

IT for Decision & Policy
Leveraging Knowledge & the Power of e-Networking

The Potentials of Best Practices

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Relevance of Issue

- Salient in the practice of policies toward Sustainability
- Central to ways of reducing the gap between *Knowledge* and implementation - *Decision, Policy, Action*
- By definition, a 'Best Practice' is a moving target

Outline

- Current Status
- Emerging Knowledge Domain
- New Venues for Knowledge Development
- Local Practices & Global Accords
- Tracking the 'Moving Targets'
- Taking Stock & Moving Forward
- Orientations for Research & Collaboration

Current Status

- Applied to a range of issues & issue areas, by extensive communities of theory, policy, & practice
- Quantity of databases exist about what is considered 'best practice' – but there are no integrative perspectives
- Ontologies are diverse, yet may share common features – that are still to be identified
- Meta-databases are not in existence – there is as yet no coherent way of learning from practices

Emerging Knowledge Domain

Treated in the context of data bases & case studies

- Not in terms of a knowledge domain or a cluster of knowledge domains

Appears to be a 'moving target'

- Today's Best Practices may cause problems tomorrow

Complexity in scale, scope and speed

- Local-global dynamics, context-specificity vs. transferability, & the issues of moving target

New Venues for Knowledge Development

Consider a domain at the intersection of:

- Sustainable development & IT on the one hand
- And a select topic, on the other

We note that:

- Best Practices in sustainable development are identified
- As are practices for the select topic

But there is no data about:

- Best Practices in IT for sustainable development
- Or the introduction of IT for sustainability in the select topic

Leveraging Best Practices Knowledge

We propose to:

- Draw on a meta knowledge base of Best Practices
- Disaggregated by topics, sub-topics & concepts
- With the ontology and functions of the Global System for Sustainable Development (GSSD)

Where for example:

- Urban management is a topic
- Intelligent transportation systems is a sub-topic
- Use of sensors at cross roads is a concept
- Etc.

Local Practices & Global Accords

Practices evolve in the international community,
Applications at the local level will vary

Thus the need to:

- Improve understandings of local practices in response to international accords, and highlight 'best' actions
- Address general global tendencies as well as specific responses at the local level

Answering Questions

Global Level

- What is the international record for Best Practices?

Local Level

- What is the nature of attendant practices at the local level?
- What are actual operations of Best Practices, and the major institutional adjustments and innovations that are taking place in response to emergent demands for responsiveness and compliance with international accords?

Gaps

- Where are the gaps at the global level, and in the context of local strategic development?

'Moving Targets'

- Best Practices involve sustained improvements in applications of knowledge & skills
- What were once 'best practices' do not remain such over time, as they become superseded by improvements and enhancements
- The value of Best Practices is updated as technology improves and knowledge is enhanced
- This helps identify the 'frontier' practices
- It is relevant to 'leapfrogging' considerations
- It helps clarify potential applications for local contexts

Tracking the Moving Targets

Step 1 – Identify:

- An initial ‘location’ of local cases within the broader international records of Best Practices
- And some general indication of current performance relative to Best Practices

Step 2 – Develop:

- The global database
- The criteria for tracking Best Practices
- And the elements most relevant to local contexts

Taking Stock and Moving Forward

Considerable on-line resources are available to allow for:

- Analysis of Best Practices in specific domains, topics, and locations
- Comprehensive review of the characteristics of Best Practices
- Developing methods for tracking 'moving targets'
- Highlighting Best Practices most consistent with current realities and desired trajectories in specific contexts

Directions for Research

UN and the Int'l community on “Best Practices”:

- *It is essential that (...) the activities in question be evaluated (...) by both experts and the people concerned.*
- *(...) it is imperative that information about the activities be easily accessible.*

GSSD MIT on “IT for Decision & Policy”:

- Leveraging Knowledge
- & the Power of (e)Networking

New Collaborative Initiatives

Domains

- Biodiversity, Intelligent transportation systems, Corporate social responsibility

Methods

- Environmental economics, Standardizing approaches

Locations

- Malaysia (MUST), France (EMSE)