

## Table of contents

I) Introduction .....	1
II) Literature review.....	5
II.1 <i>Organizational learning</i> .....	5
II.1.1) Providing definitions and links .....	5
II.1.2) From “individual” to “organizational” learning .....	6
II.1.3) From Organizational learning to knowledge management .....	9
II.1.3.1) The link between organizational learning, knowledge creation, and knowledge management .....	9
II.1.3.2) Organizational learning and knowledge management .....	11
II.1.4) The link to best practice identification and development .....	13
II.1.4.1) The notion of “best practice” .....	13
II.1.4.2) Best practice enhancement as an ongoing process .....	16
II.2) <i>The transfer of Knowledge and Best Practices</i> .....	19
II.2.1) Problems regarding the transfer of best practices .....	20
II.2.2) General insights into the transfer of best practices.....	21
II.2.3) Main reasons for and enablers of knowledge and best practice transfer .....	23
II.3) <i>Communities of Practice (CoPs)</i> .....	24
II.3.1) The notion of CoPs and their link to best practices .....	25
II.3.2) Nurturing a community of practice.....	28
II.3.2.1) Principle 1: Design a favorable frame in which CoPs can evolve .....	28
II.3.2.2) Principle 2: Know the “inside” perspectives of the community and build dialogues with perspectives “outside” the community.....	31
II.3.2.3) Principle 3: Invite different levels of participation within the community.....	40
II.3.2.4) Principle 4: Develop both public and private community spaces .....	45
III) Model building and developing research hypothesis .....	53
III.1) <i>Presentation of the research model</i> .....	53
III.2) <i>Development and presentation of the research hypotheses</i> .....	62

III.2.1) Linking existing theory to the research hypotheses.....	62
III.2.1.1) Towards the 1 <sup>st</sup> research hypothesis – related to CoP objectives .....	62
III.2.1.2) Towards the 2nd research hypothesis – related to CoP results.....	63
III.2.1.3) Towards the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> research hypothesis – related to sponsorship and leadership .....	72
III.2.1.4) Towards the 5th research hypothesis – related to routinization of activities .....	76
III.2.1.5) Towards the 6th research hypothesis – related to a risk-free environment .....	78
<b>IV) Methodology.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<i>IV.1) The positivist and constructivist paradigms .....</i>	85
IV.1.1) Positivism.....	86
IV.1.2) Constructivism .....	87
IV.1.3) Positioning of the current research .....	89
<i>IV.2) Quantitative and Qualitative research.....</i>	93
IV.2.1) Research objective .....	93
IV.2.2) Characteristics of and differences between quantitative and qualitative methods.....	93
IV.2.3) Interaction with participants .....	95
IV.2.4) Researcher bias: a qualitative research shortcoming .....	96
<i>IV.3) Research design.....</i>	97
<i>IV.4) Research setting.....</i>	98
IV.4.1) Data collection .....	104
<i>IV.5) Data analysis.....</i>	109
IV.5.1) Between a loose and a tight analysis approach.....	111
IV.5.2) Linking data collection to data analysis.....	112
IV.5.3) Data analysis across a multiplicity of CoPs.....	113
<i>IV.6) The qualitative questionnaire and semi-structured interview.....</i>	121
IV.6.1) The qualitative type questionnaire .....	121
IV.6.2) The semi-structured interview .....	124

IV.6.3) Questionnaire pre-testing.....	126
IV.6.4) Semi-structured interview pre-testing.....	127
IV.6.5) Strengths and weaknesses of theory building from a multiplicity of CoP cases .....	128
<b>V) Research findings .....</b>	<b>131</b>
V.1) <i>Three “successful” configurations of CoPs.....</i>	131
V.1.1) The main reasons for failure of CoPs.....	141
V.1.2) Discussion of the 1 <sup>st</sup> set of research findings.....	143
V.2) <i>An in-depth understanding of the 6 success factors regarding the development and sharing of best practices in CoPs .....</i>	148
V.2.1) Clear objectives .....	148
V.2.2) Routinization of activities .....	153
V.2.3) Leadership .....	167
V.2.4) Risk-free environment.....	174
V.2.5) Sponsorship .....	177
V.2.6) CoP results .....	192
V.2.7) Summary of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> set of research findings .....	196
V.2.8) Discussion on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> set of research findings and future research propositions .....	205
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>238</b>