



Report

Training & Certification Group Meeting 10 - 11 December 2009

6th PEMPAL Internal Audit Community of Practice

Centre for Excellence in Finance, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Background

Following the 5th Internal Auditor's Community of Practice meeting in Yerevan, Armenia in October 2009 I was invited to facilitate the Training and Certification (T&C) workshop in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The T&C members had volunteered to take a leadership role on T&C during the Yerevan workshop and this was their first meeting together.

There were five countries represented in this working group:

Country Representatives	Institution
Ainur Suleimanov	Ministry of Finance, Kazakhstan
Albana Gjinopulli	Ministry of Finance,, General Department of Audit, Albania
Ainur Baimaronova	Ministry of Finance, Kazakhstan
Tomislav Micetic	Ministry of Finance, Croatia
Zamira Omorova	Ministry of Finance, Kyrgyz Republic

Judith Hoffman (InWEnt) and Arman Vatyán (The World Bank) also participated in the meeting. Salome Steib (The Swiss Confederation) joined us for the beginning and the end of the meeting.

The principle aims of the meeting were to compare country T&C programmes with the PEMPAL model and to advance the conversation about adopting and using the PEMPAL T&C model in people's respective countries. This would also lead to finding out what resources would be needed and what steps should be taken for this to happen.

I met with Tomislav to discuss and make suggestions to the agenda and we also met the day before the meeting to finalize the activities.

We decided to create a wiki website as a memory and potential strategic resource for this community.

Supporting the meeting with a wiki

In the preparation for this workshop I suggested that we use a wiki for creating a collective memory of the meeting.

The wiki also has the advantage of being a collaborative tool during the meeting. People can take notes directly onto the wiki which are then available for the whole group to read and to edit. The idea of the wiki was not to be a publishing tool with official notes and conclusions, but something that would be an invitation to the wider community into the process of what happened and the plans for next steps.

A wiki is a webpage that all members can view or edit. I chose the tool "Wikispaces¹" for our task as it is very user-friendly, has many features and looks professional. It also has an excellent support team for wiki administrators and a strong community who give advice and suggestions on the wiki forum. In order not to have advertisements on the front page and to have the facility of making the wiki private there is a subscription fee of \$50 / year.

The wiki was created here: <http://pempaltc.wikispaces.com>

The wiki is private, so membership needs to be approved for someone to be able to view or edit the wiki. All members can edit all pages.

¹ Wikispaces: <http://wikispaces.com>

Leadership groups

Following on from the idea of leadership groups at the meeting in Yerevan, Armenia, we assigned people to leadership groups for this meeting. There were two leadership groups: the social reporters responsible for keeping the memory and the critical friends responsible for thinking reflectively on the issues that arose in the meeting.

Notes by these groups can be found on the wiki:

Social reporters: <http://pempaltc.wikispaces.com/socialreporting>

Critical friends: <http://pempaltc.wikispaces.com/criticalfriends>

What happened

The meeting started with agreeing leadership roles.

We went on to discuss some of the responses to questions sent out in the T&C questionnaire. These were written up on a matrix on some large sheets of white paper on the wall. A shared visual and text representation of a discussion is a way of creating a shared understanding of what a group is discussing.

Additional discussion points were included in the original grid and posted on the wiki: <http://pempaltc.wikispaces.com/Matrix>

The PEMPAL model was briefly re-presented and people worked in two groups to discuss how this model applied to their context and how the methodology and training could be adapted to their own contexts. A summary of one group's discussion can be found with the PEMPAL model here: <http://pempaltc.wikispaces.com/pempalmodel>

Again in two groups people worked on producing a strategic text that could be presented to relevant people back in their own country. The objective would be to engage key people in discussions about T&C, the value of the PEMPAL model and of taking a harmonized approach. The groups produced a draft Powerpoint slide show and a brochure which could be adapted and used by each country. These can be found here: <http://pempaltc.wikispaces.com/strategictakeaways>

Each country took some time to design and present their own short, medium and long-term action plan. These action plans are recorded here: <http://pempaltc.wikispaces.com/actionplans>

The social reporters and critical friends made some closing reflections and the meeting ended. There was no time for the social reporters to complete their presentation of the events during the two days although there is a slideshow with the photos of the event on the front page of the wiki: <http://pempaltc.wikispaces.com>

Reflections and Recommendations

We did not get formal feedback from participants but everyone reported a sense of achievement and felt the goals of the meeting had been reached. In particular people appreciated the working and productive atmosphere of the two days. There was an in depth discussion about the similarities and differences of T&C in their different countries. People thought about how and to what extent they could adopt the PEMPAL model and a Powerpoint show was prepared that could be adapted and used by people to show a strategic way forward. Each country developed and presented an action plan which they can report back on to the wider group at the next meeting. The wiki serves as a collective memory of the meeting which will help show the PEMPAL community what happened. For future members of the group it could give them a sense of the history of discussions.

I think that one of the reasons for the success of the meeting was the involvement of people from sponsoring organisations. Judith Hoffman from InWEnt kept the focus on the content and facilitated the discussion about the matrix; Arman, from the World Bank, played a pivotal role interpreting and facilitating small group discussions; CEF secretariat role facilitated all the

logistics and the inputting of information into documents or the wiki while we could move on to another activity. Their roles and the generous leadership shown by Tomislav from Croatia were a very productive combination.

However, the Powerpoint was not completed during the meeting and there was a sense of rushing to finish things at the end. Sometimes it felt that outcomes and action plans were not specific enough, although this is also because it often takes longer for people to absorb, reflect and act on discussions that we anticipate. I also wonder if the concrete next steps between this meeting and the next meetings were clear enough. The bridging of this meeting to the other meetings and wider group may need some strategizing. What steps should we be taking to create the conditions for more people from within the community to take on leadership roles? How could the wiki and other communication tools support and extend this and other PEMPAL activities? These were some of the questions I think it would be useful to consider.

1. Completing output: schedule more time

Although the Powerpoint was a key output of the meeting there was not enough time to finish it for people to take back with them. There was also not enough time to finish the reportage by the social reporters. However, it is difficult to know what activities we could have shortened. I wonder if we should try and be more creative about the design of the agenda. What if scheduled a final afternoon (or morning) for completing all output including output from the leadership groups? If the output is completed early, then the meeting ends early.

2. Convening skills: an appreciation

This meeting would not have been so successful without the very good teamwork between the people who convened the meeting. The way that different individuals and entities successfully work together to bring the PEM PAL meetings together is something that should not be taken for granted. In this case we saw CEF, InWEnt, the World Bank and Tomislav, an internal leader working together to make this meeting happen at short notice. In my experience it is rare to find such a productive team of conveners from diverse organisations.

3. Internal leadership: facilitated self-design

My sense is that PEMPAL is ready to develop a culture and practice of internal leadership. We have had two meetings where the leadership roles have been readily taken up by members. In the meantime most of the internal community work is being done by one individual (Tomislav). There is a gap between what leadership roles people are ready to do and what they are doing which we could fill with some facilitated self-design. This would not happen in just one meeting, but we could start the process of creating a culture and practice of internal leadership by developing the concept of leadership roles and integrating it further into the design of the agenda.

Leadership and self-design are an integral part of the business of being a community of practice. It is part of becoming more intentional in developing the strategic learning capabilities of the community. Based on some work I am currently doing in partnership with Etienne Wenger I propose that four principles of a community of practice could be taken up in four different leadership roles: community keepers, social reporters, agenda activists and critical friends.

These principles are:

Bringing practice in: making sure that the agenda is driven by practice i.e what happens in practice rather than what we think *ought* to happen. Keeping the community means that we ensure that practice and diverse voices are at the table in every stage. The matrix developed from the questionnaire is an example of bringing practice in. *Community keepers* would pay attention to bringing practice in.

Self-representation: communities of practice develop an identity around a domain (in this case Internal Auditing) which needs to be represented to the community and beyond. The wiki and the Powerpoint developed at the T&C meeting are examples of this self-representation. *Social reporters* would pay attention to self-representation.

Pushing out the practice: the community needs to be pushing the bounds of its learning agenda. What activities do we need to do in order to improve our practice? What issues should we be addressing? *Agenda activists* would pay attention to pushing out the practice and developing the learning agenda.

Self design: there needs to be ongoing reflection and feedback that drives the self-design of the community. This needs an accompanying culture that supports openness and space to make mistakes, or to turn mistakes into learning opportunities. *Critical friends* would pay attention to self-design.

These roles could be rotated at different workshops or they could bridge between workshops. They could start and end during the workshop or there could be some preparation time before a face-to-face meeting and follow-up time after the meeting. I have initiated a table (annex 1) that starts to develop these roles and activities for a face-to-face meeting.

My invitation to PEMPAL would be to explore how to develop these internal leadership roles so that the community can become better at designing and implementing its learning agenda in a sustainable way and within the bounds of the convening and sponsor team parameters.

4. Bridging between meetings: an email discussion group

A question arises about the strategy for extending the T&C conversation in Ljubljana to the wider PEMPAL group. The wider group needs to be invited into the wiki. Preparation needs to be done by the group to present their work at the next whole group workshop. How will this take place and who will lead the process? I wonder if PEMPAL has considered keeping people informed between meetings through a discussion group, such as Yahoo discussion groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com/>). There are several advantages of using a discussion group rather than sending emails, including:

- There is an online record of the messages creating a shared archive that anyone in the group can refer to;
- All members receive the messages through their email and can reply through email;
- Any member can unsubscribe to the messages if they no longer want to participate or receive the messages;
- You can subscribe to a digest form of the messages;
- It is easier to manage emails from a discussion group in your email box through a filtering system.

For example, if PEMPAL had a discussion group with PEMPAL members registered, it could now send a message to the group with a brief description of “what happened” at the T&C meeting and a link to the wiki. Anyone with questions of how to get in or about the content would reply to the whole group and everyone could benefit from the reply. Any updates about the next meeting in Ukraine could be sent on this discussion group. If there is a new person to the group, they can read through the archives of the group to catch up with the emails they have missed.

5. Wiki and other social media: thinking through the issues

In considering how to strategically use some of these online tools to support the group there are a number of issues that arise related to: privacy, cost, facilitation and upkeep, integration. If PEMPAL starts to integrate some of these tools into its practice to support and extend its work, then these issues will need to be discussed.

Beverly Trayner
bev@bevtrayner.com