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Press Release

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Communities of Practice make their mark in education!

A new book from York is about to hit the shelves which draws together research from around the world to point to the future of Communities in Practice in the field of education. 'Communities of Practice: Creating Learning Environments for Educators', edited by the experienced Chris Kimble and Paul Hildreth and published by Information Age, aims to act as a practical resource for teachers, lecturers and other educators by demonstrating the impact that Communities of Practice can have.

Communities of Practice (CoPs) have long been recognised in the field of business as providing an environment where less-structured knowledge is created, developed, sustained and nurtured. As they have attracted such attention they have come to be acknowledged as a new organisational form. The relationships developed in CoPs, the inner motivation which drives the CoP, and the development of new knowledge in CoPs all lead to an environment rich in creativity and innovation.

Chris explained: "CoPs are important for learning in any organisation because learning is an act of participation and is therefore an essentially social activity. Communities of Practice are a theory of learning however during the preparation of our previous book 'Knowledge Networks: Innovation Through Communities of Practice' it became very clear to us that Communities of Practice are now having an impact far beyond that in the field of education." This impact is being felt across the world in many areas of education, for example

- Communities of Practice in the Classroom – ie the school as a community of learners
- CoPs to support students
- Virtual CoPs supporting new and existing teachers
- CoPs in informal education
- CoPs supporting educational specialists
- Informal CoPs created by interested educational practitioners
- CoPs in higher and adult education
- Local Area CoPs supporting teachers in specific geographical locations
- CoPs in e-Learning
- Curriculum specific CoPs

Teaching is a very personal and 'individual' activity, yet teachers benefit greatly from links with other teachers, both with colleagues in their own establishment and with colleagues in the wider teaching community. Teachers are therefore prime candidates to benefit from CoPs – Communities of Practice can be powerful catalysts for enabling teachers to improve their practice. The fields of teacher training, newly qualified teacher (NQT) induction and on-going professional development are fields in which work is already being undertaken to develop CoPs to support teachers. Local based CoPs and virtual CoPs are both proving valuable – new Information and Communication Technologies are making it possible for teachers to become involved in larger, distributed communities. Membership of these communities allows teachers to collaborate, to develop new knowledge, and to develop and learn about new resources. The CoPs which are available are not only supporting teachers but also administrators, district coordinators, state staff, staff developers, university faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, researchers, and educational consultants all being and providing resources for each other. However as well as support for teachers, CoPs have the potential to improve the learning experience for students and this is reflected in the book.

Although CoPs are starting to attract interest in the field of education and there are a number of initiatives taking place around the world, the field is poorly-supported and there is a real need for a practical book which draws on the experience of practitioners who are implementing CoPs in the field of education. The aim of the book is to benefit from the expertise of people who have worked with CoPs in real world educational situations and who can provide real examples of supporting real CoPs, thus bringing guidance, ideas, support and a genuine and useful resource to practitioners and academics who work in the field of education and CoPs.

More information including Table of Contents and Chapter Abstracts can be found at <http://www.chris-kimble.com/CLEE/index.html>

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or on the FaceBook group

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6444719953>

About the editors:

Chris Kimble is a lecturer in Information Systems and Management in the Department of Computer Science at the University of York, United Kingdom. Before moving to York, he was lecturer in Information Technology at the University of Newcastle's Business School, and a researcher in both the Business School and the Department of Computer Science at the University of Northumbria. His broad area of research is Knowledge Management. His areas of particular interest are Communities of Practice and the problems associated with supporting distributed working in cross-cultural or trans-national contexts. He is the leader of the Management and Information Research Group at York and a co-founder of the Northern Interest Group on Information Systems and Organisations. He has supervised several PhD students and has published more than 50 articles in journals, conferences, reports and books. Chris also acts as a consultant for information systems textbooks and as a reviewer for numerous academic journals.

After 11 years teaching modern languages, Paul Hildreth went back to university, in York (United Kingdom), to "convert" to IT. Having completed his MSc, he stayed on to do a DPhil exploring the field of Knowledge Management. This work convinced him that Knowledge Management is not about technology but about people and led him to explore the emerging and fascinating field of Communities of Practice (CoPs). Recognising the pressures imposed on organisations by globalisation, he concentrated on researching how CoPs can function in a distributed international environment. The work produced a number of well-received journal and conference papers. Having completed his DPhil, Paul now runs his own independent Knowledge Management consultancy and is a leading figure in the fast-growing sport of Rock-It-Ball. He lives in rural North Yorkshire with Maggie and Tom, and cats Chloe and Izzy. When he manages to find a little spare time, he likes to indulge his hobbies of kit and classic cars, guitar and Rock-it-Ball.

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