

The Views of Bahir Dar University academic leaders on the role of organizational culture in implementing management innovations

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to understand the views of academic leaders on the role of organizational culture while implementing management innovation at Bahir Dar University. Using a qualitative case study, data were collected using an in-depth interview (from sixteen purposefully selected academic leaders) and relevant documents (such as the BPR document and university strategic plan), and were thematically analyzed based on the selected dimensions of organizational culture in the conceptual framework. The findings show that participants consider organizational culture as decisive factor for organizational success even though the university's culture has been considered as a barrier to the implementation of the management innovation (Business Process Reengineering). Presence of poor understanding of the innovation, low commitment and sense of ownership, disconnection between middle and top level leaders, and reporting for conformity were some of the major challenges reported. Moreover, the participants seem to have poor recall of the university's core values. Participants' responses also indicate clash between old and new elements of culture, and less effort has been made to reconcile new values with old ones which later posed difficulty to live up to the underlying principles of the innovation. From the results, it can be said that the organizational culture at the time of this study was less conducive to implement management innovation (BPR in this case). Further suggestions for better considerations of organizational culture are forwarded.

Keywords: culture; innovation; university; Ethiopia

INTRODUCTION

Unrelenting demands from stakeholders coupled with unpredictable environment have put Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in pressure and forced them to engage in continuing reforms. The premises for the reforms are to become more efficient and effective in teaching, research and community outreach activities. As a means to address the changing environments, New Public Management (NPM)² ideas are being practiced in HEIs (Cai,

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²NPM emerged to replace the traditional model of public management during the 1980s and 1990s in response to the inadequacies of the traditional model. Its basic idea is market-oriented management of the public sector that aims at improving the quality of public services, enhancing the efficiency of governmental operations, and making policy implementation more effective that ultimately lead to greater cost-efficiency for governments (Hughes, 2003; Hood, 1991; Christensen, T., & Lægreid, 2002)

2017). Thus, many HEIs “have attempted, (either voluntarily or under mandate) to adopt new management systems and processes that were originally designed to meet the needs of (presumably) more efficient business or governmental organizations” (Birnbaum, 2000, p.1). As a result, it has become a common phenomenon to observe innovations that have been used in industries being practiced in HEIs’ contexts. According to Zhu and Engels (2014) , among such innovations introduced to the HEIs in the last decade include: “...new management structure, new methods of assessment, accreditation and financing, diversification of courses, programs and studies, and the application of technology in teaching and learning” (p. 136). Due to such moves, implementation of Management Innovation (MI)³ in the HE sector has also become a common phenomenon. Similarly, Ethiopian HEIs have been subject and object of such influences. For instance, MIs such as Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Balanced Score Card (BSC), Kaizen and recently Deliverlogy have been introduced to Ethiopian public universities.

Despite the attempts made to introduce such tools, their implementation may not sometimes be successful particularly in HE. In fact, as noted, they become fads⁴ and fail to achieve their intended objectives. Organizational researchers also argue that even if organizations take various measures to facilitate the implementations of such innovations, their implementation may not still be successful (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). The personal experience of the researcher of this study coincides with Birnbaum’s “life cycle stages of management fads” in HE (Birnbaum, 2000). At the inception of the introduction of the innovation at Bahir Dar University (BDU), there were individuals who were very ambitious and committed; the university management was highly engaged in daily meetings and awareness creation workshops; many people have been eager to see the fruits of the promises of the innovation, and a lot of efforts were made to convince the university community that the university is in crisis and needs innovations to become competent. The practice paralleled to Birnbaum’s expression that academic leaders who have shown interest to engage themselves in the reform process were “applauded for acknowledging the existence of serious problems” (Birnbaum, 2000, p.7). There were also experiences in the case university that some middle level leaders⁵ were substituted for they were perceived as barriers to the implementation of the introduced innovation.

³ Management innovation is the implementation of a management practice, process, structure, or technique that is new and is intended to improve management practices that brings a difference in the form, quality, or state over time of the management activities in an organization, where the change is a novel or unprecedented departure from the past (Hargrave, T. J., & Van De Ven, 2006, 2006; Birkinshaw et al., 2008). Business Process Re-engineering that has been in implementation in the case university since 2007/8 is taken as an example of such innovation in this study. Management innovation has also been used by Birnbaum (2000) to refer to Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS), Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB), Management by Objectives (MBO), Strategic Planning, Total Quality Management/Continuous Quality Improvement (TQM/CQI), Business Process Reengineering (BPR) and Benchmarking.

⁴ Birnbaum (2000, p.2) generally referred to those organizational innovations that are usually borrowed from other settings (business and industry), and are applied without full consideration of their limitations, presented either as complex or deceptively simple, rely on jargon, and emphasize rational decision making. Such innovations enjoy brief popularity for a time with exaggerated zeal.

⁵ The terms *keftegna amerar* (top leaders) and *mekakelegna amerar* (middle level leaders) are adopted from the university. While the top leadership in this study constitutes the president and vice presidents, middle level leaders include deans, vice deans, quality assurance, registrar and human resource management officers.

The aforementioned practice was observed when the university introduced BPR. BPR was implemented following a survey⁶ conducted in 2007/8 by the university to justify the need for it. Following this, many changes mainly structural and process reforms have been made. After years of implementation, however, several staff members were hardly confident whether the promised changes at the beginning are achieved to the expected level. If so, what went wrong in the process? Why are people engaged actively in the reform feeling dissatisfied? Is it possible to consider those MIs so far introduced to Ethiopian HEIs, BPR and BSC⁷ for instance as management fads due to observed discrepancies between what is promised and actually implemented? Such questions are worth discussing though it may not be possible for this study to deal with all the process and all the innovations introduced to the university. At the time of the study, it is possible to say from the researcher's observation and informal discussion with some colleagues that the implementation of those MIs introduced at least in the selected university is not satisfactory. Documented (e.g. university and faculty reports) and undocumented (e.g. informal discussions and meetings) evidences in the university show that there are implementation problems. Some of the problems are attributed to academic and administrative staffs' lack of commitment, knowledge and skills as well as the nature of the change itself (BDU, 2012). Moreover, there are many outside and inside factors that play a key role for the failure and success of innovation implementation, and one of these factors that has a critical role in HEIs is organizational culture (OC) (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Schein, 1990; Tierney & William, 2011; Zhu & Engels, 2014).

Previous studies on OC have shown its pivotal role in making or breaking success of innovation in HE. Cognizant of its roles, a number of studies have been conducted on its relationship with innovations. Nonetheless, there are only few studies that show its role on management innovations often revealing strong support of OC in the adoption of innovations in organizations (Mohammed & Bardai, 2012). Zhu & Engels (2014, p.153), on their study about the impact of organizational cultural variables on instructional innovations in HE, revealed that "organizational culture is closely linked to educational innovations". They further argued that "open and supportive organizational culture with clear goals, collaborative spirit and shared vision are pertinent for the implementation of instructional innovations" (p.153). Another study also examined whether there appears to be a relationship between institutional culture and change (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). The results suggest that change

⁶ The case university has launched a survey by establishing a team. The team studied for a year and has come up with results that justify BPR as an appropriate tool to transform the university. In the final report, it is mentioned that BDU has opted for BPR as a change tool. The report indicated that the university is in intricate problems whose roots are deep and networked. Thus, it needs to envision to be transformed to a better level (BDU final report on BPR, 2007/8, p.5). In fact, though conducting the study was relevant to understand the problems in the university that later helped in restructuring, BPR was already chosen by the government and has been practiced in public organizations other than HEIs.

⁷ BSC is another MI which has been under implementation by public HEIs in Ethiopia. BDU has also been implementing it since 2011/2012. BSC is presumed to enable academic leaders to develop their organizational strategies in line with the vision, define strategic objectives, develop strategic plan by integrating various issues, monitor and adjust the implementation of their strategies and to make fundamental changes in them (Kassahun, 2010, p.30). The front page of the five years strategic plan (2011-2016) of BDU indicates the strategic plan is developed based on BSC (BDU, October 2011).

strategies seem to be successful if they are culturally coherent. The study concluded that institutions that violated their institutional culture during the change process experienced difficulty. Seen, Singh and Jayasingam(2012), on their part, examined the relationship between OC and innovation, and found out positive relationship between some of the dimensions of OC (creating change and organizational learning) and innovation implementation.

There are also only few studies conducted on the role of OC specifically in implementing MIs. As far as the researcher's experience is concerned, neither those studies indicated above nor other studies in the literature have addressed specifically the role of OC on implementation of MIs. It was also noted that despite the presence of extensive studies related to the role of OC on different outcomes of organizations, its role on innovation is relatively unexplored (Yeşil & Kaya, 2012). This is also true in the Ethiopian context. For instance, published works that can be found in Ethiopian context on OC are studies conducted by Beshu, Negash and Amoroso (2009), and Endawoke (2009). The former study has attempted to examine the impact of OC on the success of information system implementation. The study focused on private and public organizations other than HEIs. Similarly, the study conducted by Endawoke (2009) focused on regional bureaus and offices. These studies, though conducted in contexts other than HEIs, attested that OC in Ethiopian context as well had significant impact on organizations' attempt to achieve their organizational goals. Endawoke (2009) further argued that shared assumptions can affect working environment of organizations and hence OC needs to be given more attention in research to improve quality of services provided by organizations in Ethiopia.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the issue of innovation studies in general and MIs in particular are also under researched in HE. After analyzing previous studies on innovation studies, Cai (2017) concluded that innovations in HE are hardly discussed in the literature and echoed the criticism that researchers are not giving proper attention to the subject. In similar vein, Birkinshaw, Hamel and Mol(2008, p.825), reported that MI is "relatively under-researched form of innovation and particularly the processes through which it occurs". Similar to the issue of OC, there are very few studies on MIs in Ethiopian HE context (e.g. Kassahun, 2010; Menberu, 2013; Sibhato & Singh, 2012). Kassahun (2010) discussed the ways of adapting and adopting BSC, another innovation tool introduced to Ethiopian HEIs following BPR. On the other hand, Menberu (2013) in his research studied the ups and downs of BPR in the case university of this research and another public organization and found out that the design of BPR was good but the main failure was lack of wide range of planning and proper implementation. Sibhato and Singh (2012) also evaluated BPR implementation in two public HEIs, Aksum and Mekelle Universities. In their study, the factors that hinder its implementation were identified and include: lack of staff training, false report to outsiders that hide actual progress of implementation, frustration of the top management because of slow result and lack of top management determination and enthusiasm. They also pointed out that despite presence of well-articulated strategic documents in the two universities, they were not communicated well to create clear understanding among the staff and change their

mind set. The study, however, did not reveal how OC or “mind set” in their study is playing a role in the implementation of BPR.

All in all, the above studies have targeted MIs introduced to Ethiopian HE in the last decade; but, none of them have addressed specifically the role of OC in implementing MIs. Thus, one of the reasons for conducting this research is that the issue of OC does not seem to have got appropriate place in the discourse of HE in Ethiopia while there is strong move by the government to introduce MIs into HEIs. Hence, by taking key theories on OC as a conceptual framework and critically examining academic leaders' views, this study tried to understand academic leaders' views of the role of OC (taking selected dimensions) while implementing MIs (BPR in focus) at BDU.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Attempt was made to briefly present a conceptual framework that guided the study. In choosing cultural framework, it is argued that neither all successful institutions nor those unsuccessful institutions do have similar cultures. It has to be noted that the intention for developing a cultural framework “... is not to presume that all organizations should function similarly, but rather to provide managers and researchers with a schema to diagnose their own organizations” (Tierney, 1988, p. 17).

OC is broadly considered as one of the most important factors in reforming public administration and service provision (Jung et al., 2009). As such, a practical need to assess organizational culture has arisen and many models with diverse dimensions have emerged. For instance, several models have been developed to describe the relationships between phenomena and variables of OC (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). As noted by many researchers, OC has been challenging to define despite agreements on several of its essential elements (norms, perspectives, values, assumptions, and beliefs shared by organizational members) (Cai, 2017). Considering such challenges, this study attempted to understand more in terms the dimensions it constitutes than opting for a single definition. The dimensions, however, are also as many as the number of researchers who proposed them. Yet, some similarities exist across the dimensions in the models proposed (e.g. Denison, 1996; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Tierney, 1988).

Jung et al. (2009,p.43) asserted that OC is “far from being conceptualized universally” that led to have diverse dimensions. Ott (1989) listed 74 elements of OC which have been identified by various authors, and Van der Post et al. (1997) identified over 100 dimensions associated with OC. This shows that there exists little consensus among scholars in the area on the list of dimensions. Hence, to narrow down the conceptual gaps, it is useful to group the various dimensions relevant to the level of culture under study. This makes OC to lend itself to various ways of analysis. For instance, Denison (1996) identified characteristics related to or derived from OC such as empowerment, team orientation, capability development, creative change, customer focus and organizational learning (Denison, 1996), or motivation;

socialization; quality and leadership; control; and collegiality (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001 in Folch & Ion, 2009). On the other hand, Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006 p.208) identified twelve dimensions from 25 that have impact on performance of organizations. Their final list consists of: involvement, cooperation (collaboration), transmission of information, learning, care about clients, adaptability, strategic direction, reward and incentive system, system of control, communication, agreement, and coordination and integration. It was reported that these dimensions could be used to assess the role of OC on the success of organizations. Yet, it was not clearly pointed out what success or performance of organizations that researchers have to focus on.

Other studies have also analyzed OC (goal and innovation orientation, participation in decision making, structured and supportive leadership, shared vision, and collaborative relationship) in terms of its relationship with instructional innovation (Zhu & Engels, 2014). Folch and Ion (2009) on their part analyzed OC of universities in two ways and proposed two models to analyze OC in universities: at university level and at department level. These authors stated that in studying these levels of culture there might be differences in theoretical and methodological approaches for the two investigations. The authors remarked that the two approaches eventually lead the researcher to conduct study on one of them “to identify common and divergent features in the two contexts” (Folch & Ion, 2009, p.143). According to Folch and Ion (2009), however, dealing with both department and university culture is possible to study OC in a wider scope. They stated that “the analysis of a university’s organizational culture is important because the university as an organization is interested in the adaptation of its culture to the values and the behavior of its members, so as to maintain a healthy state of mind and foster permanent improvement” (p. 144). This is also corroborated by Tierney, (1988) who contends OC as valuable element to understand quality and leadership in universities and claimed the analysis of cultures as a method of institutional diagnosis. Other scholars such as Deal and Kennedy (1983) also argued that shared values and beliefs are the soul of culture and need deliberation. Hence, it appears feasible at this point to say that when studying organizational culture it could be studied in various ways as it has been approached by various researchers differently. At the same time, it is noteworthy to identify the level at which one’s study is focusing. This study is then targeting the university culture or institutional culture and the dimensions chosen to guide are based on this assumption.

To select the dimensions in the proposed conceptual framework for this study steps adapted from Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006, p.203) were followed. First, an attempt was made to review from the sources of literature and dominant models in the study of OC and their dimensions were collected. As it was noted by Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006), many authors didn’t single out concrete dimensions and the names were given by analyzing the content phenomena described. In this study too, either the names proposed by the sources were maintained or new name is given to the revised dimension. Second, differently named dimensions with similar content were ascribed to one dimension. In so doing, similar dimensions proposed by different authors were merged and viable dimensions that suit to the

context of the study were selected, and finally only those dimensions that are either empirically or theoretically supported to affect the implementation of innovations were selected. Among the commonly used frameworks for studying OC, four models/frameworks were chosen and the dimensions across these models were studied and selected.

The first model is Schein (2004) OC model. Schein (2004) has provided one of the most prominent conceptualizations of OC which suggests that culture exists at three levels. The first is at the observable level, which he calls artifacts. The second and third levels exist as inferences about how workers believe and feel, and the assumptions on which those beliefs and feelings are based. He calls these categories values and basic assumptions respectively. Schein breaks down each of these into categories that allow useful diagnosis of college and university cultures. Though Schein's model is criticized for not addressing the active role of assumptions and beliefs in forming and changing OC (Hatch, 1993 in Martins & Terblanche, 2003), this study has taken some lessons from the values and basic assumptions. Another framework used in this study is Tierney's dimensions of OC (1988, p.8) developed for studying OC. This framework constitutes six dimensions: environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy and leadership. Similarly, Martins (1987) in Martins and Terblanche (2003) developed an OC model based on the ideal organization and the relevance of leadership in creating an ideal OC. This model is based on interaction between sub-systems in organization, survival functions (internal and external systems), and the dimensions of culture (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). According to the authors, this model is considered as comprehensive as it encompasses many aspects of an organization upon which OC can have an influence and vice versa. They further noted that this model can be employed to see how OC influences innovations in organizations. This model also consists of six dimensions: mission and vision, external environment, means to achieve objectives, image of the organization, management processes, employee needs and objectives, interpersonal relationships and leadership (Martins, 1987/1995 in Martins & Terblanche, 2003). Denison (1996) also identified six cultural dimensions that include empowerment, team orientation, capability development, creative change, customer focus and organizational learning. From these frameworks, following the three steps adapted from Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006), six broad dimensions were developed or selected to see the role of OC on the implementation of MIs in this study. These are: leadership, consistency, participation in decision making, interpersonal relationships, risk taking behavior and flexibility, and mission and vision. (See the following authors where the dimensions are adapted for comparison, Denison, 1996; Martins, 1987 in Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Schein, 2004; & Tierney, 1988)

In using these dimensions, the conceptualizations of some of the dimensions are understood in line with the questions raised by Tierney (1988) in his effort to explain the dimensions. In addition, the other included dimensions are either merged or are considered as they are. It should be noted, however, that as some scholars put it, culture is an interconnected web of relationships, and it is quite common to see these dimensions overlapping and connecting to each other (Tierney, 1988).

METHODOLOGY

Research design

With the purpose of understanding the issue in-depth, qualitative approach is used in this study. Qualitative approach enables to study culture in its context. Besides, culture itself is unique, value-laden and even taking many institutions and participants may not guarantee for generalizations of results. The design of the research is qualitative case study. Case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context) through developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case (Creswell, 2007). Choosing a particular strategy however should be guided by certain assumptions and perspectives (Creswell, 2007). In this regard, Yin’s (2009) assumptions for choosing case study were used. According to Yin (2009), a case study method is preferred when the research attempts to explore ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, and when the researcher has less control over the issue under research, and when “the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context” (p.2). In addition, studying OC demands to have complete picture of the organization to be assessed and contact of the researcher with the organization. This in turn requires the researcher to be involved deeply in the research process, usually focusing on a single case (Silvia & Simona, n.d.).

Research Setting, Participants and Sampling

Research setting

The setting chosen for this study is BDU. BDU is one of the first generation public universities in Ethiopia. The University has been experiencing sweeping changes in recent years, as is the case to many public HEIs in the country. BDU is selected as a setting for this study using purposeful sampling for the following reasons. First, the university was at the forefront to implementing MIs. Second, studying one institution helps to understand the issue in-depth (Silvia & Simona, n.d.). Third, case study demands to have an in-depth knowledge of the setting (Yin, 2009). Thus, the researcher has selected BDU as he has good knowledge of the context through his engagement in teaching and administrative duties at the university. Among the management innovations or tools so far introduced into the university, BPR is chosen as it has been implemented for longer period of time compared to the other tools introduced later, such as BSC and Kaizen.

Participants and Sampling

The participants in this study are academic leaders (presidents, deans, department heads and officers⁸) who work at different levels of administration in the university. Purposeful sampling was used to select sixteen academic leaders based on their experience in the innovation implementation process. In using this type of sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Thus, academic leaders who have actively participated during implementation of BPR were included in the sample. Moreover, those leaders who have been in the implementation period but replaced by newly appointed leaders during the time of data collection (2015/16) were included in the study. Specifically, the participants included in the study were two vice-presidents, eleven academic deans, and three officers (quality assurance, human resource and registrar officers).

Data Collection Tools and procedures

Interview

The primary source of data for this study was an in-depth semi-structured interview. Both One-on-One and E-mail interviews were used to collect data. One-on-One interview is a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time (Creswell, 2012). E-mail interviews on the other hand consist of collecting open-ended data through interviews with individuals using computers and the internet (Creswell, 2012). The latter was used as some of the participants were not available during data collection. An interview protocol was prepared based on the conceptual framework from the literature and researcher's university experience. The guiding interview questions comprised general and specific questions that helped explore participants' views. The interview was made in the language chosen by the participants, Amharic (official language). One-on-One interviews were held with eleven participants in Amharic while E-mail interviews were held with five participants. The One-on-One interviews ranged from 40 to 65 minutes. These interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, translated, and coded with the email interview.

Document

In order to get additional information and full picture of the issue, selected documents such as the university's strategic plan and BPR document of the university were reviewed. The data were used to supplement the interview data.

⁸ According to Bond (n.d.) ...the domain of academic leadership is broad and it "does occur in the domains of teaching, research and administration" Administrative positions in a university with the responsibility, whether derived by statute, charter or articles of incorporation, for ensuring that the institution and its members fulfil their educational, social and ethical mandates is included in the domain of academic leadership. Thus, in this study the quality assurance, human resources and registrar officers are include as academic leaders. Of course, the leaders of these offices were academicians at the time of data collection and their wok is linked directly or indirectly with the core processes of the university.

Data Analysis technique

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data taking the dimensions identified in the conceptual framework as overarching themes. Taking these broad dimensions as themes, the researcher then adapted O'Connor and Gibson (2003) step-by-step guide to qualitative data analysis to identify the categories under each theme. This step-by-step analysis was developed by O'Connor and Gibson's (2003) based on Stake (1995), and Rubin and Rubin, (1995) ways of analyzing interview data. This way of analysis was selected in this study for it is found comprehensive and has clearly indicated and detailed tasks the researcher has to do.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, analysis and discussion are made taking each dimension in the conceptual framework as an overarching theme. Several categories were developed to some of the themes. Relevant data were also drawn from the documents reviewed and were included in the analysis.

1. Leadership as a dimension of OC and its role in implementing MI

Under this theme, five categories were developed. These include: leaders' understanding of MI, degree of commitment and ownership, relationship between middle and top level leaders, follow-up of implementation, and reporting implementation.

1.1 Leaders' understanding of the management innovation

Leaders' understanding of innovation is vital for its successful implementation (Madu, 2011). Lack of understanding of the MI was, however, mentioned by the participants to be a major barrier during implementation. Others also echoed this and added that problems of understanding of BPR by the top leadership have fueled the misunderstanding and confusions on middle level leaders and the university community at large. Middle level leaders mentioned presence of clear inconsistency in understanding the innovation which has led middle level leaders and staff to confusion, uncertainty and mistrust towards the top leadership and the innovation itself.

Another leader called introduction of BPR, as "an installation" and described it as "unfit to university system" though failed to justify this assertion, and mentioned that "the conceptualization and detail understanding were limited to those groups who were in the BPR team". He further commented on why such lack of understanding among leaders prevailed in the university:

There was only orientation kind of training for all involved in the implementation process; I think this is one of the main reasons for poor understanding. It would have been better to really make the MI well understood by all involved before going to

implementation hastily. There was no continuous engagement on principles of BPR and follow up of the practice was also minimal. In my view, except those who were involved in the study team, no one had good understanding of BPR.

Some other leaders also attributed the lack of understanding of the innovation as source of disinterest to engage in the implementation process. For instance, a leader mentioned that "...majority of the staff are dealing with the change without interest as they had no good understanding of the tool". He also criticized the top leaders "urgency and pressure to implement BPR" that made the implementation "a campaign". He continued to say,

Such innovations should not be implemented without having sufficient understanding. The top leaders were saying it is government direction and were trying to impose on us [middle level leaders and staff] than helping us understand and recognize its benefits.

This middle level leader's view was also shared by many of the participants in the study. Unlike to other leaders, a college dean mentioned, the presence of curiosity among his staff to know and understand the innovation but said it was obstructed due to lack of understanding on his side. Shortage of time between innovation adaptation and implementation was also mentioned as a reason for the lack of understanding of the innovation among leaders and staff.

Another reason mentioned for the lack of understanding of the MI is partly caused by "unplanned and untimely change of leaders from their positions"⁹. As one of the leaders mentioned,

There is no stability in the top and middle level leadership. New people come and as soon as they adapt to the changes they leave. That is one of the challenges creating problems during implementation.

A top leader further argued this change of leaders is not only causing misunderstandings in the implementation process but also inconsistency to lead the process due to "lack of institutional memory". He mentioned,

Most of the change agents with demonstrated capacity and potential left the institution. There is high turnover of leaders. Neither there is effort from the predecessors and successors nor a system for dealing with institutional memory.

Similarly, another dean mentioned that the guiding principles and ideas of the MIs are lost on the way as there is no smooth transition of leadership. The leader also mentioned that the

⁹ Change of leaders in the university was in fact noticeable. For instance, leaving aside the changes made on middle level leaders, the university faced with unstable top leadership in the last decade. In the last decade, there were changes of 5 presidents, 6 academic vice presidents, 4 business and development vice presidents. This is also common experience of the newly established structure of vice presidents (information and strategic communication, and Research and Community services).

intervention made by the university board was not enough to reconcile those differences. He further mentioned that the innovation was highly personalized where the misunderstandings were attributed to those individuals who left the position than giving proper solutions to the problems.

He continued to say that one of the reasons for lack of understanding and confusions of BPR among leaders and employees was simultaneous implementation of various tools. He commented:

MIs are not implemented in an integrated manner; rather the approach was piecemeal. E.g. implementers perceived that the latter innovation (BSC) is succeeding the former (BPR). Even the same trainers on BPR and BSC failed to show how integrated the two MIs are. The speed at which BSC and then Kaizen came didn't allow the University to internalize, adapt and apply the former before the next comes along.

One top leader mentioned the implementation process as “half-implemented” referring to the change made as limited to the structural aspect of the process.

Previous studies have also portrayed the need for leaders to have a good understanding of their organizational changes if such changes are to achieve their intended purpose. According to Schein (2004), OC becomes an important tool in leadership if it is well understood by leaders. He argued that once it is established and accepted, leaders will have a good opportunity to share their assumptions and values to the staff and those shared assumptions will have high chance to be transferred to new members of the organization. That is, as far as leaders maintain to have good understanding of what is transpiring in their organization, be consistent in sending clear signals about their priorities, values and beliefs, they can achieve success. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008)) also contended that if leaders are to influence and bring success to implementation of innovation practices, they need to have a deeper understanding of the implementation and their organizational life in general. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) further cautioned that leaders should do beyond expressing “slogans, wishful thinking and fantasies” (p.35) to help their staff get deeper understanding of changes.

1.2 Degree of commitment and ownership of management innovation

It is quite sensible to assume that while a MI with a wide-ranging impact is implemented, strong commitment and sense of ownership followed by careful follow up of the process is expected from all leaders involved. However, as reported by many of the participants, the degree of commitment and ownership was very low. Their poor understanding of the MI may have led them to give poor guidance and fail to address the concerns. Participants from both top and middle level leaders had the opinion that neither the middle level nor the top leaders were able to win the hearts and minds of the staff. Owing to the lack of substantial commitment and sense of ownership of the top leaders, the middle level leaders believe that proper implementation of BPR has failed. A leader commented,

The staff in the university is highly resistant to change. One of the reasons is that the leaders including myself are not committed to give them proper support. For instance, the training and workshops so far given are limited to awareness creation, and it is very hard to find leaders except one or two who understand and take the innovation very seriously

Another leader, mentioned commitment of the staff as follows:

..., my university has faced formidable challenges as job satisfaction and motivation are very low to take up new ideas and try out. On one hand, BPR is theoretically pleasing and on the other hand it requires a lot of dedication, commitment and resources to put it into practice. When we come to the idea of readiness and commitment by the university staff, they trailed far behind the expected.

Others however extended the reasons for low commitment and sense of ownership beyond failure of staff and leaders to understand the innovation. These leaders believe that understanding of innovations has contributed to the hazy implementation; they also believe that the source of the MIs (i.e. approach of the government) which is recurrently mentioned by the participants as “imposed” had also contribution. Some of the participants mentioned top leaders’ endorsement of all MIs coming from the government for granted was source of displeasure among middle level leaders. In this regard, one of the members of the top leadership stated:

For any MI to be implemented there must be evidence –be it from government or the University itself –that it will work. Direction was given by the government to implement BPR, which came with a “one-size-fits-all” approach that led many to disengagement.

Related to this, another reason for lack of commitment and sense of ownership by leaders is the intervention of the university board¹⁰ in routine affairs of the university. A leader mentioned:

In principle, the skeleton/structure of University governance from MoE to Academic Unit level (stipulated in HEP 650/2009) can be workable. The problem is associated with its implementation. First of all, mistrust seems to exist between government and universities. Consequently, the university is strictly controlled by board members who represent sector offices. There is interference in university-level decision making – even on academic matters.

¹⁰ Article 5, HEP (650/2009) (FDRE, 2009), states the board members shall be past or present holders of responsible positions and notable personalities especially in teaching or research and in integrity, or be representatives of the customers of the products and services of the institution and whose exceptional knowledge, experience and commitment are such as to enable them to contribute to the attainment of the mission of the institution and the objectives of HE generally. The board, however, constitutes the president of the university, a nonvoting member and secretary of the board, and others who represent other government sector offices, and in fact are members or supporters of the ruling party with key positions.

In addition, others mentioned prioritizing individual interest over organizational as an additional reason for low commitment and ownership. For instance, a leader commented:

Majority of the staff prioritizes its individual interest over organizational needs. It is very hard to find individuals who defend their university. The MIs are judged in terms what benefits will bring to them than to the organizational priorities at large. It is not easy to find staffs who say “I am a member of the organization and my contribution is important to the success of my university mission.

In addition to the above mentioned reasons, scarcity of evidence to show the staff that such MIs (BPR, BSC and Kaizen) are suitable to HE context has also contributed to the lack of commitment and low sense of ownership.

1.3 Relationship between middle and top level leaders: “We” and “they”

As many may assume, leaders at all levels are supposed to have common understanding, if not agreement, on issues that they share in their organization. Particularly, when change is introduced and implemented, common understanding of the change principles among leaders and staff is required. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) argue that when organizations have unique culture explained in terms of values and if the organizations are able to sustain them, they can provide identity for their members. In such organizations, staff tend to identify themselves as “part of an overall ‘we’ and experience unity and closeness with the whole organization” (p. 39). On the other hand, if such culture is ambiguous, people get confused and unnecessary collisions may occur between them at different hierarchical status (top, middle or bottom).

As reflected by all middle level leaders, there is disconnection between middle and top level leaders wherein the middle level leaders point their finger at the top leaders for the “failure of the implementation” and “the whole misunderstanding created”. There is clear rift of “we” and “they”. As reported by participants, their relationship is characterized by “imposition”, “command” or “dos and don'ts” and “mistrust”.

One middle level leader expressed this saying,

I do not have trust on the top leaders. They do not keep their promises. They do not really have the capacity to convince or at least properly reflect the tool or process of implementation. They always try to please their bosses than addressing our concerns.

Another dean mentioned:

the top leaders always want to do things in campaign and many of us believe that, after pressure for short period of time, they will forget it. It is like ‘running to fight fire’ and I did not see anyone trying to align the existing culture with the new

demands of BPR. Neither we nor do the top leaders do this. Even you don't see them acting as role models in taking the change forward.

Previous studies also reported similar experiences. For instance, Ahmed (1998) found out that most organizations are reluctant to make the necessary resources and commitment required by the innovation implemented. Instead, they dabble in innovation. Such reluctance is expressed by frequent meetings and hot discussion at the beginning of implementation at high-level management, meager resources assigned and "often the commitment usually ends there" (p.30). Nonetheless, implementation of innovations demands more than discussion and allotting resources; it requires an OC that constantly guides organizational members to strive for successful implementation of the innovation and thereby attain the intended outcomes (Ahmed, 1998).

1.4 Follow-up- of implementation

Many of the middle level leaders are doubtful about their own roles as a leader as well as the involvement of the top leaders in the implementation of the innovation. Such uncertainties of responsibilities were attributed to different bodies. One is the top leadership's lack of commitment and sense of ownership (as mentioned above). It was also noted that the top leaders' lack of focus and time to properly lead the implementation and its lack of provision of space to the middle level leaders to do things in their own way were reported to be factors for the implementation problems.

Some middle level leaders reiterated the lack of close follow up of the innovation implementation, and said that the top leaders are only keen to get reports with no attention to staffs' confusions and complaints on the process. Moreover, some of the participants noted that the reports presented by the top leaders in those rare whole staff meetings often do not reflect the actual practice. Such experiences led the staff to lose trust on the top leaders and started to identify those middle level leaders who even try their best to implement as 'puppets' of the top leadership. With regard to this, previous studies also show the need for cautious approach when such business tools are introduced as they may not fit with the nature of academic settings. As mentioned by many of the leaders, BPR requires transformation while the university context is not in a way to be so. That is, university transformation is not guaranteed by quick fix of problems. It is because academic settings have unique characteristics that may not easily permit to fit to the requirements of newly introduced MIs (Birnbaum, 1988). In this regard, Clark (1998) argued that university transformations require capable structure that is permissive and able to facilitate the change. That is, transformation happens when there is change in the academic heartland as it is reliant on what the staff and students are doing. Clark further argues that transformation does not happen because a university has established university committee to bring a new idea or because the top leader shows interest to do so. Many of the leaders including the top leaders who participated in this study are also uncertain about the outcome of implementing the innovation and are not also confident on its sustainability.

1.5 Reporting implementation

Middle level leaders agreed that they are reporting their work activities to the top leaders as part of bureaucratic requirements and fulfill their requests. As some of them reported, the top leadership is willing to listen only what it wants to listen than sharing their challenges and providing them relevant support. Another reason mentioned by middle level leaders for compliance was lack of feedback on their plans and reports. There seems common agreement among the middle level leaders that the top leaders are reporting to the university board and the Ministry of Education for conformity than reporting them what is on the ground and take actions for improvement. This report for conformity is also partly attributed to impositions or external pressures from inside (top leaders) and outside (university board and ministry). As mentioned by participants, while the former ones pressure the middle level leaders the later do same on top leaders. A dean accentuated this by saying,

The top leadership accepts everything that comes from top. They also want to report to and comply with their demands.

There are also concerns about this “reporting for the sake of reporting” becoming a tradition in the university which is also being practiced by many staff. As one of them asserted,

Reporting for the sake of reporting is becoming a tradition not only on the top leaders as it is used to be but also on the academic staff as well. When you seriously evaluate their reports, they do not really reflect the actual practice.

Sibhato and Singh, (2012) in their assessment of BPR implementation in two public HEIs in Ethiopia identified the factors that hinder implementation, and one of these major factors was false report to outsiders that hide actual progress of implementation partly attributed to frustration with slow result on behalf of the top management.

2. Interpersonal relationships and handling of conflicts

Interpersonal relationship is one of the crucial dimensions of OC in implementation of change (Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Tierney, 1988). For the university to properly deliver its functions, smooth leaders’ interpersonal relationship with staff and among themselves is vital. It is believed that the stronger the attachment and bond between academia and leaders, and among leaders themselves is, the higher the success rate for effective implementation of any innovation. This is mainly because close attachment conveys that leaders are accessible, they are there to listen to each other and the opinions and comments of academia, and helps to know what is going on in the institution. This in turn helps to increase the shared understanding among all those involved in the implementation of MIs and bring sense of ownership on institutional matters.

Despite this, participants agree that there is lack of team spirit and common understanding on the implementation of MI among leaders at all levels in the university. It was also reported by middle level leaders that their relationship with the top leaders and among the top leaders themselves is not easy. Presence of grip for power among top leaders is one of the reasons mentioned for poor interpersonal relationships than focusing on the university's mission and exerting their effort towards achieving it. A dean mentioned,

There seems lack of agreement amongst top leaders and it was very challenging to me, as a dean, which leader to follow as they had different conceptions and beliefs on the MI. While some of them enforce the tool, others make a mockery of others' ideas. It was very confusing.

All the middle level leaders echoed that such hostile relationship among the top leadership is caused not because of their difference on how to make the university better but because of their own interests to dominate one another. Another top leader also mentioned that the interrelationship is not good and if it happened, it is superficial. He said,

...interpersonal relationship among leaders and staff may look positive at the surface. However, other indicators, such as lack of consensus, commitment, etc. in implementing the innovation show mistrust and lack of authority.

One of the reasons for such relationship between the top and middle level leaders as reflected by some of the middle level leaders is the fact that autonomy of the faculty is overridden by the top leaders. Moreover, another leader mentioned the presence of unhealthy grouping (cliques) in the university that dilutes the relationship of the staff and the leaders.

Another source of conflict that was repeatedly mentioned is lack of transparency and fairness on appointments to different positions in the university. A dean complains about such practices,

Some of the top leaders sometimes are appointed without following the university's procedures. The criteria for appointing people to different posts are highly compromised by the top leaders' interests. There is no consistency in appointing people; there are appointments without notice or using elections that are often manipulated. Such practices I believe have brought antagonism and mistrust between leaders and the staff.

Another leader also mentioned lack of transparency and indecision as sources of conflict. He said,

People who have insufficient qualifications, experiences and leadership ability are given places in the university management and their inability is often excused than

taking corrective measures. This in turn makes the staff to develop negative attitude towards their workplace and weaken their commitment.

From the participants' views, collegiality, friendship and intellectual engagement did not get appropriate attention in the university. Contrary to such practice, studies portray that interpersonal relationships among members becomes useful dimension of OC when there is a culture that supports members of organization to create and share their knowledge and skills to each other (Zhu & Engels, 2014). Ahmed (1998) asserted that when the degree to which staffs feel free to discuss and debate issues actively is high, there will most probably be positive feelings of staff. This in turn enhances the likelihood of implementing innovations. To do so, however, there should be a space that accepts criticism, expects conflict and address such issues in a proper way.

3. Degree of risk taking behavior and flexibility

Lack of risk taking behavior and flexibility in the implementation process coupled with poor innovative capacity has resulted in poor performance of implementation. Some of the participants affirm that the university context does not allow flexibility. As one of the leaders mentioned, "...the culture is very oppressive and does not entertain differences of ideas". Another leader, who had considerable experience in other public sectors prior to joining the university, commented,

Even from my experience in other public sectors, I found the university culture very resistant. My expectation was different before I joined the university. Though I had the impression that the university is open to innovations, I witnessed that it is actually the opposite.

Academic leaders interviewed largely agreed about the lack of flexibility in the system to entertain differences. Some of the reasons for lack of risk taking behavior on the part of leaders and system inflexibility were attributed to lack of open-mindedness on the part of the top leaders. When talking about this, a dean commented,

When people reflect ideas different from what the top leaders are saying, the leaders get frustrated and consider it as a barrier for implementation".

Another dean said,

Most of the time, the university is trying to use the old way of doing things than easily adopting new bylaws or regulations. I observed clash during implementation as the new tasks are guided by the old rules. There was no much effort to align the old with new. Of course, absence of finalized legislation gave opportunity for top leaders to manipulate things and advance their own interests.

Studies in OC portray that unless the existing OC, i.e. the held beliefs and assumptions of employees, as well as the new demands of the innovation are aligned to the existing rules and regulations it is very challenging for any organization to successfully implement innovations (Seen et al., 2012).

4. Degree of agreement on mission, vision and core values

Agreement among leaders and the staff on mission, vision and core values is vital for successful implementation of innovation. Scholars on OC assert that there should be synergy between the mission, vision and core values at corporate level (university) with the academic units. On the other hand, if there is no synergy between university and faculty, culture will have counterproductive effect on the implementation of innovations in any organization (Abbasi & Zamani-Miandashti, 2013; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Tierney, 1988; Zhu & Engels, 2014).

4.1 Agreement on mission and vision

Academic leaders need to have defined and clear vision and mission of their organization which has to be shared among their staff. They have a responsibility to support their staff in translating the vision into their day-to-day activities (Abbasi & Zamani-Miandashti, 2013). In this study, academic leaders have reported mixed views. Many of them are hesitant on the relevance as well as effective translation of the missions and vision of the university into practice. A dean mentioned that he and his faculty staff are well aware of the mission and vision of the university. He also mentioned that though there might be understanding on the part of academic leaders and staff, the missions and vision are not taken seriously by the staff and the efforts made to do so were also insufficient. Majority of the academic leaders agree that the missions and vision are known by majority of their staff though there does not seem a common agreement on the vision itself and on how to achieve it. Academic leaders also agree that there is no mechanism to check the alignment between university and faculty values, mission and vision despite some reported improvements after the implementation of the BSC.

4.2 Agreement on core values and consistency with university and other academic units values

Several middle level leaders reported that they do not remember the core values of the university, and almost all participants are not sure on the purposes of the core values. All the participants except a dean with whom I had a One-on-One interview were unable to remember the core values which are mentioned in the strategic plan of the University. The common response of leaders was “I do not remember the core values”. Interviewed academic leaders agree that though the core values are there in the strategic plan, no attempt was made to translate them intentionally into the work processes of the university. Previous studies show that many organizations pay “lip service” to the need of an OC that supports innovation practices. Theoretically, many of them believe that such culture is needed to nurture and

properly implement innovations. Very few however intentionally translated it into practice or succeed in doing it (Ahmed, 1998). This is similar to the experiences of the case university of this study. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008, p.91) found out that “top and senior middle managers did not behave according to the cultural values, ... something that was forced upon employees with top managers remaining outside, trying to control rather than being in it themselves”. Similarly, while most leaders in the case university seem to agree that BPR has good principles and ideas that may be relevant to the university, the values which are essential to make it happen are not properly translated into practice, and thus lack consistency. Related to this, Ahmed (1998) argued that consistency has two dimensions that should exist together for values to deeply influence organizational practice. The dimensions are: intensity-amount of approval/disapproval attached to an expectation, and crystallization-prevalence with which the values are shared. According to Ahmed (1998), some values may be held by many people with no intensity. That is, there is a possibility where everyone in the organizations knows what the leaders need without giving them strong approval or disapproval to the values advocated. On the other hand, some staff may have approval to some values and share them while others are against to those held and shared values. It is said that for values to have strong influence and facilitate innovation practice in organizations both intensity and crystallization should be met. However, from the participants’ account, neither intensity nor crystallization seemed to be met in the case university.

4.3 Cultural clashes: existing versus new

Participants agree that the desired culture required to implement the innovation is missing. They reported that while the nature of the MI implemented demands radical thinking or transformation, cultural change is gradual and the efforts made to reconcile with the existing culture in the case university was also negligible. When implementing organization-wide change, as is in the case university, checking whether the existing OC is in alignment with the required, often new, is largely imperative (Haneberg, 2009). According to this scholar “if the culture is nimble (in the habit of being realigned), change will be more fluid and effective” (Haneberg, 2009, p.3) and hence leaders are supposed to play a key role in aligning the existing culture with the desired one to facilitate smooth implementation. For instance, they can include strategies on how to address current and desired cultural elements. A common view held amongst participants, however, is that there is cultural clash between the old and the new culture (such as new delivery methods, ways of assessments, reporting, designing curricula, etc.). Others also reported that the work done to modify the existing culture was insufficient to make staff align themselves with new ways of thinking and doing. Participants agreed that there was a difficulty to realize the expectation of the underlying principles of BPR.

5. Degree of involvement in decision making

Except one of the leaders who mentioned his participation in decision making process, particularly in the development of strategic plan, and BPR design, most of the leaders have

reported inadequacy of their participation in strategic decisions of the university. As one interviewee put it:

I was not involved in the team that was working on the strategic plan though I was in the post. A group of people were working on it and we were communicated the strategic plan. The strategic plan was not released timely. BPR started in 2008 but the strategy was communicated to us after two years. I participated in a presentation by the team but it was not enough.

Another leader also corroborated the above view and mentioned the limited opportunity to directly involve in the development of the university strategic plan and criticized the process for it was just nominally limited to informing. He commented:

While the vision, core values and the university strategy in general were developed, the participation was very low. There was a strategic team that has developed the strategy. I was invited to a meeting for discussion but the meeting was not for modifying or openly discussing to improve rather it was just limited to inform what has been done.

In this regard, there seems to have been various problems related to leaders and staff participation. Another relevant element that facilitates staff participation in decision making is the presence of structures that allow their interaction. Studies show that to make staff involved and facilitate innovation practices require presence of both social and structural setups. For instance, if organizations need full participation of their staff in decision making, structures characterized by flexibility and permissive to interaction are essential (Ahmed, 1998). Ahmed further argues that without structures that allow staff interaction, mere involvement will only produce empty results even in the presence of a strong leadership commitment. With regard to the structure in the case university, almost all participants agreed that the BPR structure was better in terms of enhancing involvement of staff but they said that it was not fully implemented and is highly compromised by leaders who do not have a good understanding of the innovation. Some of the participants also mentioned that the university is in a state of confusion to which structure (old and new) to follow.

CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that leadership as a dimension of OC has been playing a marginal role in the implementation of the innovation. Lack of in-depth understanding of the innovation among leaders and staff was one of the reasons for this. Unplanned and untimely change of leaders, lack of open and sufficient discussions and debates on the innovation, lack of delivering organized leadership on the part of the top leadership, insufficient time between preparation and implementation of innovation, and lack of proper and rigorous training to challenge the existing beliefs of staff, middle and top leaders were some of the reasons mentioned by participants for the lack of good understanding of the innovation in the

university. The study also found out low commitment and sense of ownership of the MI among leaders and staff. One of the reasons mentioned was staff resistance resulted from the feeling that it is an imposed innovation. The other pertinent issue raised by middle level leaders as source of resistance is the nature and source of the innovation. All participants agree that the trajectory of all the MIs so far implemented in the university is top-down including BPR despite some attempts to contextualize them.

It was also found out that there is disagreement or disconnection between middle and top leaders. While the top leaders seem tightly coupled with board and MoE, they seemed loosely coupled with middle level leaders and/or with different units in the university. The middle level leaders feel that they are disconnected with top leaders as the latter are not responsive to their concerns that created a clear rift of sense of “we” and “they” between them. Another finding related to leadership in this study is academic leaders’ report for conformity. During implementation, reports were mainly used for compliance with bureaucratic requirements than using them for improvement and inform the implementation process.

The study has also shown that the degree of risk taking behavior and flexibility in the university is very low. Lack of alignment of legislation with the new practice, lack of open discussion, top leaders’ reliance on top-down communication, failure to fully implement the new structure, and source of the innovation (top-down) were mentioned as challenges for the university to nurture risk taking behavior and flexibility. The study also found out that almost all participants had poor recall of the university’s core values. The study also revealed feeling of uncertainties of academic leaders on the innovation and lack of follow up of the implementation. A common view revealed in the study amongst participants is that there was cultural clash between old and desired culture. All academic leaders agree that the desired culture to implement the innovation is missing and mentioned difficulty to live up to the expectation of the underlying principles of BPR in university context. Participants underlined that the existing culture largely remained a barrier for implementation.

With regard to the degree of involvement in decision making most of the middle level leaders have reflected inadequacy of their participation in decisions that matter the implementation of the innovation. The majority of the leaders agreed that there was lack of adequate debate and reflection before and during the implementation of BPR.

IMPLICATIONS

The study has shown that the university’s OC is not conducive to implement MI (BPR in this case). The results suggest that academic leaders need to regularly assess and monitor the culture of their organization. With regard to this, the University needs to adapt an overhaul approach to examine its existing OC in implementing MI. To help academic leaders implement effective strategies and use OC, they must first understand the essence of OC. There should be discussion on what elements of culture should be promoted in the university, and it should be part of the leaders’ activities to work and build the desired culture. Efforts

should be made to understand the “toxic” cultural practices embodied in the university functions. There should be participatory leadership that allows open discussion and staff should be given an opportunity to criticize and participate in the university's decision making processes. The toxic cultural practices should be made to gradually freeze and be replaced by positive cultural elements. There is a need to realign the existing culture with the demands of the innovations; otherwise, it will be very challenging to effectively implement whatsoever tools are introduced.

It was revealed in the study that OC had been a barrier for the implementation of the innovation. It is because the desired culture to implement the tool and the existing culture were not in alignment. For instance, there was quite usual way of doing assessment, delivery, and curricular organization but after the introduction of BPR all these activities were redesigned and attempt was made to implement them in a different way. These have created strong resistance from the staff for they did not want to leave their long tradition of doing things despite the benefits it would bring to students' learning. Some of the principles of BPR such as the principle of fundamental transformation or radical change may need reconsideration as it often contradicts with university context. That is, a package of readymade MIs which work in some public organizations may not directly work elsewhere unless they are contextualized and fully understood by actors. So, careful study, and rigorous training which go beyond short-lived orientation programs should be made before introduction of innovations to a new context. The other point is to challenge logically the old belief systems (mindset) which serve as a strong fence to belittle new innovations. Tierney (1988) claimed that analysis of OC in universities entails understanding actors' interpretations in addition to looking into the structure, rules and regulations that govern the interconnected web. Unlike the presumption that an educational organization, university context, is amenable to change ideas, for it teaches and advocates other organizations to implement change ideas, such context, however, is found to be extremely resistant to change itself as revealed in this study. It is thus vital for leaders to be aware of their existing culture and devise mechanisms to improve and set out new values and healthy assumptions that the innovation entails.

As reported in this study, the core values are not known to most of the middle level academic leaders. This calls for organizing continuous cultural seminars at different levels. In fact, before doing such seminars, it would be fitting to make organizational diagnoses in a wider scale that aims cultural audits at institutional level to get the actual picture of the university's current cultural milieu. These cultural seminars should deal with the core values the university wants to inculcate, the mission, vision and strategy of the university. This way of making leaders and staff understand the mission, vision, core values and activities of the organization is not new. For instance, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) found out that such seminars can have various purposes among which include to disseminate top leaders' ideas about what is appropriate at institutional level, and to enable units and staff to try to identify things that need to be done. Moreover, such practices are helpful for leaders and staff to come closer to the core values the organization is striving to attain. In the cultural seminars, leaders can also organize and present the core values, mission and vision of their institutions and

their respective units, faculty or department, to their staff and may discuss intriguing questions such as ‘How can we live up to these values?’, ‘How will we as a team change our behavior?’ and ‘How can we as individuals act in accordance with these values?’ ‘How can we translate the values into practice by each unit and individuals?’ ‘What improvements do we need to make on the existing way of doing things?’ and etc. On the other hand, transparent assignment of people to different positions, open discussions and debates on the innovation to enhance leaders’ understanding of the innovation, provision of appropriate guidance and follow up by the top leadership and instituting two way communications might enhance the commitment and sense of ownership of staff and leaders.

The reported rift between top and middle level leaders needs to be lessened. Though acknowledging differences is quite essential in university context, the sense of “We” needs to dominate the sense of “They” from both sides by allowing middle level leaders to participate on key issues. Academic leaders should be genuine in addressing the concerns of staff. As much as they give attention to government directions, they should also treat and reconcile the sought gaps between their staff and the government’s intentions. Depoliticizing change ideas is a critical function that the top leaders should focus at university context. There should be academic debates to convince the staff that the change tools are viable to the university context and are in alignment with the HE culture. Studies show that OC is socially constructed—it is created and changed through conversations (Haneberg, 2009); hence, leaders need to allow conversations to reconsider the existing.

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