

Chapter 89

The Emergence of Women Entrepreneurs and Communities of Practice within the Global Context

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to explore the emergence of women entrepreneurs across the Globe. Moreover, 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. The authors attempted systematic and unsystematic literature review to investigate the emergence of women entrepreneurs across the Globe and the role of Communities of Practice. There was an unprecedented increase in women entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in the developed and the developing countries are slightly different. CoPs and networking play an important role for women's learning. The chapter widens the knowledge regarding Communities of Practice and their role in helping women entrepreneurs and is an original contribution to the research field of women entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

Humphries and St Jane (2011) argued that the latest phase of capitalism sharpened the process of economic and politic globalisation. Considering Kuratko's (2014) opinion, the capitalism is the main economic system which controls economies across the world. Likewise, Humphries and St Jane (2011) empha-

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sised that the globalisation leads to a new orchestration of challenges such as poverty and segregation, opportunities and advantages. Additionally, they suggested that poverty is a direct consequence of the capitalism. Furthermore, they considered the actual economic system as a type of 'Master', whilst the capitalist routines were named by them as 'the Market'. It infers that the 'Master' expanded its power globally, produced disequilibrium and affected negatively certain segments of the population. Moreover, the new global market, forced people into the global labour force, without meeting their needs: jobs, loans, financial help and standards of life (Humphries and St Jane, 2011). Within this context, entrepreneurship, which is considered to be the main mechanism for the economic growth, spread across the globe (Kuratko, 2014).

According to Kuratko (2014), in the last decade the world faced the appearance of a new type of entrepreneur, the 'global entrepreneur'. Similarly, some authors (Edwards-Schachter et al., 2015) emphasised the role of the new reforms started by the European Union with regard to entrepreneurship and the creation of the entrepreneurial society. Although, there are certain opinions which emphasised that entrepreneurship is a male attribute (Ahl, 2006), there are also arguments presenting entrepreneurship either as a common characteristic for both male and female, or as a matter of identity for female entrepreneurs (Orser, Elliott & Leck, 2011). Entrepreneurship and the enterprise culture phenomenon were considered as crucial factors for economic and social revival (Warren, 2004). Although, women entrepreneurs bring a significant contribution to economic regeneration, they encounter many challenges and barriers which should be promptly addressed by the global society (Warren, 2004). Further, they engage in networks and communities of practice in view to create an 'identity', which could have the same meaning like any of the following two terms: profession and career (Wenger, 1998; Warren, 2004). It is Kuratko's (2014) considerate opinion that, the entrepreneur needs to be perceptive, flexible, adaptive, creative and able to have both a global view and networking skills, in order to succeed in a very challenging environment. Kuratko (2014:23) defined the entrepreneurship as 'dynamic process of vision and change' and the entrepreneur as 'an innovator' who takes hold of opportunities and as 'a catalyst' for economic development and growth.

Entrepreneurship research conducted in the last ten years discovered an unprecedented increase in women entrepreneurs (Kuratko, 2014). There was also an increasing interest for the phenomenon of women entrepreneurship and academic research and official statistics highlighted women entrepreneurs' contribution to the economies across the world (Carter & Shaw, 2006; Roomi, Harrison & Beaumont-Kerridge, 2009; O'Carroll & Millne, 2010; GEM Report, 2011). Alternatively, there were discussions and research discovered either little or lack of research on women entrepreneurs (Clutterbuck & Devine, 1987; McAdam, 2013). As a consequence, this chapter will focus on the emergence of women entrepreneurs within the global context, the challenges they face, as well as barriers and opportunities for growth and development. The chapter will employ both a systematic and unsystematic literature review, based on books, reports, chapters and articles published in relevant journals. Moreover, the chapter will emphasise the role of networks and Communities of Practice (CoPs) for learning and sharing knowledge and information. The chapter will highlight similarities and differences in research conducted on women entrepreneurs across the world. Further, the chapter will endeavour to find out if the networks and CoPs are beneficial for their members in general, and for women entrepreneurs, especially. The chapter will raise awareness regarding the role of women entrepreneurs as contributors to global economy and the significance of Communities of Practice as new forms of knowledge creation and sharing. Finally, an emphasis will be placed on globalisation and information technologies as means of knowledge and information diffusion within the Communities of Practice, around the globe. By raising awareness about

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