SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yasar KONDAKCI

Middle East Technical University, Turkey

Gaoming ZHENG

Tampere University, Finland

Academic leadership culture

- **Academic leadership culture:** a group's distinct set of (leadership) patterns, features, traditions as well as the values and assumptions on which these patterns have been based, in the context of higher education institutions (Kekäle 2005),

- **greater attention should be given** to contextual or cultural factors in educational and international development (Crossley and Jarvis 2001; Crossley 2009, 2010)

- Many international development approaches already show some approaches cannot be simply applied from one context to another

- Inaccurate analysis and understanding of Chinese education: misunderstanding of the context and culture (Yang, 2011)

- Implication: importance of **cultural sensitivity**

Three aspects of culture
(Pang 2005)

- **Material layer**

(hardware of movie production)

e.g. University governance structure

- **Social layer:** material ideology, e.g. theory, system

(institutions, systems, behaviours that produces the movies)

e.g. regulating academic leadership,

- norms and practices of academic leaders

- **Ideological/pychological layer:** deeply rooted in a nation's tradition and ideology and is resitant to change.

(values, beliefs, concepts, etc, that the movie wants to convey)

e.g. beliefs, values about academic leadership that are taken for granted

important for comparative cultural studies (Yang 2011)
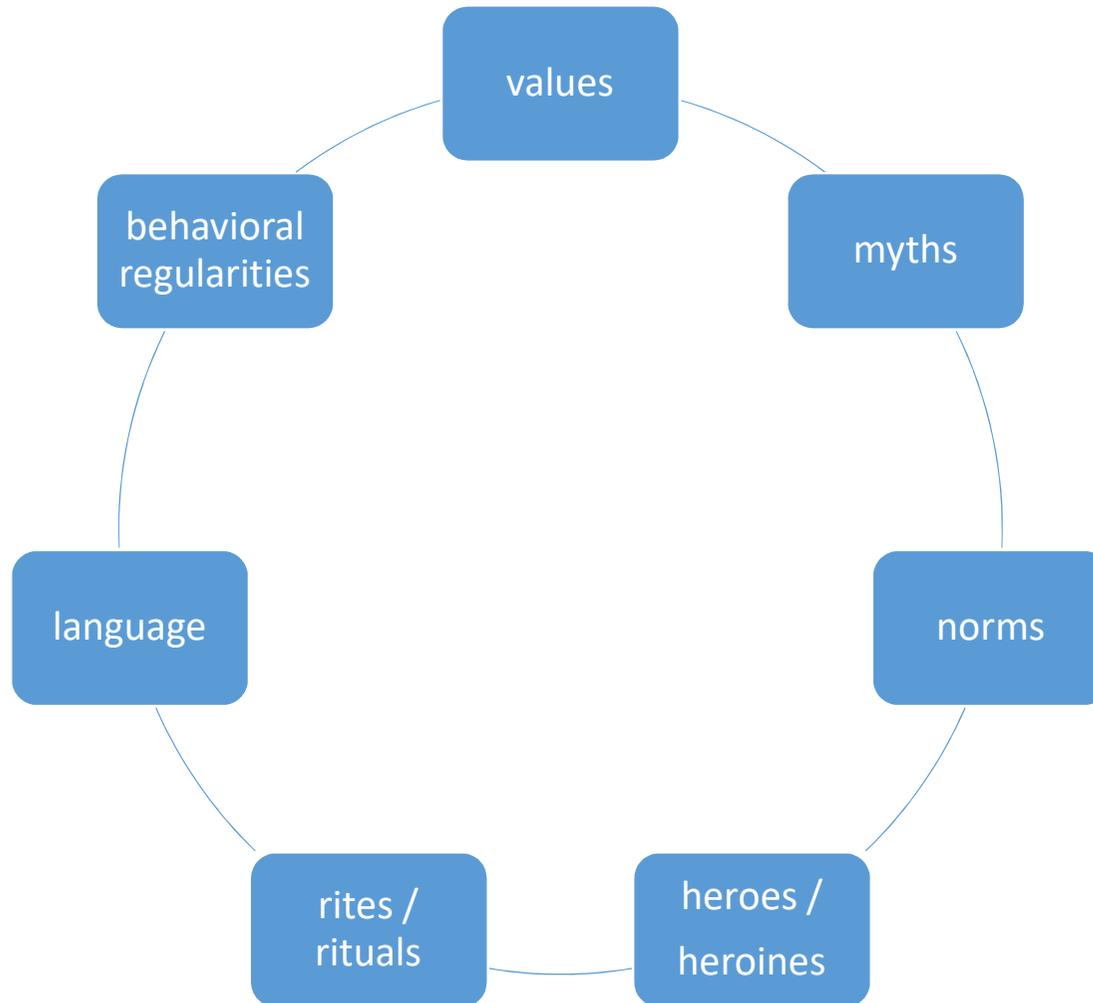
IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE IN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

- Profound *impact* of culture on organizational/managerial behavior and organizational performance
  - "The group performs far beyond the sum of its individual talents"
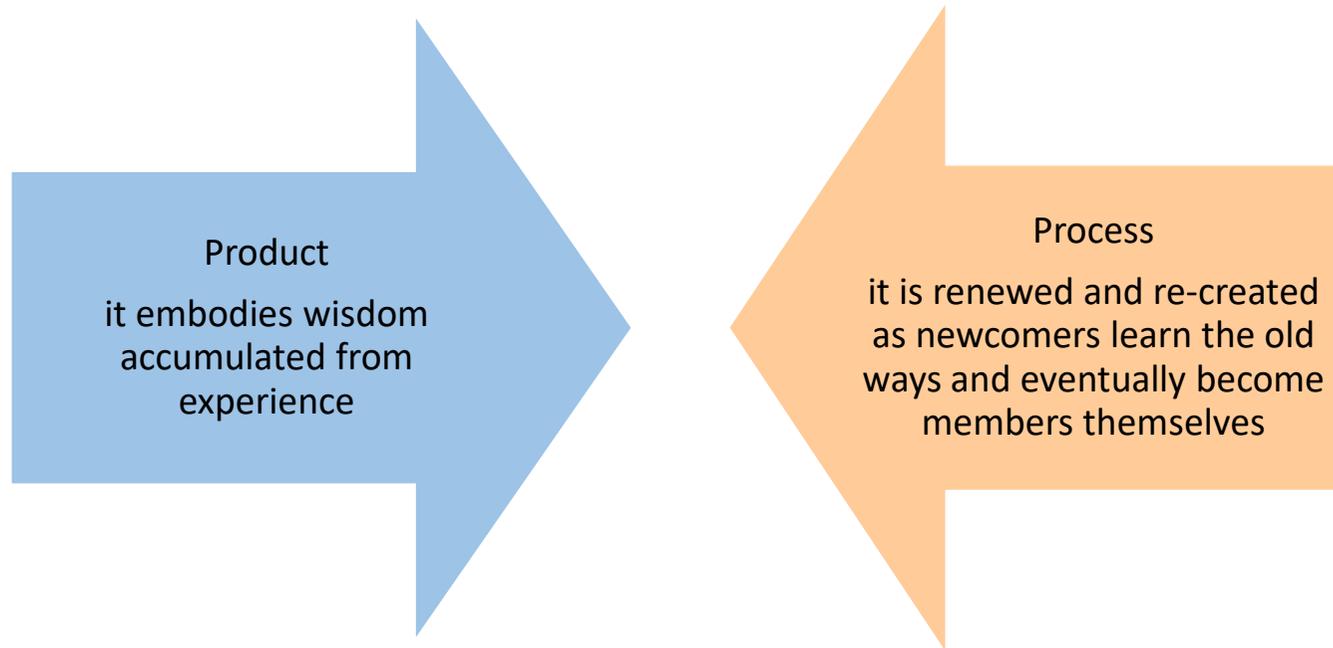 - Universities are not exempted!

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE IN AL

- Common mistake at universities.
  - The age of *change and transformation* at the academy
    - Increasing calls for changing and transforming the universities

- Large scale change requires culture change
  - *Change that touch mission, vision and mission* of the organization
    - We undertake huge changes, but we ignore to think about the impact of change on culture and *vice-versa*
    - In many cases, *resistance* results from cultural reasons
    - *Mismatch* between organizational actions and cultural elements
      - Example, universities in Turkey
      - Example, internationalization

CHALLENGES IN MANAGING CULTURE

- "Some argue that organizations *have cultures; others insist that organizations are cultures.*"

- *Fluid* nature of cultural context
  - Unlike the formal structures, culture is invisible
    - Nontraditional and nonstructural dimensions
    - Linear causality does not work

CHALLENGES IN MANAGING CULTURE

Product

it embodies wisdom accumulated from experience

Process

it is renewed and re-created as newcomers learn the old ways and eventually become members themselves

CHALLENGES OF MANAGING CULTURE IN THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

- The culture at the university is a *multilayered* concept
  - The culture of a specific *discipline*,
  - The culture of a specific *profession*,
  - The culture of an *institution*
  - Culture of a *national system* (Clark, 1980)

- Similar challenges different approaches
  - Universities are facing with similar challenges but they have to *implement different approach* in order to deal with these difficulties.

University culture (Bergquist)

Institutional (Schein)

National culture (Hofstede)
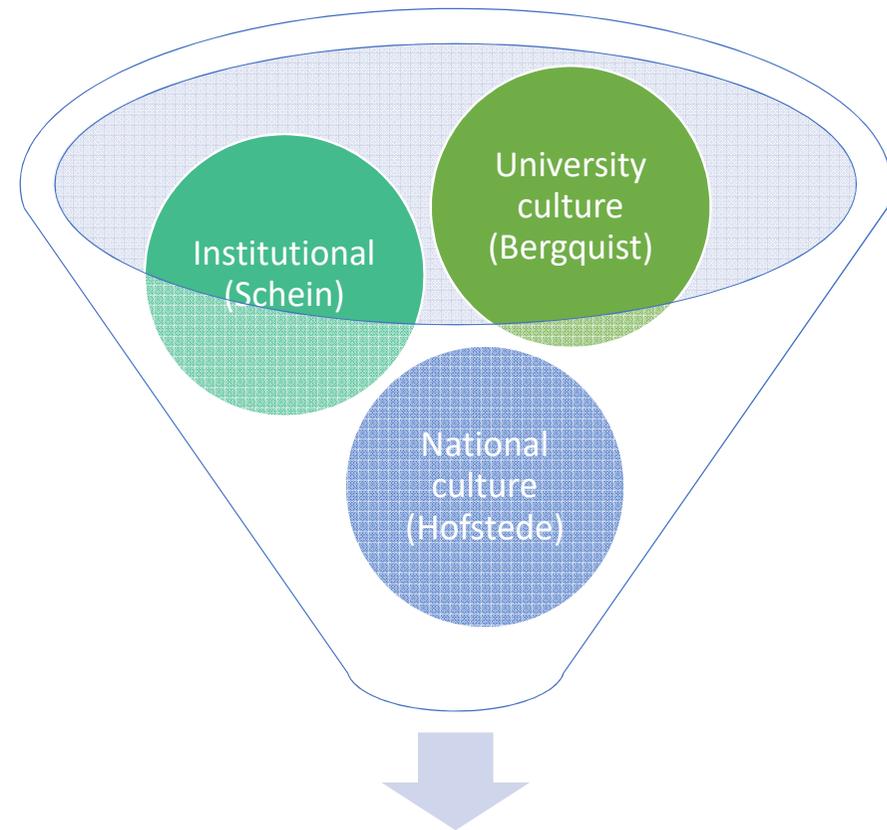
Distill a culture serving organizational goals

CHALLENGES OF MANAGING CULTURE IN THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

POWER DISTANCE
how much *inequality* between bosses and subordinates?

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE
How much comfort with *ambiguity?*

"collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one human group from another"

INDIVIDUALISM
how much value on the *individual vs. group*?

MASCULINITY-FEMININITY
how much pressure on *males/females* for career-success and workplace dominance?

CHALLENGES OF MANAGING CULTURE IN THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

Collegial
- Emphasizes the *traditional nature of campus settings* and the origins of North American higher education in England's Oxbridge Model (faculty culture, liberal arts traditions, and research and scholarship)

Managerial
- Outlines the *administrative* side of higher education organizations. Premier emphasis on ways to manage the university more *efficiently and effectively*.

Developmental
- Roated in 1960s student activism, focuses on faculty development, curriculum expansion, and institutional research, thus augmenting the discussion of *student development topics* (e.g., teaching and learning, and institutional change).

Advocacy
- Have connotations with the 1960s student activism but originates from faculty unions, collective bargaining, and academic freedom...introduction to *faculty life* from which one could better understand faculty priorities and emphases
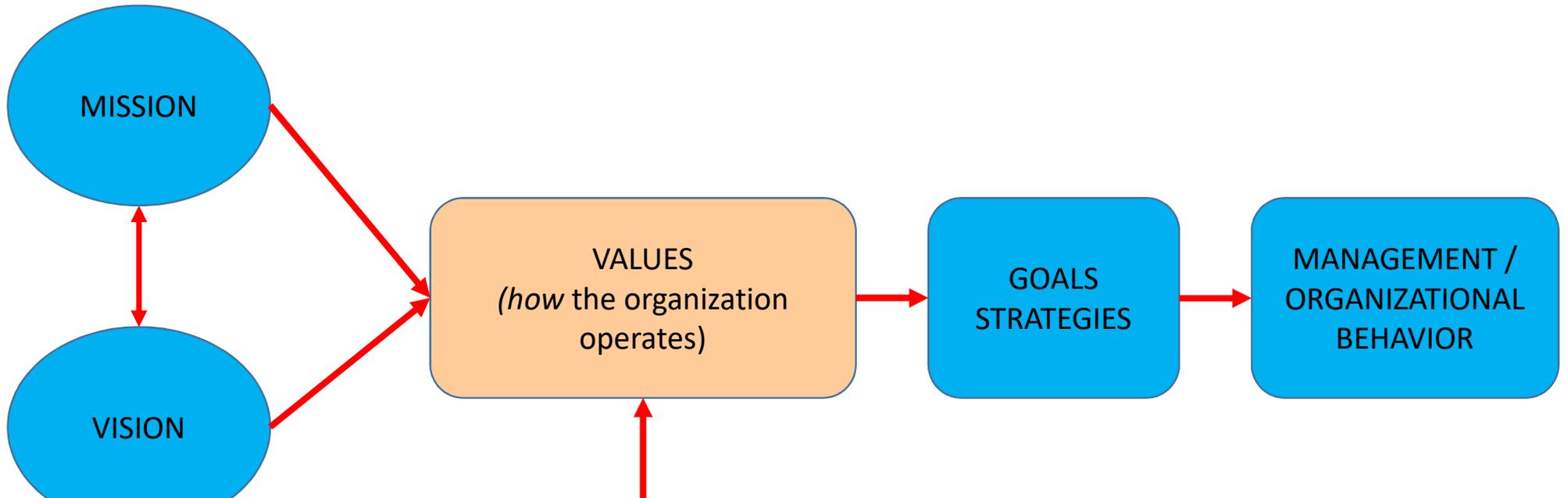
Virtual
- Focuses on *the realities of work life in higher education in the 21st century*. How lives of students, faculty, administrators, and staff are firmly entrenched in the technological inventions (e.g., the internet, computers, cell phones) as well as the developments in ODE

Tangible
- Covers a *broad discussion on space, architecture, and pedagogy*, understand why students, community members, parents, and alumni, among others, are drawn so convincingly and habitually to collegiate environments
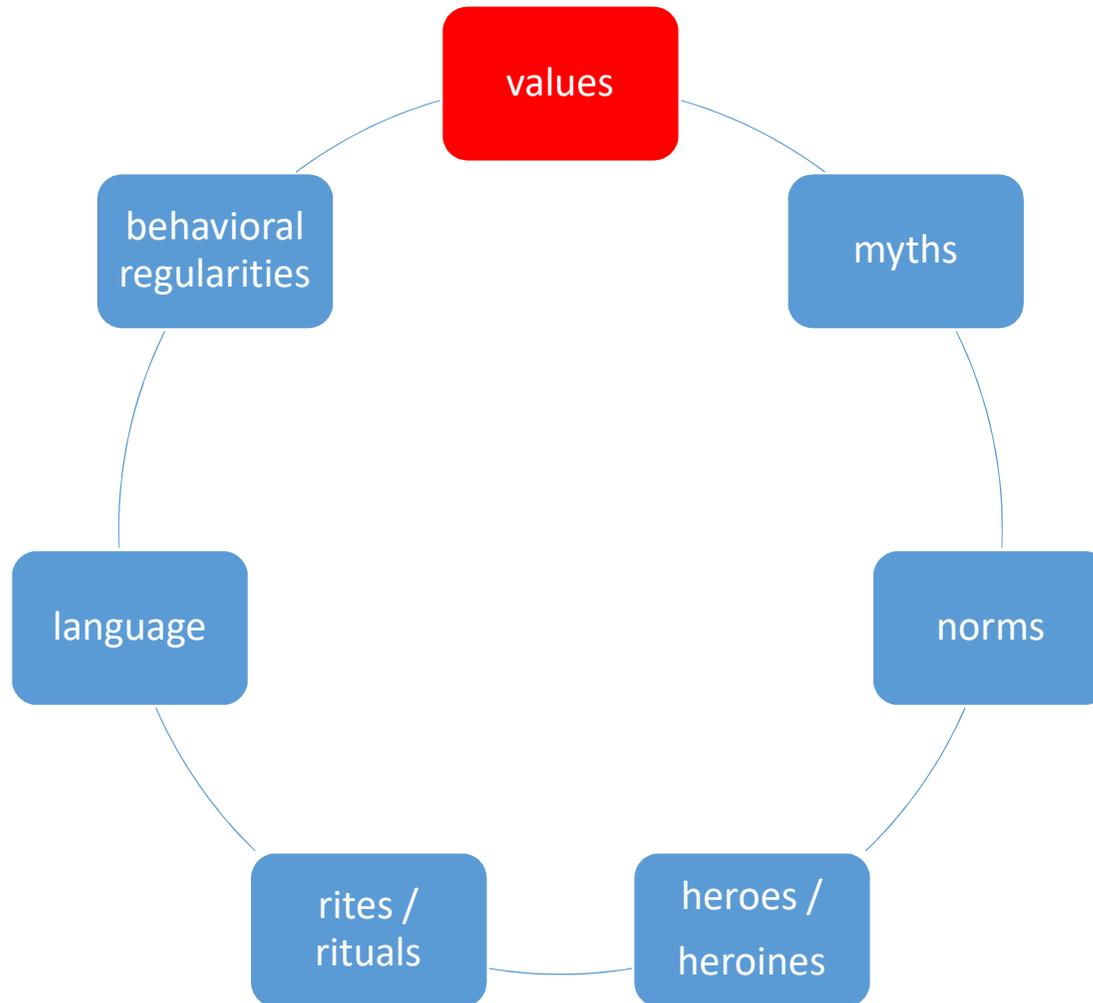
MANAGING CULTURE - VALUES

```
  ┌──────────┐
  │ MISSION  │ ─┐
  └──────────┘  │
       ↕        ├──→  ┌──────────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────────┐
  ┌──────────┐  │     │      VALUES       │ ──→ │    GOALS      │ ──→ │   MANAGEMENT /   │
  │  VISION  │ ─┘     │ (how the          │     │  STRATEGIES   │     │  ORGANIZATIONAL  │
  └──────────┘        │ organization      │     └──────────────┘     │     BEHAVIOR     │
                      │ operates)         │                          └──────────────────┘
                      └──────────────────┘
                              ↑
```

- How do we want to conduct our business (how do we do things around here)?
- How do we want to treat our key stakeholders?
- What do we value—in other words–what do we really care about?
  (respect, trust, honesty, integrity, and teamwork)

EXAMPLES

- http://www.metu.edu.tr/general-information
- http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/estates/aboutus/customerservice/vision/
- https://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/principles
- http://www.vub.ac.be/en/we-are-vub#vub---this-is-us
- http://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/how-the-university-and-colleges-work/the-universitys-mission-and-core-values
- https://oaa.osu.edu/mission-vision-values-and-core-goals

TASKS FOR WORKSHOP

- TASK
  - List six to eight values that you think are *most important (ideal)* for your university and; therefore, you would like to see your university adopt to guide your strategic goals and tackle the current challenges?

    Examples of challenges:
    - 'Double World-class' development
    - Technology and information development
    - Resistance to change
    - Employability
    - Demographic changes
    - Competition and Cooperation
    - Quality
    - University ranking
    - …

- What are the differences between Chinese and European universities on the key desired values?

TASKS FOR WORKSHOP

- TASK 1:
  - What you consider to be your university's key values *in practice* at the present time?
  - What are the differences between Chinese and European universities with regard to their current values?

- TASK 2:
  - List six to eight values that you think are *most important (ideal)* for your university in dealing with challenges/forces of change and; therefore, you would like to see your university adopt to guide the conduct of its business and its relationships with key stakeholders.
  - What are the differences between Chinese and European universities on the key desired values?