Leadership Metaphor in Indonesian Higher Education Institution

by Seger Handoyo

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Dr. Seger Handoyo, Dr. Fendy Suhariadi, & Dr Suryanto Faculty of Psychology, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia Jl. Dharmawangsa Dalam Selatan Surabaya 60286 s handoyo@unair. ac. id, +62315032770

Abstract

This study empirically established that top managers of university in Indonesia categorized into four metaphors. The metaphor created base on two dimensions, which is strategic interpretation and political interpretation.

Metaphors use name of actors in "wayang" (Indonesia traditional puppet), that is: (1) "Kresna": predisposed to see organizational issues as potency and strategic opportunities to get benefit for organization, and for the same time also perceive that issues can trigger potential conflicts; (2) "Sengkuni": predisposed to see issues as political support of particular group interests, and less attention to perceive strategic quality of issues; (3) "Bima": predisposed only to perceive that issues connected with strategic interest of organization; and (4) "Yudistira": withdraw him/herself from organizational problems.

Practical implication is university top managers should be encouraged or trained to be "Kresna". Characteristics of "Kresna" needed to develop university effectively and sustain ably in high political climate.

Keywords: Leadership, Interpretation, Higher Education.

Introduction

World Trade Organization (WTO) has made a decision that higher education could be trade freely. Some warnings have been highlighted on seminars and articles that there will be foreign institutions penetrate into education business in Indonesia. This could be a threat to Indonesia higher education. Aware on this factor, currently many higher educations in Indonesia has start for the innovation and changes. These changes would bring a development only if this is a proper response to the threat caused by changes on their environment.

According to the above reason, higher education should have a skill to identify key factors for their quality and strategy development and also to be able to develop continuing changes (Scott, 2004). So, development on higher education is a continuing change as a factor of giving a proper response to threat of their environment.

To build a proper response to their environment, higher educaiion must keep an effort to understand what is happening on their environment and try to interpret it. Understanding the environment means try to understand on the ambiguity of information at their organizational environment. "What is happening", "why it is happen" and "what does it mean" are important questions in effort to interpret and understand the environment.

Organizational issue interpretation is critically important because during this process, information becomes clearer and meaningful. Issue interpretation is also very crucial to determine organizational action through their decisions. To emphasize that, Dutton & Duncan said that the affectivity of organizational action and the results on their performance are determined by their strategic issues interpretation. Empirical study has highlighted that result on interpretation process has a main role on organizational action. (Chattopadhyay, Glick, & Huber, 2001; Ginsberg & Venkatraman, 1992; Thomas, Clark, & Gioa, 1993).

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Organizational issue interpretation is top management team's task. Weick (1979) expresses that top management team should actively create the reality which they attend to. Top management team culminates to deal with various complex and strategic issue for its organization. They deal with the complex issue and should choose various interpretations. They also should link issues with organizational action which have implication to organizational performance (Thomas, Shankster & Mathieu, 1994). While Hambrick & Mason (1984) express that top management team has to do it because they are most important group, so-called as dominant coalition. Top management team culminates to serve the important of cognitive function by situation interpretation and use that interpretation to give the meaning framework for organizational member (Daft & Weick, 1984; Gioia, 1986). Even Bennis & Nanus (in Isabella, 1990) express that top management team is a meaning architect which is made by organization.

Organizational Issue Interpretation Organizational Issue interpretation is meaning that attached to organizational issue through cognitive process to represent the issue (Jackson & Dutton, 1988). Meaning to an object or occurrence understood as a concept forming process and cognitive representation of an object or occurrence.

Egelhoff (in Thomas & McDaniel, 1990) state that organizational issue is trends, developments, and dilemmas that affect organization as a whole and its position in its environment. Organizational issues have the potency to influence the organizational goal attainment (Ansoft, in Dutton & Jackson, 1987). Issues include opportunities, threats, and problems (Dutton & Ottensmeyer, in Thomas & McDaniel, 1990). Strategic organizational issues are often ill-structure and ambiguous so those require an interpretation effort (Thomas & McDaniel, 1990)

Identifying organizational issue assist decision maker determine its environment. Fredrickson (in Thomas & McDaniel, 1990) express that if researchers want to comprehend and improve the strategic decision process, they must understand why the same stimulus could be interpreted differently. Previous study have offered some term and description interpretation which different each other, for example, concept sensemaking (Weick, 1979), formulation (Lyles & Mitroff, 1980), diagnosed (Dutton, Fahey & Narayanan, 1983) and structuring (Abulsamh & McDaniel, 1990). Even though that have a slight different in meaning, but those terms are describing a same process, which is decision maker interpret strategic event or situation on their environment (Thomas & McDaniel, 1990). Interpretation process is cognitive process which can be explained with the categorization theory (Dutton & Jackson, 1987). Managers categorize information about its environment to comprehend the information meaning (Dutton & Jackson, 1987; Jackson & Dutton, 1988).

Empirical research strengthen the opinion that decision maker in organization often interpret its organizational environment by using categorization like threat and opportunity (Fiol, 1995; Thomas & Daniel, 1990; Thomas, Clark & Gioia, 1993). Justification that category of opportunity and threat there is in decision maker's mind alighted from study about strategic decision process. (Mintzberg, Raisinghini & Theoret, 1976; Nutt, in Dutton & Jackson, 1987). Those studies prove that different stimuli yield the different decision process. This research expresses that category of opportunity and threat is relevant and owns the consequence at decision process.

Thomas, Shankster & Mathieu (1994) and Gioia & Thomas (1996) suggested other issue interpretation categorization, which is political interpretation and strategic interpretation. Both of them claimed that political and strategic category are more substantive (Thomas, Shankster & Mathieu, 1994) and premature to assume that category of opportunity and threat can be used directly in higher education institution (Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

Manager assessment for issue that affects its organization will-be related to a strategic position and political contribution from the issue. Issue is interpreted as strategic; when the issue is judged affect organizational performance and position. Issue is interpreted as political when the issue will

entangle the conflict, negotiation, and influence the effort individuals or group to get the self-advantage.

Research Method

Subject of this research is top management team in level at seven universities in Surabaya and Malang. Top management team in faculty level is Dean, Vice Dean I, Vice Dean II, and Vice Dean III. Seven institution of higher education in Surabaya and Malang selected in order to vary in university status (private and public university), religious-orientation, and all of them have good reputation. As a whole in East Java, there are more than 231 college, both for in form of university, institute, college, academy, and polytechnic, with the status of public university and private university.

First step to scale construction of issue interpretation is interview to obtain information about current strategic issues in higher education and how top management team scan and interpret its environment. Interview approach is sensemaking interview, what is developed by Dervin (1992). This approach gives us three fundamental questions, which is question about situation, question about gap, and question about use or aid. Some adjustment is made in order to reach the expected result.

Seven interviewers, consisted of one lecture and six students, trained to conduct interview. The selected siudents have experience to conduct the previous research interview. Interview talked between 45 minute until 90 minute and all recorded and have transcript. Eighteen faculty head in University Airlangga, have interviewed within one month.

From interview transcript, then searched related or relevant key idea with the issue interpretation. Three raters look for and discuss the related or relevant key idea with the issue interpretation. Its result is obtained 152 key ideas, which is in the form of word or sentence. Process hereinafter, raters categorize 152 the key idea. Its result is 5 categories, which are education quality, education fund, attitude and affection, government-related, and group-interest. Idea distribution shall be as follows: 44 in category of education quality, 39 in category of education fund, 27 in attitude and affection, and 18 in governmental category, and 24 in category of group-interest category.

The result is used as a base of compilation of organizational issue interpretation scale. Twenty statement made to measure the organizational issue interpretation at five above dimension, and two strategic issue, entitled the "strategic issue 1" (demand of college change) and 'strategic issue 2" (governmental regulation about higher education). Next step is determining the scale amount to be used, initially scale 7 spanned between answer choices very imprecise until very precise. Scale 7 selected at least two consideration, that is respondent is one who have higher education, so that will not find difficulties to take choice with the seven scale and this scale will give the finer measure than with the slimmer scale.

Statement which have been collected then passed to five psychologist to be given judgment about how far the statement have content validity to measure organizational issue interpretation. The experts assessment express that statement have good content validity, but some statement need the sentence revise.

Answer choice re-considered because there is a problem of not exhaustive. Very possible there is statement assessed by respondent is not related or relevant with the situation. Pursuant to the consideration, scale added one with the answer choice "is not related/relevant situation". Thereby, its end result is twenty questions by 8 skala-Likert used to two different issue. Score used is score mean from two the issue. Statement distribution of five above dimensions is on table 1.

label 1 Statement Distribution of
Organizational Issue Interpretation

No	Dimension	Statement Number
1	Educational Quality	01, 02, 03, 04
2	Educational Fund	05,06, 08, 09
3	Attitude and Affection	13,14,15,16
4	Governmental	17,18,19, 20
5	Group Interest	07,10, 11, 12,

Result of examination factor analysis are conducted with the method of principle component analysis is Kaiser-Meyer-Oikin (KMO) = 0.755 and Bartiett's test = 773.241 with the significance value 0.000. So that data can be processed furthermore. Number item 18 obtaining score of anti-image correlation 0.454 (than 0.5) so that the item are deleted.

Factor analysis is conducted again by asking for 2 factors. Its result is amount total variance explained 37% with the correlation at same component come near 1 and inter-factor correlation is very small Loading Factor of each statement at two factor obtained is at the table 2.

Table 2
Loading factor Organizational Issue Interpretation Scale

Number Item	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2
1	Quality of education would be more difficult to be improved	0,42	
2	The system, infrastructure, human resource and academic atmosphere can be more develop in order to increase quality of education	-0,15	
3	Motivation to increase education quality become ever greater	0,06	
4	Threat to higher education life becomes ever greater		0,14
5	Source of education Fund will remained most depend on SPP, and at governmental fund (specially public university)	0,38	-0,12
6	Will progressively easy to develop the Revenue Generating Activities to obtain the earnings of outside SPP	-0,06	
7	Opportunity to improve the prosperity of faculty member and employees become greater	-0,11	
8	Threat for obtaining the education fund from society becomes greater	0,29	0,18
9	Centralize in university, not in faculty autonomy, will gain strengthen		-0,05
10	Group interest will gain strengthen to try to fight for self advantage in the situation		-0,05
11	Greater opportunity of Group of status quo to become more dominant		-0,10

Number Item	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2
12	Will arise the sigh, small taik, internal dynamics or friction of faculty answer to the change which is and/or to be happened	[illegible]	-0,04
13	Mental attitude of faculty member and employees will change to face the situation demand	0,34	[illegible]
14	Faculty member enthusiasm to make a change to answer the situation becomes strengthen	0,35	[illegible]
15	Will arise worries / dread of faculty member, employees and student answer to the change which [is] and/or to be happened	[illegible]	-0,06
[illegible]	Motivation of student to become more braver to protest if/when something happened by disagree with its desire becomes greater	[illegible]	0,22
17	Governmental regulation exactly pursue the effort to increasing education quality	[illegible]	-0,09
19	Governmental motivation to give an autonomy for college to be authoritative arranging their self becomes greater	-0,08	[illegible]
[illegible]	Governmental policy and regulation about education full concern about "center importance", is not always about education problem	[illegible]	-0,29

Statement distribution on two factors is at table 3.

Table 3
Statement Distribution on 2 Factor

No	Factor	Statement Number
1	Political	04, 09,10,11,12,15,16,17,20
2	Strategic	01,02, 03,06, 07,13,14,19

Examination on Reliabilities of political scale yield the coefficient of reliabilities alpha 0,80 and correlation item-total is at range from 0.37 until 0.68. Coefficient of Reliabilities alpha for the scale of strategic is 0.68 and correlation item-total ranged at 0.33 until 0.51. By theoretic two factors, strategic and political which are supported by empirical data, representing separate dimension one another, so that scoring will be done separately. This means that will be obtained one score for the interpretation of political and one score for the interpretation of strategic at each subject. High score at political factor means the issue perceived includes a lot of entangling conflict, negotiation, and influencing the effort of individuals and group to get the advantage of their selves. High score at strategic factor means the issue will influence the organizational performance and position.

Result and Discussion

In theory, organization issue would be interpreted strategically if the issue is perceived will alter the institution position in market, influencing institution as a whole, and has an influence on target and institution mission. In other word, strategic interpretation of an issue shows that the issue is important for attainment of target and organizational life. Result of this empirical research indicates that two issues, that is issue about demand of change of governmental regulation and college about higher education, what is raised in this research is strategically interpreted when the issue influences:

1. Increasing of education quality, consisted of

a. Increasing of quality as a whole
b. Increasing of quality through development on system, infrastructure, human resource, and academic atmosphere
c. Increasing of quality due to increasing of motivation

2. Increasing of earnings of outside SPP
3. Increasing of prosperity of faculty members and employees
4. Change of mental attitude of faculty members and employees
5. Enthusiasm faculty members to make a change
6. Giving autonomy larger by government to higher education institution

Meanwhile, theoretically issue is interpreted political when the issue will entangle the conflict, negotiation, and influence the effort individuals or group to get the self-advantage. Result of this research indicate that issues is interpreted as political when the issue entangle the existence of

1. Increasing of threat to taking place of college life
2. Strengthen of centralization in university, not faculty autonomy
3. Strengthen of group-interests that struggle for its importance
4. Increasing of opportunity of status quo group dominance
5. Increasing of different ideas and conflict
6. Increasing of anxiety or dread faculty members, employees, and students
7. Increasing of student's bravery to protest
8. Increasing of central government's interest, that happened through
    a. government regulation pursuing the increasing of quality
    b. regulation and government policy loaded with the "center's interest".

Strategic interpretation and political interpretation represent two variable which discrete. That mean an organizational issue could be interpreted political and strategic on equal height or on equal low. Strategic interpretation and political interpretation viewed as two factor of organizational issue interpretation. Both of them coherent with organizational issue interpretation because the organizational nature. Strategic interpretation related with the nature that organization exist to reach the goal which has been specified. Thereby, trends and developments in organizational environment will be able to be interpreted as trends and developments which can push and facilitate the goal attainment or not. Interpretation that way that's so-called with the strategic interpretation.

The other organizational reality is that organization represent a group of people who own their interests which could be different each other. People in the organization besides working for organization; also naturally fulfill their needs and interests. They struggle to get organizational resource for fulfill their needs and interests. Because resources in organization is rare, then people or group struggle to get the resource. Conflict emerge because people or group struggling and playing its power to win that conflict. In the end, decision oftentimes has to be relied on process of bargaining and negotiation. With the organizational reality like that, trends and developments in organizational environment will be able to be interpreted as trends and developments which can push stronger efforts of interest group to get self-interest, generating conflict, and require the negotiation to come to at one particular certain decision. This interpretation referred with political interpretation.

Data obtained in this research show variable strategic interpretation and political interpretation is discrete (see figure 1). At the figure look that manager can give both of interpretation in the same higher, in the same lower, or one of higher and one of other lower. Red line is cut-off score that showing middle dot of normative. Middle dot of normative for the interpretation of strategic is 28 (8 item by 7 scale) and political interpretation is 31.5 (9 item by 7 scale). Middle dot of this normative is utilized to conclude whether somebody give the strategic interpretation higher or lower.

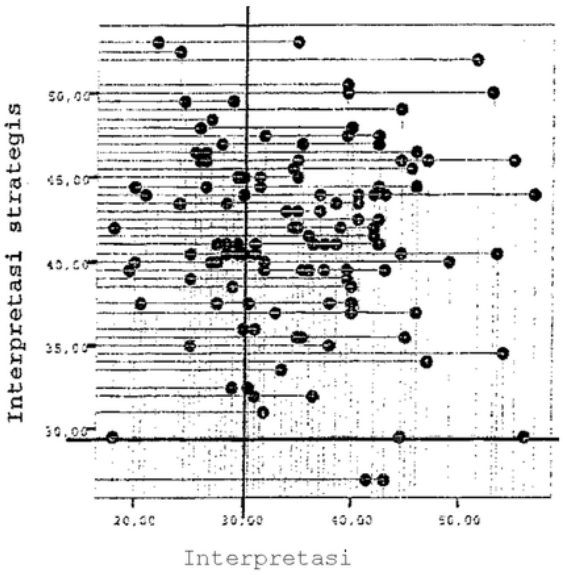

Figure 1
Distribution Matrix of Issue Interpretation Score

Research data indicate that most of all respondent give high strategic interpretation at organizational issues. This matter is reasonable because the issues are very important issues which nowadays having potency to affect organizational goal attainment. Issues are referred as strategic issue by Dutton & Jackson (1987). However, there is variation at political interpretation. There are relatively equal numbers of respondent who give the higher and lower political interpretation. At above figure even see some people give the very high political interpretation. Who is giving higher political interpretation? Whether the higher political interpretation is given by manager culminate in public or private university, or at certain factor demographic, like age and tenure?

To reply the questions, researcher conducts the additional data analysis to test the political interpretation difference between public and private university. Its result indicate that there significant difference at political interpretation between manager culminate in public and private university. Manager in public university interpret the issue more political than manager in private university. This research also gives the evidence of existence of significant positive correlation age and political interpretation. The older give political interpretation is higher than younger. There are significant positive correlation tenure and political interpretation.

Respondent from public university relatively is older than respondent from private university. So age is important factor that making political interpretation difference between public and private university. This result support opinion in focus group discussion that expressing old people which follow in political party in 1950 or 1960-an bringing political scheme into college. Focus Group discussion also confirms that public university more political than private university.

Focus group discussion also gives the answer why age relates to political interpretation. Its answer is related with the organizational political growth history at the university in Indonesia.

Organizational politic at university in Indonesia is typically influenced by ideological politics and conflict that goes on Indonesia since 1950-an, In this time a lot of Lecture University in Indonesia which is active people in political organizations like PNI, Masyumi, etc. Political scheme of ideology conflict from outside brought into the faculty or university and utilized to interpret the organizational issue.

Result Of this research clearly show that there of acre of four types of top manager in higher education institution according to organizational issue interpretation. We use metaphors of actors in "puppets" (Indonesia of Traditional puppet) to describe the types of top manager (see

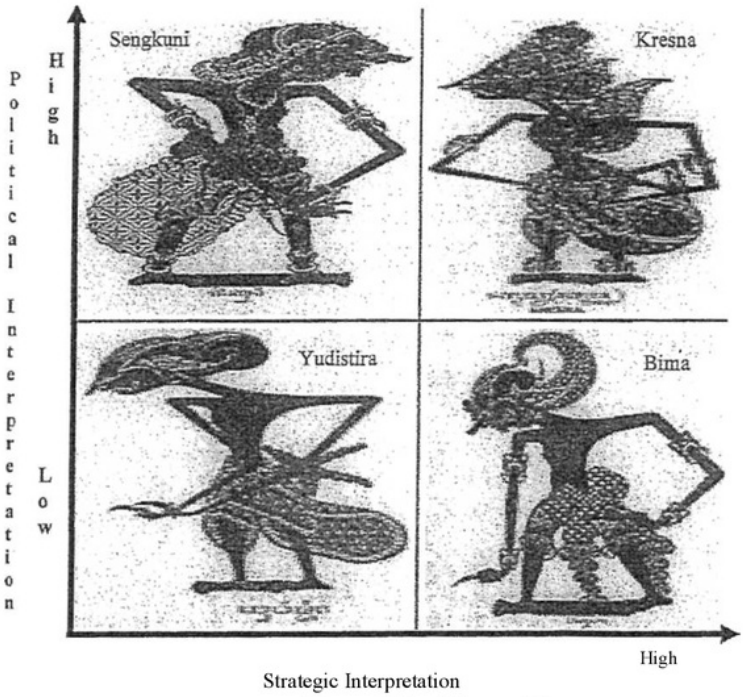

Figure 2 Four Types of Top Manager

figure 2).
(1) " Kresna": predisposed to see organizational issues of ace of potency and strategic opportunities to get benefit for organization, and for the same time also perceive that issues can trigger potential conflicts. He / individual she realized that issues are a trigger to drive [of] or particular groups struggle to get their self-interests. Kresna Manages issue to facilitate information could be proceed interactively, participative, and still formally. Kresna Predisposes to use offensive strategy to get strategic opportunity. This Manager also considers groups which become known corresponding to particular issues. The Groups of acre of managed in of order of to conflicts will of note of disrupt organization to achieve its goals. If Required, Kresna Take political action to get his / her advantages with manipulative ways

(2) " Sengkuni": predisposed to see issues of ace of political support of particular group interests, and less attention to perceive strategic quality of issues. Sengkuni has suspicious mind. He / she always suspect that particular groups have some interests linked with issues. Sengkuni Beliefs that opponent will distort information to protect their interests. Because Of that, he / she plays

power in almost organizational issues to get self-advantages. Organizational Issues abused to bargain, negotiate, and compromise in of order of to get his / her advantages. Sengkuni Very often manipulate organizational of interest of to get his / her self-interest.

(3) " Bima": predisposed only to perceive that issues connected with strategic of interest of organization. Bima is nai've. He/she is of note of concern about people in organization which have their self-interest that could be different with organizational interest. Bima Use "horse eyeglasses" to run to the goals

(4) " Yudistira": withdraw him / herself from group and organizational problems. Yudistira Predisposed to close his / her eyes, so he / she could of note of see opportunity that following the issues and could of note of know group interests that related with power struggle. Yudistira perceives that everyone is good, so he / she want to see everyone and group of acre of happy and content. Yudistira Does of note of have personal hidden agenda.

Practical Implication

Resuit of the research has a benefit for higher education if there of acre of practical following action. That is urgent to do to realize government's challenge that in 2010 some university in of Indonesia of acre of excellence in the world and give enormous contribution to increase nation's competitive. University top managers, in level faculty and university, should concern to their external environment, scan important issues, and interpret strategically to develop higher education.

To deal with internal environment which have high organizational politic, university top manager should be selected and developed to be politician manager. Kotter (in Boiman & Deal, 2003) declare three types of manager, that is naive manager, cynical manager, and politician manager. Naive manager that is manager looking into people with the rose eyeglasses, everybody has seen goodness, friendly, and reliably. On the contrary, cynical manager is manager which see everybody have political agenda, and own tactics"getting them before you are catched by them".

Facing reality which there is many interest groups in faculty, so that able to interpret issue as political naturally, university need manager as politician. This manager belief that everybody is not good, but also not bad. In environment which high political activity, this manager makes the political interpretation precisely, developing direction, building support, and always learn to manage relationship with friends and also rivals. Manager as politician should develop social skills, political skills, and politics behavior according to four ethical values, that is mutuality, generality, openness, and caring (Boiman & Deal, 2003)

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