



**BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO**  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING



**ASEAN**  
University  
Network



# Community of Practice: Lessons for Reflection from Real-life Case Studies

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# Theoretical background

- A multi-purpose and an age-old context
- Formally proposed or made popular as a theory of learning by Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger (1991)
- Theoretically rooted or connected to pragmatism (CS Peirce, John Dewey) and sociocultural theory (Lev Vygotsky)
- Situated Learning Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) – what people learn, see and do, is situated in their role as a member of a community
- Learning is an important goal

# What is a CoP?

- CoP as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly
- Main features
  - Community – groups of people
  - Domain – area of knowledge/interest/concern/passion
  - Practice – the way work is done to further their goals
- Identity is an important goal

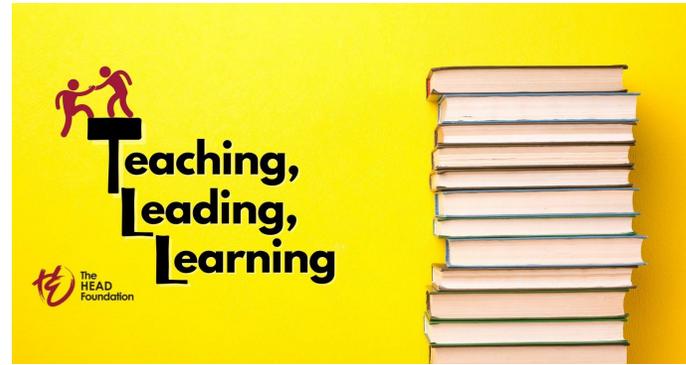
# What is the end goal of a CoP?

- Is it sufficient to just establish a community?
- How to sustain the interest and interaction?
- How to support 'learning' and development 'identity' among the members of this community?
- How should a community grow?

# Three Case Studies



GLOBAL  
YOUNG  
ACADEMY



MALAYSIAN SOCIETY FOR  
HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY &  
RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

***Caveat:*** analysis of three case studies are based on my observation from personal involvement.



## GLOBAL YOUNG ACADEMY

- A member-based organization to give voice to early- and mid-career scientists and researchers, and to nurture the ecosystem of the next generation of science leaders globally
- Limited to 200 members for 5 years; self-governing membership; 327 alumni
- Executive Committee of 2 co-chairs and 9 Execs elected annually among 200 members.
- Supported by full-time GYA Office led by a Managing Director and 6 staff covering media and press, finance, membership and projects

- As of March 2022, GYA has 16 Working Groups, 5 incubator groups, 3 focus area groups and 3 strategic projects. All groups are co-led by 2 members with membership open to all members and alumni
- GYA Office financially by the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, with further support from German government (federal and state), InterAcademy Partnership, Volkswagen Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.
- In partnership with at least 24 organisations including All European Academies, International Science Council, F1000 Research, Future Earth, DAAD, Global Research Council, National Science and Technology Development Agency of Thailand, The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) etc
- A spin-off in Southeast Asia is the ASEAN Young Scientists Network



### Summary

- Clear focus
- Multiple interest groups
- Proactive leaders
- Institutional support
- Financial support
- **Highly dependable on annual AGM for interaction**
- **Elitist**



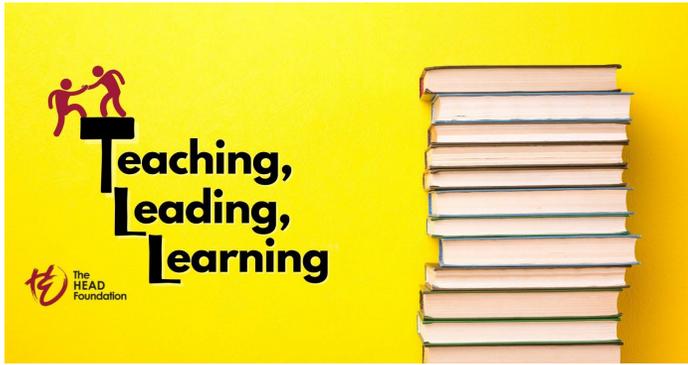
## MALAYSIAN SOCIETY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY & RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

- A professional and non-governmental societal organization determined to provide informed feedback and suggestion towards issues of national higher education policies and practices. Advocate evidence-based research for HE.
- Membership is open to Malaysians aged 18 years old and above. Non-Malaysians can join as Associate Members.
- Executive Committee of 7 Execs elected and 3 co-opted Execs. All are volunteers
- Total membership is 106 but active members estimated about 20-30%. Participation remained the same from in person to online events.
- 4 Taskforces are setup to garner wider participation among members in areas of research dissemination, media advocacy, capacity building and public outreach.
- Source of finance from members, donors, and events
- In-kind institutional supports such as providing venues for public events. Relied on partnership with institutions through the active members



### Summary

- Clear focus
- Volunteers driven
- Mode of interaction does not differ participation
- **Lack of institutional & financial support**



- As response to COVID-19 pandemic, The HEAD Foundation conceived, designed and launched Making HEADway.
- Making HEADway is an open access developmental programme, through webinar series, handbooks in multiple languages, and workshops, by educators for educators.

- Teaching, Leading, Learning is a Group on Facebook intended to be the virtual Community of Practice for Making HEADway.
- Currently 1,098 members in the group and administered by a dedicated team of staff in THF.
- Most members are educators in Southeast Asia, and likely to have participated, at least in part, in Making HEADway or events of THF.
- Interaction has been stilled. Almost all interaction has been driven by administrators with limited response from members.
- Members in the group, presumably, have never met each other in person, where Making HEADway and TLL are virtual programme and community respectively.

## Summary

- Common interest
- Driven by Programme Team
- Resources devoted to promote interaction
- **Low participation and response**

# What are the key ingredients?

1. Buy-in: Well-defined & relatable focus to the members
  - What is the area of focus that can garner the interest of academics in Southeast Asia?
2. Catalyst: Core team to drive interaction
  - Who, and how to put in place, catalyst(s) to drive the CoP(s)?
3. Structure: Interaction structure to ensure regular interactions, the mode of interaction may matter to some extent; governing structure that outlive individuals to sustain and grow
  - What is the ideal structure and mode to establish regional CoP(s)?  
Virtual, in person or hybrid (virtual+physical; national+regional)?
4. Support: Financial is critical to establish structure and provide impetus for greater catalyst
  - Is there financial support to sustain and grow CoP(s) in the region?

# Thoughts for the Future of Southeast Asian Higher Education

- How can academics of Southeast Asian universities be organised into a CoP or CoPs?
- What to learn and what identity to develop with the CoP?
- What are the past lessons to be learned from other regional CoPs in Southeast Asia or elsewhere?
- How can key ingredients be included in a regional CoP?
  - Buy-in – focus/area/concern
  - Catalyst
  - Structure/platform & Mode
  - Support & Resources

# Thank You

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