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Institutional Strategy and Knowledge Sharing in Higher Education

Present by

Hidehiro Nakajima, Nagoya University, Japan





Key takeaways

- Top-down approach is not effective
 - It is a disaster
 - No need to be a strong leader
- Support organizational learning
 - The role of the presidential team:
 - to facilitate formal and informal communication among the member for exchanging their experiences and thoughts based on psychological safety





Background

- Higher education reform and roles of governance and management
 - Strong leadership = successful reform
 - Implicit assumption:
appropriate decision making by the top = always carried out by the member
- “Plans are never carried out in colleges and universities”
(March & Olsen 1976)
 - Due to the attention patterns in the decision-making process





Why leadership brings successful reform?

- Myths of presidential leadership
 - Successful reform = effective presidential leadership
- Why?
 - Presidents tend to recognize success due to their competency (Schein 2016)
 - Visible strategies or presidential vision VS Invisible capability
 - Outsiders also tend to recognize success due to the presidential leadership





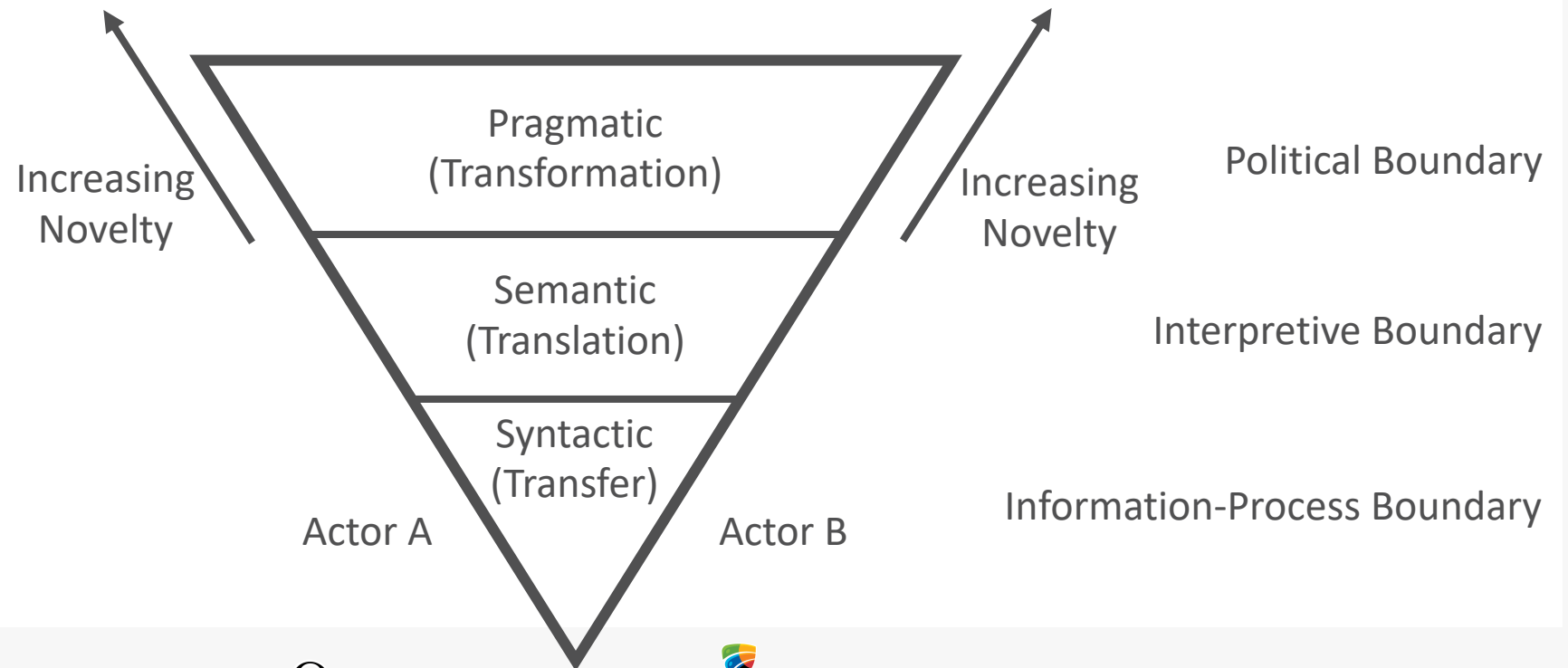
Sources of reform: Organizational capability

- Learning and Interpretation by member
 - The necessary process to be carried out the strategic plans (kazer 2005)
 - Crucial for educational reforms (Dee and Leisyte 2017)
- Research Questions
 - How does the learning process emerges?
 - How the member adopt/adjust their experiences and strengths to the strategic plans?



Theoretical background

- Knowledge across Boundary (Carlile 2004)
 - Innovation occurs on the boundary



Theoretical background

	Knowledge Transfer Approach	Interpretive Approach	Transformation or Political Approach
Theory of learning	Information processing and transferring knowledge	Creating shared meanings through CoP	Negotiating practice and transform knowledge
Way to intervention	Knowledge management and database	Cross-functional team	Prototyping objects that can be jointly transformed
Circumstances	Differences and dependencies between actors are known	Novelty generates some differences and dependencies are unclear	Novelty generates different interests between actors that impede their ability to share and assess knowledge



Originality of this study

- Clarify the knowledge sharing process at the bottom level
 - How the learning is progressed?
 - How the member or units exchange their knowledge to be engaged in the campus-wide projects?
 - How are the strengths of member or units incorporated into the campus-wide projects?



Qualitative survey

- Participants
 - Faculty and staff at “successful” institution
 - Open the strategic plan public
 - Succeeded in educational reform and revenue improvement
 - 2 mid-size private universities in Japan
- Semi-structured interview
 - Structured questions
 - how did you interpret the institutional strategies when the president made it public?
 - how did you share and exchange your ideas on your interpretation of the strategies with your colleagues?
 - how did you being involved in the part of practices that contribute to the goals of the strategies?



Data analysis

- Grounded theory approach
 - Coincidental development of sampling and coding
 - 8 academics and 8 professional staff
 - Concepts shown in all transcripts of the participants are adopted





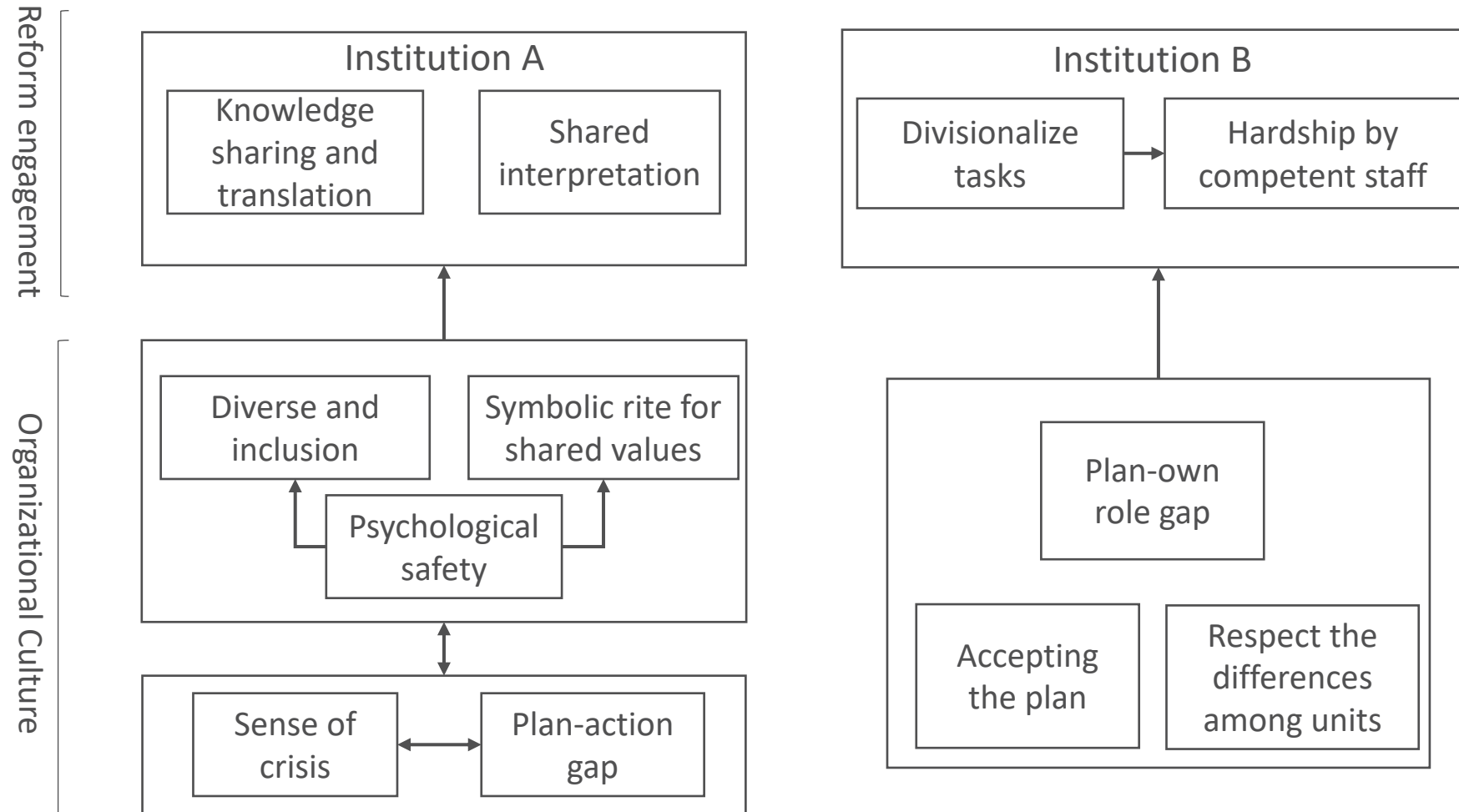
Results (1) for institution A

	Category	Concept	Definition
Organizational Culture	Top-bottom relationship	Sense of crisis	Accepting the sense of institutional crisis sent by top management team based on their recognition.
		Plan-action gap	Understanding the strategic plan is not effective for the reforms despite knowing it.
	Routines embedded in each unit	Psychological safety	Informal routines for new members preserved to meet and know with people in and out of the unit.
		Symbolic rite for shared values	Formal and informal routines for new members to accept the shared values in the unit.
		Diverse and inclusion	Diverse ideas are respected but the effort for integration is also retained to achieve the goals of the unit.
Reform engagement	Interpretation of the plan	Shared interpretation	Find the way to achieve the goals of the unit with exchanging ideas and making a shared interpretation of the plan among the member.
		Knowledge sharing and translation	Translate the plan compatible with the strengthens in the unit, or creating a new meaning of the plan by exchanging and sharing the knowledge by the member.

Results (2) for institution B

	Category	Concept	Definition
Organizational Culture	Dividing the tasks	Accepting the plan	Understanding the strategic plan and knowing it as a piece of information.
		Plan-own role gap	Understanding the expectation from the top management team but cannot find the relationship with their own roles in the unit.
		Respect the differences among units	Respect the differences of priorities, roles and tasks among units, and preserve no intervention policy from other units.
Reform engagement	Interpretation of the plan	Divisionalize tasks	Campus-wide plans are divided into small tasks and assigned to specific member or units who are capable to do them.
		Hardship by competent staff	Unit member who are competent in a specific area are engaged in the hardship tasks to achieve the goals related to the campus-wide plan.

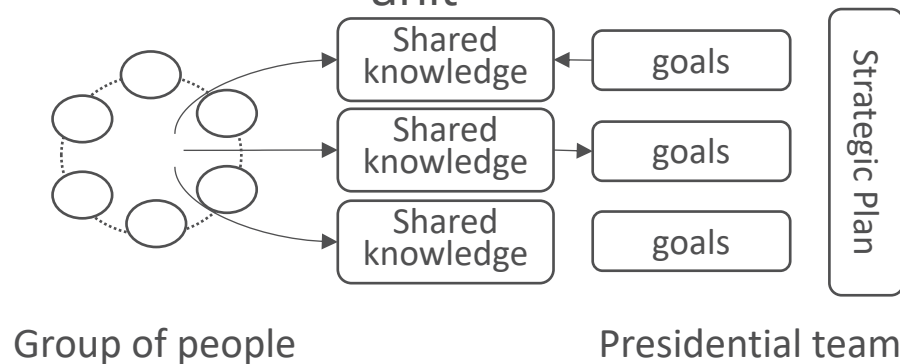
Storyline (relationship among the concepts)



Summary

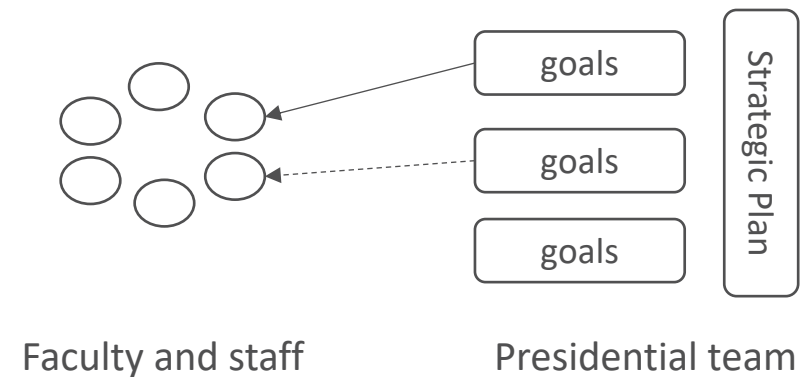
• Institution A

- Informal network for generating shared knowledge and interpretation
 - Connect between abstract goals and strengths of people or unit



• Institution B

- Competent individuals or units and assigned a piece of tasks
 - Failed to achieve goals when they do not have enough capability





Implications for executives

- Top-down approach is not effective
 - It is a disaster
 - No need to be a strong leader
- Support organizational learning
 - The role of the presidential team:
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Limitations and further studies

- Explore the knowledge sharing process for innovation
 - Lack of appropriate cases and examples
- Theoretical integration of the 2 cases





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