
Foreword

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Biographical notes: Jingyuan Zhao is a Postdoctoral Researcher in Postdoctoral Center and School of Management, Harbin Institute of Technologies (China). Her PhD is in Management Science and Engineering in Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and University Science and Technologies of China (USTC). Her expertise is on regional innovation management, high-tech industry cluster, knowledge management, technologies diffusion and organisation learning. She serves as a Guest Editor for several international journals and is an Invited Reviewer for China's state-run newspaper *West Times* to provide comments on the economy.

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The regional development of society and economy is closely related with innovative capacities. Choosing suitable development model can give full play to regional advantages, integrate scientific and technological resources, and continually improve the regional innovative capacities. It is an important issue that finds the rules and experiences of establishing and developing innovative city based on economic theory, innovative theory and intellectual capital management theory, puts forward the framework of establishing innovative city according to the unique characteristics of urban development, researches on structural and systemical characteristics of innovative city, including innovative investment system, innovative service system, essential security system, innovative management system, innovative policy system. Furthermore, the design

principle of innovative city's goal system and evaluation system of achievement should be studied.

Regional innovation system (RIS) is an emerging concept, and is a new field of world economy and geography. In the late 1990s, RIS school of thought is considered to be industrial economy and regional economic research focus (Cooke et al., 1997; De la Mothe and Paquet, 1998). Many scholars pay much attention to the theoretical study of RIS, and score certain achievements in terms of the basic concept, content, formation mechanism and function of RIS. It focuses on a specific region, and its cross-organisational knowledge innovation mainly gets through the share of common tacit knowledge and social capital link, the knowledge transfer factor of RIS is the geographical and cultural adjacence and knowledge spillover. The study on RIS can help with the establishment of innovative city.

Government governance plays a critical role in the establishment of RIS and innovative city. The emphases and model of government governance still need further exploration. Meanwhile, the issues that need further study are the mechanisms of innovation, business and creativity, information technology and internet platform, infrastructure environment construction and investment, improvement of the education system and personnel training policies for social needs of innovative society, development countermeasures and suggestions of knowledge-intensive service industries, improvement of living environment and establishment of livable city.

With the economy globalisation gradually developed in depth, science and technology has become the leading force of economic and social development, turning into the driving force to support and lead the development of economy and the progress of human civilisation. Impelled by science and technology, human being is experiencing transformation from the industrial society to the knowledge society, science and technology continue to create new economic growth points, playing an increasingly important role in terms of solving a series of important issues of mankind sustainable development. Facing the current overall development trend of science and technology, many developed countries and newly industrialised countries have made similar strategic choice, setting scientific and technological innovation as national strategy, keeping on investing in science and technology, and deploying and developing strategic technology and industry, to achieve continuous improvement in the competitiveness of the country.

The development of the world economy of past 30 years shows that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially technology-based SMEs are the important force in technology innovation system, the most active and most efficient part of national innovation system, and the source of technological innovation and the direct carrier of the technological achievement transfer. According to statistics data, about 60% of the major innovations are originated from SMEs in the 20th century, especially from technology-based SMEs, more than 80% of US new technologies are turn into industrial productions by SMEs. Practice has proved that some international well-known large companies, such as Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, Dell and so on, grow up from small enterprises. Therefore, SMEs innovation activities should be paid great attention, and strong policies should be implemented to support the innovation and development of SMEs.

In the face of fierce competition, it has become critical issue how SMEs are able to withstand pressures from a large number of multinational enterprises and large domestic enterprises, and win more spaces for growth and development, which is the issue that entrepreneurs pay close attention to. The important support for continued growth of

SMEs is continued innovation, particularly technological innovation. Therefore, the estimation of growth type, characteristics and the path are of special significance for SMEs to achieve sustained growth by way of technological innovation.

Innovation is closed to organisational learning. Learning organisation has become a popular word since it was held by Senge in 1990. OECD (2001) claims that the theory of learning region not only emphasises individual learning, but also stresses organisational learning. The most effective innovations arise from organisational internal environment, in which learning is by means of intensive inter-organisational information exchange, at the same time, there are steady and high mutual trust relationship among a variety of organisations, the successful communication network among organisations is based on the efficient information exchange and sufficient social interaction, therefore, the organisation must be developed into learning organisation. The establishment of regional learning mechanism and system is the critical point in global competition, learning region provides a series of related infrastructure which is propitious to the diffusion of knowledge, ideas and learning, and then further becomes major learning and innovation base.

Learning society is a theoretical description for the development character of modern society, and learning is becoming the urgent needs for individual, organisation and society in information society (Ordóñez de Pablos, 2006). Learning society demands for the socialisation and generalisation of learning behaviour, including learning citizen, learning organisation, learning city and learning government. It is worth for us to explore how to create learning society, strengthening the national information network, improving technological condition of knowledge diffusion, creating cultural atmosphere for encouraging learning and promoting innovation, cultivating the concept and mechanism for appreciating knowledge and talents.

We organised this special issue entitled 'Study on innovation and learning: theories and practices'. It is formed by nine papers that address the experience of innovation and learning in several countries and regions: The Netherlands, Nigeria, Chile, China, Singapore and UK.

The first paper of this special issue is entitled 'Innovation in an old industrial region: the case of Twente' by Gert-Jan Hospers and Paul Benneworth, the authors explore the innovative capacities of old industrial regions by studying the case the former textiles agglomeration of Twente, and argue that the hardware, software and mindware of old industrial regions tends to suffer from path dependency. For innovation in this type of regions, a breakthrough is needed. In this paper, the authors study the case of Twente and show how a well-networked university, the University of Twente (UT), has served as a focal point for both industrial and institutional attempts to promote regional upgrading, and conclude that for old industrial regions, a university might be an essential driver of regional innovation.

Tomas Gabriel Bas and Martin Kunc in their paper entitled 'University involvement in economic development in natural-resource based regions' review the case of three Argentinean universities embedded in natural resource-based regions to evaluate their level of support to regional development. They conclude that universities should not only facilitate local interaction but also expand the knowledge sources developing linkages with extra-regional sources like foreign direct investments and academic networking.

The paper entitled 'Cultural and creative industry cluster: a case of Beijing' by Jingyuan Zhao and Zhongying Qi focuses on Beijing's cultural and creative industry clusters, discusses on the characteristic and advantage of cultural and creative industry

clusters, analyses the situation and problems of Beijing cultural and creative industry clusters, especially discusses on management system and operation mechanism, and proposes the development framework and strategies of Beijing culture creative industry clusters.

A.A. Egbetokun, A.A. Adeniyi and W.O. Siyanbola in their paper entitled 'On the capability of SMEs to innovate: the cable and wire manufacturing sub-sector in Nigeria' explored the factors that explain innovation capability in SMEs in developing countries. This is important given the increasing global pressures that these SMEs have to face. The data employed came from a survey of cable and wire manufacturing firms in Nigeria. The important factors that accounted for innovation performance were firm-level leadership and use of new technologies – particularly ICTs. Important external factors included interactions with customers and suppliers of equipment/raw materials. Particularly, the industry association was about the most significant driver of innovativeness. They therefore conclude that it is beneficial for industries in developing countries to be well-organised as a means to achieving improved innovation capability.

Xiaolin Li in his paper entitled 'R&D intensity and productivity of exporting SMEs: empirical evidence from China' formulates an R&D-firm size-productivity research model for exporting SMEs. General linear model analysis on cross-sectional data of 186 exporting SMEs in China demonstrates that R&D intensity and firm size are positively and significantly associated with labour productivity. The findings of the study provide an additional piece of empirical evidence that maintain technical leadership and business competitiveness, exporting SMEs need to strengthen their in-house R&D.

A.A. Egbetokun, A.A. Adeniyi, W.O. Siyanbola and O.O. Olamide in their paper entitled 'The types and intensity of innovation in developing-country SMEs: evidences from a Nigerian sub-sectoral study' addressed two main questions: What types of innovation occur in SMEs? How intense is innovation in SMEs? We have used empirical information from a census carried out in the Nigerian cable and wire manufacturing industry. Questionnaire and interviews were the primary means of data collection and the data covered the four-year period between 2003 and 2007. The authors found a high prevalence of organisational innovation and low prevalence of diffusion-based innovation. Innovation intensity was low at 0.114% per capita training investment. Interestingly, our findings revealed that process and marketing innovation accompanied each other, and conclude that SMEs in developing countries are not innovation-inactive and that they would do better if industries are well organised and firms make higher investments in learning and capability build-up.

Pak Tee Ng in his paper entitled 'The Singapore learning society: intellectual capital development strategies and its response to the 2008/9 financial crisis' describes and analyses how Singapore attempts to develop a learning society under its umbrella vision and strategy of Thinking Schools Learning Nation. It examines the initiatives in the systems of schooling and adult learning. In particular, the author analyses the responses to the global 2008/9 financial crisis in these systems to highlight the underlying beliefs of the government in intellectual capital development and the strategies employed to do so. It also discusses the challenges ahead for the Singapore learning society.

The paper entitled 'E-learning implementation from strategic perspective: a case study of Nottingham University' by Chih-Cheng Lin, Zheng Ma and Chi-Cheng Chang claims that e-learning is spreading not only in the USA but also in the UK. Most available literature concentrates on e-learning platforms, but do not explore the factors related to e-learning implementation from a strategic or organisational perspective. Many

academic institutes and their IT departments are now facing the challenges of selecting and implementing the right e-learning solutions. In order to understand the entire process associated with e-learning implementation in higher institutes which has not yet been a linear process but came probably with top-down, bottom-up, or flowers blooming approach. However, the transform process is extremely complex. To make sense of this complexity, author adopted strategic IS management profile into the research. To explore this speculation, the research uses a qualitative constructivist approach. Based on an exhaustive case study of one higher institute's experience, the paper shows that maintain the alignment is still a crucial issue but hard to achieve. The pressure of achieving alignment may be even more considerable with the implementation of e-learning systems.

The last paper entitled 'Post-modern perspectives of organisational learning' by Andrew Chan and Christopher Dixon argues that, under the contemporary development character of society and organisations the rationalist objective-based approach to learning has to be seen anew with a post-modern organisational learning perspective. The authors outline the alternatives in terms of defining knowledge and learning characteristics across three sets of assumptions under the pre-modern, modern and post-modern eras. The notion of different rationalities in each involving a sequence of links between experiences, ideas and concepts is applied to the design and evaluation of management development programme. This new approach emphasises the interactive and the co-creation of knowledge as a process of negotiation. It points out the rules and categories of management development programmes should be explored in the very nature of the programme as it evolves rather than presented as given.

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