *Hints for rethinking communities of practice in public administration: An analysis from real practice* - is based on some of the practical research and consultancy carried out by the Organisational Development Team from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (http://edo.uab.cat) over the last 10 years (e.g., Rodríguez-Gómez & Gairín, 2014; Gairín, Rodríguez-Gómez & Armengol, 2012; Gairín & Rodríguez-Gómez, 2012; Rodríguez-Gómez, 2011), presenting some ideas to facilitate the introduction of improvements in the usual functioning of Communities of Practice in the public administration. Specifically, the purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) to analyse the procedures of Knowledge Creation and Management by means of Communities of Practice (CoP) in the public administration and through the intensive use of technology; and (2) to suggest elements which may allow us to rethink and improve CoP.

Chapter 7 *IT – off-shoring and a cross national intra-organizational community of practice* - presents the findings from a case study of IT-offshoring between Norway and Vietnam. The authors try to develop a theory from the perspective of practised based theorizing. It investigates various aspects of intra-cultural and international cooperation among the programmers and presents the potential difficulties. It also provides implications for management.

Chapter 8 *Communities of Practice as a tool of enhancing competitiveness in rising economies: lessons learnt from the Chinese company* - investigates the usage of Communities of Practice as a tool of enhancing competitiveness in rising economies. It presents the concept of open innovation and how it can enhance the external collaboration ability of the organizations. It adopts the structural analysis for examining the role that Communities of Practice may play as a tool for the implementation of the open-mode of innovation specifically in China. According to it Chinese innovation process is at the beginning and the Chinese firms face the question how to organize the open model and the exchanges with the external environment in the global technological competition. This chapter provides a case study with one Chinese company describing challenges, risk, problems and potential benefit of open innovation supported by Communities of Practice.
Chapter 9 *Does a Knowledge Management Community Manage Knowledge* – this chapter examines the knowledge management processes and the role Chief Knowledge Officers play in these processes. The authors try to address the problem of managing knowledge by the knowledge management communities such as *Forum of Knowledge Management in Israeli Organizations*, which is a Community of Practice (CoP). This study tries to establish the “best practices”, that are of significance in emerging economies, which will prevent “reinventing the wheel” and costly “first hand” experience.

Chapter 10 *Reflections on the roles of community of practice (CoP) in engineering education* investigates the usage of Communities of Practice in the engineering education. The authors argue that although Communities of Practice are present in other sectors of the Economy its usage in the engineering education is not widespread. They argued that it is due to the educators limited knowledge of how to implement CoP into their classrooms. The authors provide a literature review on the usage of CoPs and develop a framework for re-designing a work integrated learning (WIL).

Chapter 11 *The performativity of a CoP in innovation context: The case of a Brazilian Cluster* - investigates the opportunities, challenges and problems of Communities of Practice in rising economies. The authors provide a case study of the performance of a CoP of entrepreneurs of startup form the Belo Horizonte ICT’s cluster of innovation, Brazil. They confront the informal organization of a CoP of entrepreneurs with the normative orientation of cluster, in which they can emerge in an innovation context and pursue its performance. The authors also describe how the CoP can become the leverage of a regional innovation dynamism.

Chapter 12 *Logistics, marketing and knowledge management in the community of consumers* - analyzes business logistics through a qualitative-quantitative model. That is studying the same focusing on the roles that play those positions associated with it; choose one of the positions of this model and see how through the functions that this plays it can generate and manage the knowledge and third, show how in the generation of this dynamic knowledge can participate communities external to the organization, in particular the consumers.

Chapter 13 *Utilizing communities of practice to facilitate knowledge sharing in the digital age* – reveals the sharing of knowledge through communities of practice (CoPs) in global business, thus explaining the theoretical and practical concept of knowledge sharing; barriers to knowledge sharing; overview of CoPs; and the significance of CoPs in sharing knowledge. Sharing of knowledge through CoPs is important for modern organizations that seek to serve suppliers and customers, increase business performance, strengthen competitiveness, and fulfill continuous success in global business. Therefore, it is necessary for modern organizations to examine their applications of sharing knowledge through CoPs, establish an integral plan to systematically check their efficient improvement, and urgently respond to the needs of customers’ knowledge sharing and CoPs in modern organizations. The chapter argues that applying knowledge sharing and CoPs will significantly improve organizational performance and reach strategic goals in global business.

**REFERENCES**


