



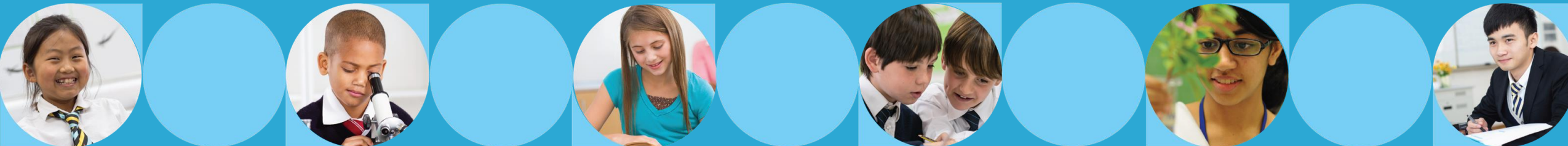
Cambridge Assessment
International Education

A Possible Modality of teacher growth community

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I. Definition of teacher growth community

II. Practices for Building teacher growth communities

**III. Mechanisms and Conditions for the Formation of
teacher growth communities**

I. Definition of teacher growth community

- ▶ **Using “growth” instead of “development” or “learning”**: “Growth” implies a broader scope, emphasizes the process of growth, and involves whole-persons of teachers.
- ▶ **Not using “professional”**: Teachers need to engage in a teacher growth community as whole persons rather than solely focusing on their professional selves.
- ▶ **“Community”**: A team based on shared goals and common conditions.
- ▶ **The collaborative nature of teaching**: Students always interact with multiple teachers, and teachers are also part of social relationships.

Theoretical Perspectives

- ▶ **Laloux's** description of **teal organizations** in *Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage of Human Consciousness*.
- ▶ Two sources: **Wilber's** spectrum of consciousness and **Wade's** evolution of consciousness.
- ▶ Human organization has evolved from **red organizations** (impulsive) to **amber organizations** (conformist), **orange organizations** (achievement), **green organizations** (pluralistic), and then to the next stage — **teal organizations** (evolutionary).

Three Breakthroughs of Teal Organizations

- **Self-management**
- **Wholeness**
- **Evolutionary Purpose**

1. Self-management

- ▶ Everyone is their own boss, without the need for either hierarchy or consensus. **Power is distributed**. Decisions are made at the point of origin. Innovations can spring up from all quarters.
- ▶ Underperforming colleagues are held to account, creating **peer pressure**
- ▶ Teams **set their own objectives**, and they take pride in achieving them.
- ▶ Sufficient **trust** and responsibility.
- ▶ Acquire a set of healthy and efficient **team decision-making skills and tools**, especially for effective conflict resolution.

2. Wholeness

- ▶ Bringing **all of who we are** to work, showing our vulnerabilities and ignorance
- ▶ Bringing together the ego and the deeper parts of the self; integrating **mind, body, and soul**; cultivating both the feminine and masculine parts within
- ▶ Repairing **our** broken relationship with **life and nature**
- ▶ After many successive steps of disidentification, as we learn to be fully independent and **true to ourselves**, it dawns on us that, paradoxically, we are profoundly **part of everything**.

3. Evolutionary Purpose

- ▶ Teal Organizations are seen as a **living organism**. Life, in all its evolutionary wisdom, manages ecosystems of unfathomable beauty, ever evolving toward more wholeness, complexity, and consciousness.
- ▶ Imagine that tens of thousands of birds are flying at a high speed simultaneously, and how can they instantly change direction without colliding when a predator appears? It is the **coordination mechanism** rather than a hierarchical structure that maintains agility and safety in the flock.
- ▶ Instead of trying to predict and control the future, members of the organization are invited to **listen in and understand** what the organization wants to become, what purpose it wants to serve.

II. Practices for building teacher growth communities

1. **A Group of Learning across Boundaries**
2. **A Teaching Narrative Action Research Workshop**
3. **A Math Teaching Research Group at a Primary School**
4. **A Secondary School in Germany**
 - ▶ **Each with a different focus**

(I) A Group of Learning across Boundaries

Members: Four visiting scholars; three kindergarden, primary and secondary school teachers; and three university professors.

Objective: No explicit objectives; the objectives change with the members' needs.

Tasks: Each member presents an issue as a research topic to be continuously explored for a year.

Support: Literature review & expert instructions.

Scheduling: Intensive activities are held on a biweekly basis; reflective memoes are required; members conducts their own research and communicate via WeChat.

1. Self-management

- ▶ **Voluntary** participation
- ▶ All members choose roles (moderator, recorder, coordinator, data custodian, group presenter) for themselves
- ▶ When a role is vacant, members **actively assume** the role
- ▶ Members **communicate on an equal footing**, shattering the implicit, internal hierarchies.

2. Wholeness

- ▶ **100%** engagement in activities
- ▶ Ice-breaking **games**, tea breaks, choruses, talent shows, and Dutch treats
- ▶ Members share knowledge and skills and are not afraid of **showing their ignorance** and vulnerabilities
- ▶ When communication deepens and touches the soul, **empathy is demonstrated**
- ▶ **Heart-to-heart exchanges** during outings

3. Evolutionary Purpose

- ▶ Purpose, goals, content and form **evolve** throughout the process.
- ▶ The moderator designs the agenda, which is **adjusted flexibly** based on actual circumstances.
- ▶ Predefined activities often go unfinished, but **this is not perceived as a “problem”**.
- ▶ The community has its own life, and members just need to follow its **rhythm and cadence**.

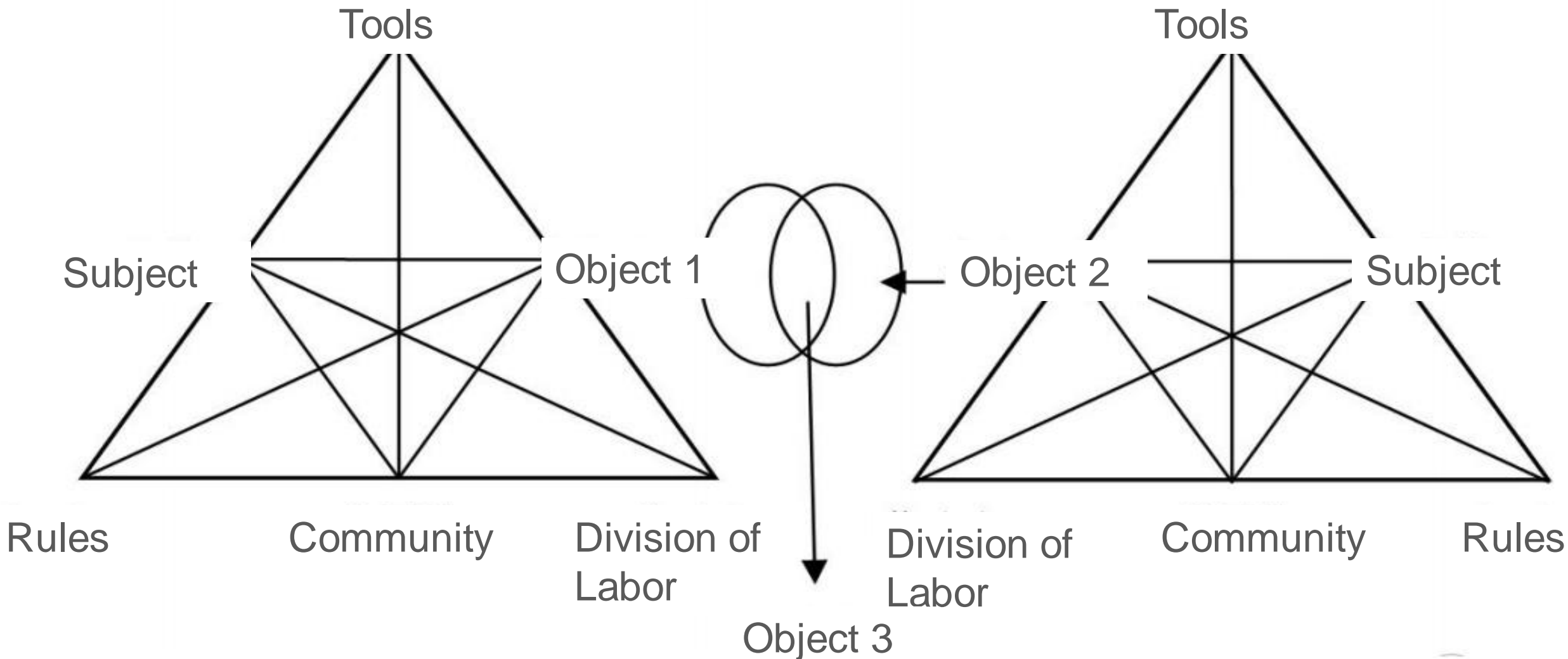
4. Boundary Crossing

- ▶ Members come from **different educational institutions and levels.**
- ▶ **Transforming differences into resources.**
- ▶ Learning across boundaries does not require consensus;
collaborative action can take place in the **absence of consensus.**

Theories on Learning across Boundaries

▶ Star, 1985, 1989, 2010; Star & Griesemer, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 2004; Wenger, 1998; Engestrom, 2001; Akkerman & Bakker, 2011

1. **Expansive learning** based on cultural-historical activity theory
2. **Situated learning** based on the theory of communities of practice
3. **Cooperative learning in the absence of consensus** based on the study of the history of science



Third-generation Cultural-historical Activity Theory Model

- ▶ **Boundary**: A socio-cultural difference leading to discontinuity in action. Examples of boundaries are differences in social norms, group attributes, values, modes of behavior, etc.
- ▶ **Boundary crossing**: An act of entering onto territory in which we are unfamiliar and, to some significant extent therefore unqualified.
- ▶ **Boundary infrastructure**: Brokering (connection building), boundary practices, and boundary object

Boundary Object

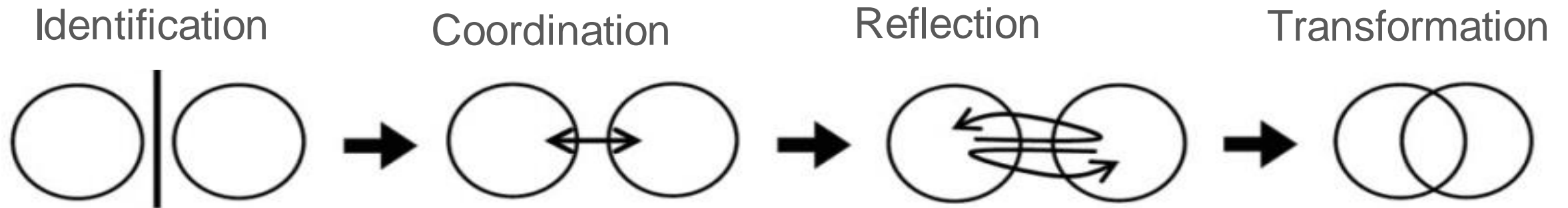
- ▶ Organic arrangements that inhabit several intersecting worlds and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them
- ▶ Both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites
- ▶ A means of translation within a situation of multisite work relations and requirements
- ▶ Open up third space for interactions across different systems (school system and academic system)
- ▶ **Condition:** Able to trigger negotiation of meaning at the organizational level

Learning across Boundaries

- ▶ While compartmentalized, boundaries are also communicative and **dialogical** in nature and may lead to innovation. By crossing boundaries, participants could re-examine their usual assumptions and long-standing professional practices, triggering deeper learning.
- ▶ Learning across boundaries through **partnerships** could better expand participants' learning contexts, providing a greater opening, inclusive space for dialogue.

Mechanism for Learning across Boundaries

- ▶ The **structure or mode of operation** of elements (actions, processes, and outcomes) that induce and sustain positive changes in people crossing boundaries.
- ▶ For example:



Resources from Traditional Chinese Culture

- ▶ **Unity of thought and action, the doctrine of the mean, and practical rationality**
- ▶ In dealing with unanticipated problems, the actor will employ some **local wisdom** implicit in his or her **tacit knowledge** and embodied action.

For example, the mechanism of learning across boundaries used in the case study

- 1) **Negotiation of meanings** through practical reasoning
- 2) **Perspective making** through the unity of thought and action
- 3) **Reconstructing practice** by pursuing the doctrine of the mean

Significance of Boundary Crossing

- Recognizing the ever-growing **diversity** in social life
- Putting the focus on **marginalized spaces** in social organizations
- Regarding boundaries as a **potential resource** for learning
- ▶ Although there has formed a “uniqueness” system of teaching and research in China, administrative intervention, competition orientation, and performance management put great pressure on teachers, which is very detrimental to the development of a **collaborative, reflective culture of teaching and research** among teachers.
- ▶ Crossing boundaries could provide teachers room to innovate and promote their growth.

(II) Large Communities:

Narrative Action Research Workshop for Teaching across Boundaries

- ▶ The workshop was hosted by the Moral Education Research Center of Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences, with participants from different institutions
- ▶ Focusing on the **persistent problems** in the day-to-day work of teachers
- ▶ Guided by the **paradigm of action research, narrative inquiries** were made to help teachers understand their educational beliefs and enhance their ability to identify and solve problems



Mode of Learning

- ▶ Interaction and collaboration among participants in the context of **learning across boundaries**.
- ▶ **Method-based learning is combined with practical application**, integrating lectures with everyday practices.
- ▶ **Offline and online approaches are combined**: collaborative lesson planning by the teaching team, with a focus on substantial issues.
- ▶ Pairing up with trainees for **cooperative team teaching**.



- ▶ Trainees are divided into **groups** based on similar research topics (32 trainees divided into six groups).
- ▶ **Guidance** from instructors: Six instructors are assigned to the groups, offering one-on-one, one-on-many, and many-on-one guidance.
- ▶ After each lesson, trainees write a **reflection memo** (no less than 300 Chinese characters).
- ▶ Each trainee submits a **report on narrative action research**; revisions are made up to version 12.0.

Transforming Narrative Inquiry into Narrative Action Research

1. **Storytelling: Producing an “experiential text”**
2. **Data collection: Enriching the “experiential text”**
3. **Preliminary data analysis: Generating a “research text”**
4. **Implementing intervention measures: Creating an “action text”**
5. **Evaluating intervention effects: Assessing the “action text”**
6. **Recollecting and reviewing data: Enriching the “research text”**
7. **Reflective writing: Enhancing meta-reflection abilities and producing a “narrative action research text”**

1. Self-management

- ▶ During the COVID-19 pandemic, group members actively provided advice, and the group **adjusted teaching plans** and organized online discussions more frequently.
- ▶ Instructors **do not provide ready-made theories and knowledge** (including Socratic dialogues), but believe in self-motivated learning of trainees through interruptions (e.g., raising questions and providing literature), allowing trainees to realize their own potential.
- ▶ Surprising results were achieved, ultimately leading to **insight learning**.

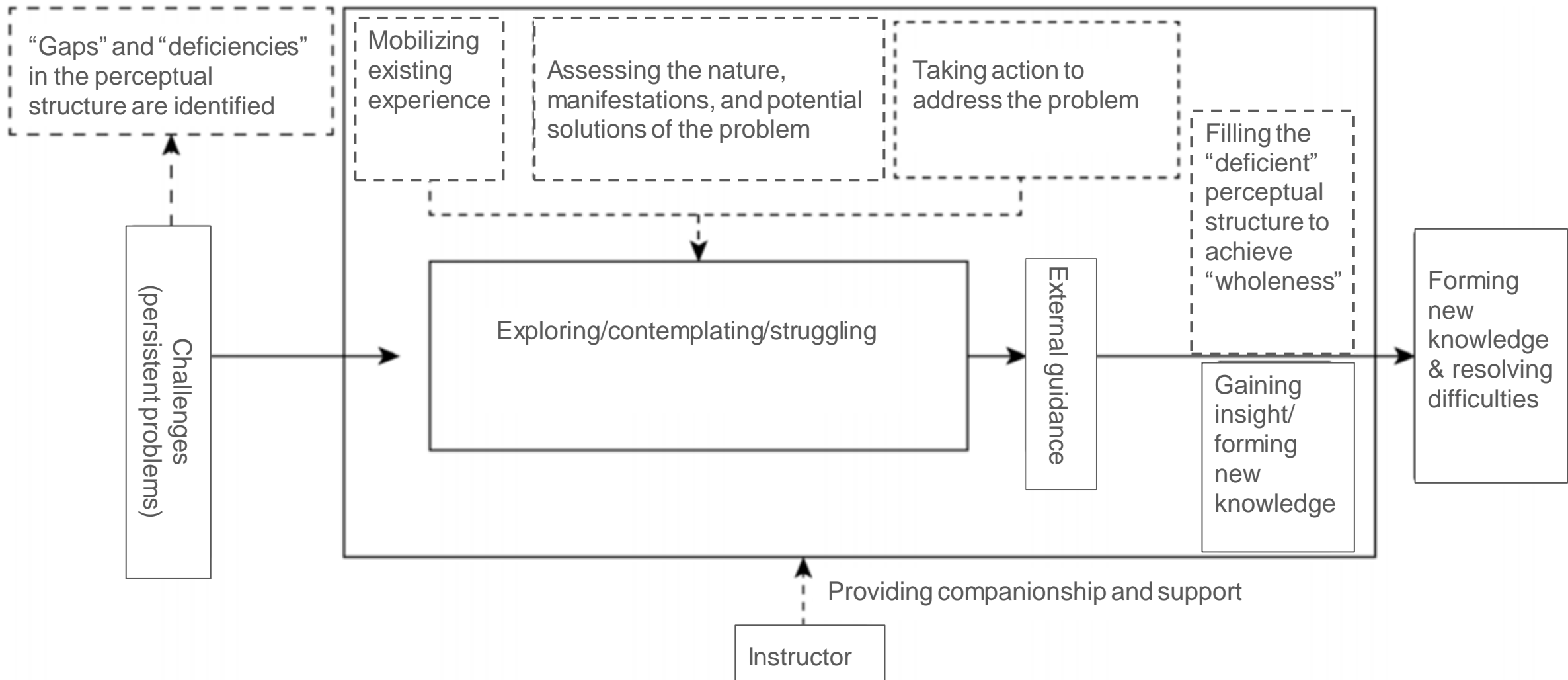
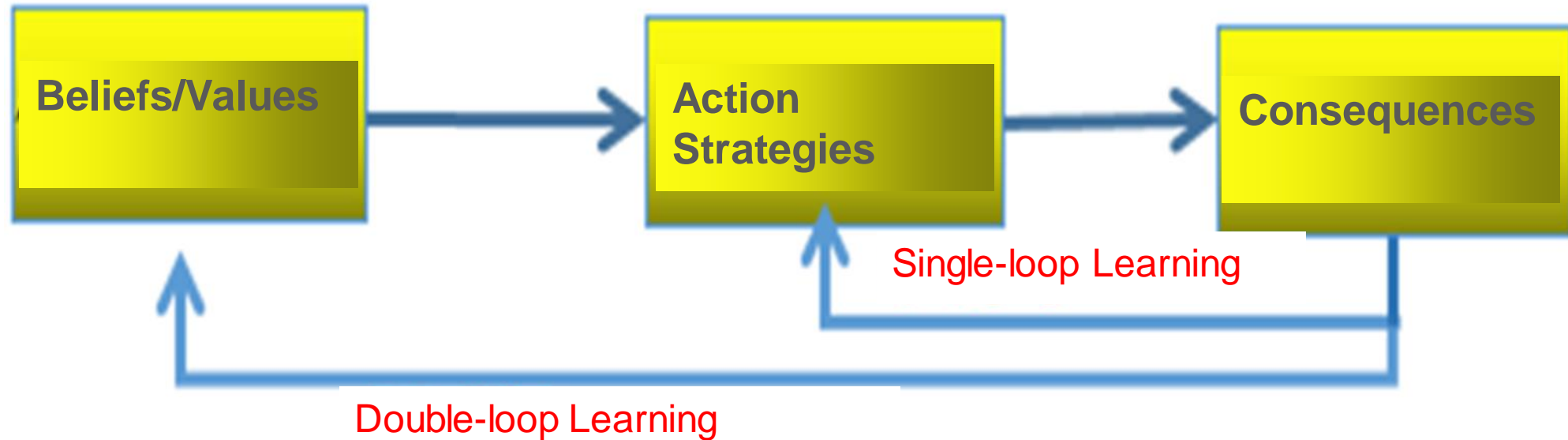


Figure 1: Mechanism of Insight Learning in the Classroom

2. Wholeness

- ▶ Members **fully engage in** exploring real problems rather than just narrative action research.
- ▶ The model **changed the mindset** of the members; through double-loop learning, members reflect on themselves as not just teachers but also as whole persons.
- ▶ Members show **their vulnerabilities** and doubts, shedding tears while sharing their stories.
- ▶ Members are emotionally engaged, generating a strong **sense of belonging**.

Double-loop Learning Theory



3. Evolutionary Purpose

- ▶ During the COVID-19 pandemic, trainees were divided into six groups, with four teaching assistants, a supervising teacher, and an observer providing guidance as instructors **in the groups**.
- ▶ In addition to inviting outstanding trainees from the previous session to share their experiences, six trainees were paired up with six instructors for **collaborative teaching**.
- ▶ Previously obscure theories and knowledge became clear through **explanations from other trainees**.

4. Boundary Crossing

- ▶ Instructors come from different universities and research institutions, while trainees mostly come from kindergartens and primary/secondary schools.
- ▶ The **differences** between the two sides constitute the boundary of learning across boundaries.
- ▶ “Engaging in teaching narrative action research” serves as **the object of boundary crossing**.
- ▶ Over 40 papers were published, and all articles were collected and published as a monograph.
- ▶ Instructors underwent ideological baptism and behavioral changes; rather than directly teaching theories, they implemented “**learner-centered education**”, creating meaningful teaching “incidents” through interruptions.

(III) School Community: A Math Teaching Research Group at a Primary School

- ▶ When the teaching research director was “poached”, an English teacher became head of the math teaching research group.
- ▶ Teachers were highly active, using **WeChat groups** for teaching research activities, and yielded unexpectedly sound results.
- ▶ Teachers **took the initiative in arranging** research procedures, such as recording, management, summarizing, and producing briefings.
- ▶ They felt a strong sense of camaraderie, **equality, and respect** in a relaxed atmosphere; even new teachers had no fear and were able to freely express themselves.

1. Self-management

- ▶ In terms of organizational status, hierarchical, rigid requirements are replaced with soft, flat, timely, and effective communication, with an emphasis on **horizontal communication**.
- ▶ Each activity is **voluntarily arranged** by all group members, which reduces passive emotions as the supervisor no longer has to convince members to get involved.
- ▶ The English director does not have a background in mathematics and, therefore, does not wish to control all the details; instead, the director reminded himself to give the floor to teachers: “My role is to help teachers, solve problems in work, and **never cause trouble** or add burdens”.
- ▶ **Showing vulnerability** can also be a virtue. Aggressive leaders can suppress subordinates’ motivation and space for development.

2. Wholeness

- ▶ Head of the group was encouraged to **establish emotional connections**, look for the personal highlights of members, and bring motivation. “I decided to manage the group with care and emotional investment from the very beginning. I told myself that I must learn to like all team members, no matter who they are, and convey friendly signals. As a result, I found that even those who didn’t like me started liking me and were willing to work with me. It’s like the principle of respecting a teacher and then trusting his or her teaching.”
- ▶ The group generated a large volume of **interactive feedback**, and teachers could provide sincere comments and feedback.
- ▶ Teachers’ classroom focus went beyond learning, exploring, and applying math knowledge and extended to aspects such as life, society, and students’ demand for **personal development**.

3. Evolutionary Purpose

- ▶ The teaching research activities are in a **dynamic state**, with various information, knowledge, and emotions shared in WeChat groups; the group operates through multiple channels simultaneously.
- ▶ When **emotional communication** and teaching research photos shared among members far exceeded other content, the director would remind members to focus on actual research tasks.
- ▶ Based on the number of resources shared and learning summaries, teachers have become research-aware, but there is still room for improvement in active learning and **reflection**.
- ▶ The director had **conversations** with every teacher and found that they lacked sound planning skills, which requires step-by-step guidance and follow-up assessment.

(IV) Large Organization: A Secondary School in Germany

- ▶ *Reinventing Organizations* introduced **12 organizations** operating at different scales, ranging from a few hundred to tens of thousands of individuals (with the largest having 40,000 members), for 30 to 40 years.
- ▶ This particular school was established in 2007 as a government-funded nonprofit school with over 500 “**troubled students**”.
- ▶ Parents recruited a principal who was an aggressive innovator and a science teacher.
- ▶ Twenty years ago, students approached her to discuss issues of violence, bullying, and extortion, and she saw courage, perseverance, resilience, intelligence, and compassion in the students. In her view, education should unlock children’s true **potential and authentic nature**.

1. Self-management

- ▶ Children **decide their own learning pace** and engage in self-learning and peer learning.
- ▶ The school offered **mixed-age classrooms**, where the roles of learners and teachers constantly interchange.
- ▶ Each class includes children with autism and **learning disabilities**, allowing them to learn at their own pace.
- ▶ Adults serve as mentors and **coaches**, providing encouragement, advice, compliments, and challenges.
- ▶ **Teaching teams** consist of two mentors per class, and three classes constitute a mini-school where almost all decisions can be made without approval from the principal.

2. Wholeness

- ▶ The school states that every child is **unique** and contributes special talents to it.
- ▶ Every Friday, children have **one-on-one conversations** with mentors, discussing not only progress, challenges, and plans for the following week, but also topics close to their hearts, such as matters about emotion and relationships.
- ▶ Children know that **there is someone who genuinely cares about them** and will be there to listen to them.
- ▶ Teachers' physical and mental development is prioritized, which fosters a culture of **cooperation and mutual support.**

3. Evolutionary Purpose

- ▶ The school maintained **high expectations** for students.
- ▶ Each student has a notebook to **record their learning achievements**.
- ▶ Students **hold workshops** every week for hundreds of principals and teachers from various places.
- ▶ Teachers pay close attention to changes in the students and provide flexible, **targeted guidance**.
- ▶ The school also adjusts support programs **flexibly** based on teachers' needs.

III. Reflection: Mechanisms and Conditions for the Formation of teacher growth communities

➤ **Dilemma:**

- Traditional, **conservative** teaching methods are considered “outdated”, as the practice of cramming treats learners as mere objects of knowledge acquisition.
- **Progressive** teachers evolve from “sages on the stage” to “guides on the side” or “partners at the back”, placing learners at the center and making knowledge the object of learning.

- **The third way** - a progressive defense of conservatism - advocates giving teaching back to education. In this way, learners exist in the **wholeness** and **diversity** of the world, instead of being placed at its center.
- **Gert Biesta:** Three functions of education: qualification, socialization, and **subjectification**
- **Levinas:** Subjectivity (alterity) is the restlessness of the same disturbed by the other. It holds true in the teacher-student relationship.

- **Participatory Teaching:** Theoretical improvements and feedback
 - ▶ Avoid leading learners to an established viewpoint.
 - ▶ Provide theories and methods that learners have not encountered or may not have easy access to.
 - ▶ Help learners encounter theories, “linger” for a while, and let them feel to have been “**taught**”.
 - ▶ Theories are like **seesaws**; they help learners identify problems in their mental models.

- ▶ Participatory teaching involves **self-organizing systems** where members cooperate with each other, without the need for “experts” to instruct, command, evaluate, or even reward their progress; no well-intentioned empowerment is required.
- ▶ **Avoid the “teacher-centered” model** that sets learning objectives and trajectories in advance and lead learners to the destination via cramming.
- ▶ Teachers ought to embrace uncertainty and creativity, actively interact with learners on multiple levels, and continuously empower the learners’ **subjectivity.**

- ▶ Instead of quickly moving away from setbacks, we should stay in the challenging “**middle ground**” where interruptions and pauses occur, allowing students to mature as learners.
- ▶ “**Dialogue**”: Sparking motivation
- ▶ **Deconsus**: “Elements without common measures” should be incorporated into teaching; students develop trust in themselves when they are believed in by teachers.

Conditions for Building teacher growth communities

- 1. Open, flat self-management where leaders delegate power and encourage members to participate in the decision-making process.**
- 2. Turning the organization into a complete living organism that focuses on the development of every individual, allowing members to feel a sense of belonging and accomplishment.**
- 3. Goals and outcomes should not be controlled; rather, they should be adapted to the development needs of the organization and its members throughout the learning process.**

[Inspirational trust is the key to all conditions listed above]

“Inspirational Trust”

- ▶ **When I (teacher) trust in you (student): subject, ability, and responsibility**
- ▶ **You must develop trust in yourself, even if it requires prolonged struggle.**
- ▶ **Teachers ought to develop deeper trust in students, transferring empowering experiences.**
- ▶ **Students, therefore, develop deeper trust in themselves, appreciating their unique abilities and responsibilities.**
- ▶ **They develop stronger trust in other classmates.**
- ▶ **And so on and so forth.**

- ▶ **Karl Jaspers:** How can individuals transcend themselves and become whole persons through relentless effort?
- ▶ The most ideal teaching approach is based on **interaction:** dialogue and openness, which are at the core of human history and culture.
- ▶ “There is someone who genuinely cares about me and will be there to listen to me”

Effects

- ▶ **External ripple effect:** dissemination and innovation
- ▶ Teaching research activities attended by everyone in the school
(including campus doctors)
- ▶ Sharing and transmission in the same space and across generations
- ▶ Truth can flash upon us, while virtue never comes at ease. **Inner ripple effect:** Look deeper into the self to become stronger and more complete.

- ▶ Trust is a relationship built among people, which encompasses **morality/ethics** (rational compassion), **understanding (cognition)**, **empathy** (detached concern), and **action** (entrustment).
- ▶ Trust is not only a static result, but also a dynamic process, which can produce “inspirational” effects.
- ▶ Inspirational trust involves self-inspiration, mutual inspiration, and ripple effect inspiration.

Chinese Characteristics

- ▶ **Anonymous review:** There is no “inspirational trust” in English. Could it be changed to “**effectively supportive environment**”?
- ▶ The word “environment” is too simple, static, and flat to capture the profound, dynamic, and progressive **entrusting**, inspiring, and generating effects of “inspirational trust” at the psychological level;
mutual empathy: I'm sorry (for example: persistently reminding students to complete assignments)

Comparison of Chinese and Western Interpersonal Relationships

- ▶ Interpersonal interdependence based on familism: **collective responsibility**
- ▶ Independent and autonomous relationships built on individualism: **self-responsibility**
- ▶ Ethical relationships built on the call of others: **responsibility for others** (Levinas)
- ▶ Form **a full spiral circle**

Importance of Building Such teacher growth communities

Adapting to the essential attributes of teaching

- ▶ **Autonomy**: the right and ability to make decisions
- ▶ **Morality**: dedicated and responsible for others
- ▶ **Adaptability**: flexible and resourceful enough to carry out teaching activities following the rhythms of life
- ▶ **Collaboration**: acting in concert with others

Summary: Cultural Adaptability

- ▶ **Is oriental culture unsuitable for organizations without a clear hierarchical structure?**
- ▶ **The above cases show that it is possible in the current Chinese society.**
- ▶ **Parker Palmer:** People who decide to live an undivided life feel uneasy at times, thus forming communities of like-mindedness. What started as a way to **affirm each other** has gradually become the rehearsal of how to express a vision for change in small groups, bringing courage and strength.

- ▶ **Margaret Mead:** “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, **committed** citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”
- ▶ If you happen to be one of them, if you are called to create a more soulful, meaningful, and productive teacher growth community, it’s time to take action!

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Thank you
Any questions?

