
**LET'S TALK. THE DISCONNECTED
MIDDLE AND COMMUNICATION
CHALLENGES IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING**

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UON *'FESTIVAL OF RESEARCH CONFERENCE'*

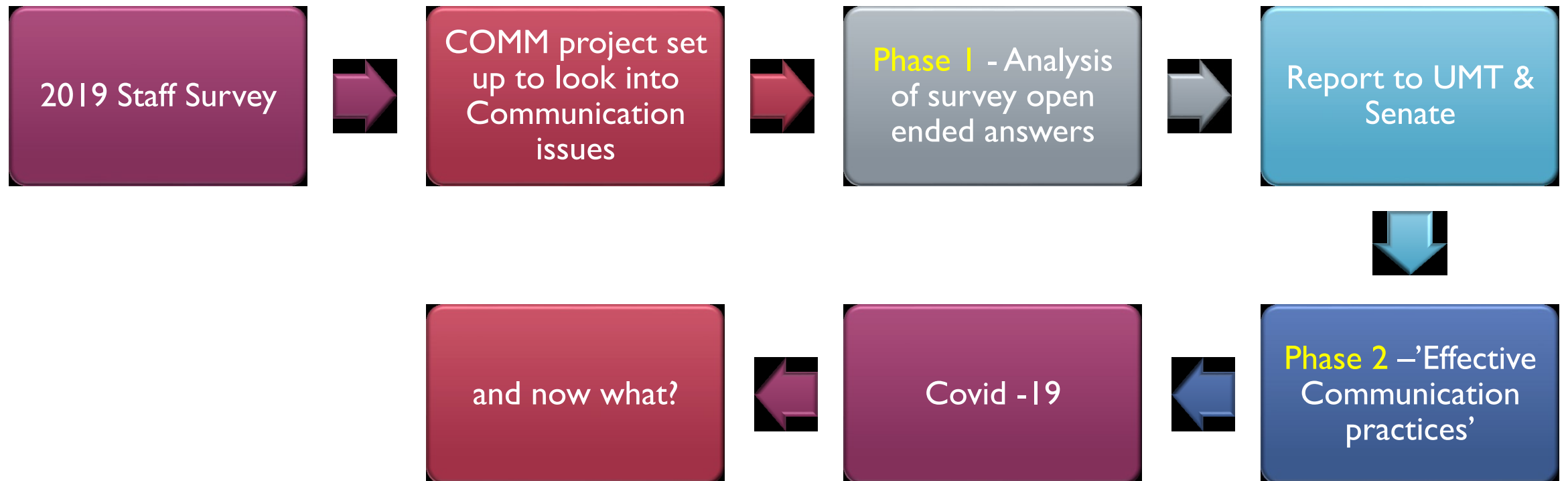
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THE POWER OF WORDS: RHETORIC AND ACTION

‘Without the right words, used in the right way, it is unlikely that the right actions will ever occur . . . Without words we have no way of expressing strategic concepts, structural forms, or designs for performance measurement systems. In the end, there is no separating action and rhetoric’.

(Eccles and Nohria, 1992 in Barrett, 2004:20).

COMMUNICATION TASK & FINISH GROUP: RESEARCH PHASES





PHASE I



WORK CARRIED OUT

	Task	Description
1.	Ethics application	
2.	Development of analytical/conceptual framework	Review of research (44 journal articles and 17 books & chapters) on organizational communication and related topics
3.	Preparation of survey data (by faculty & departments)	With the help of Carrie Birnie
4.	Data analysis and initial coding of open-ended questions	Based on a variety of models, organic and flexible to adjust for issues specific to UoN
5.	Second reading of data set	Reduction of coding and delineation of emerging themes
6.	Summary of key findings & recommendations for Phase 2	Ongoing
7.	Draft full report in preparation	ongoing

DATASETS: OVERVIEW

Academic

Faculty	Respondents
FAST	67
FBL	70
FEH	64
FHS	95

Professional services

Department	Respondents
Finance	17
HR	23
IT	20
Marketing	52
RIFS	12
SAS	140

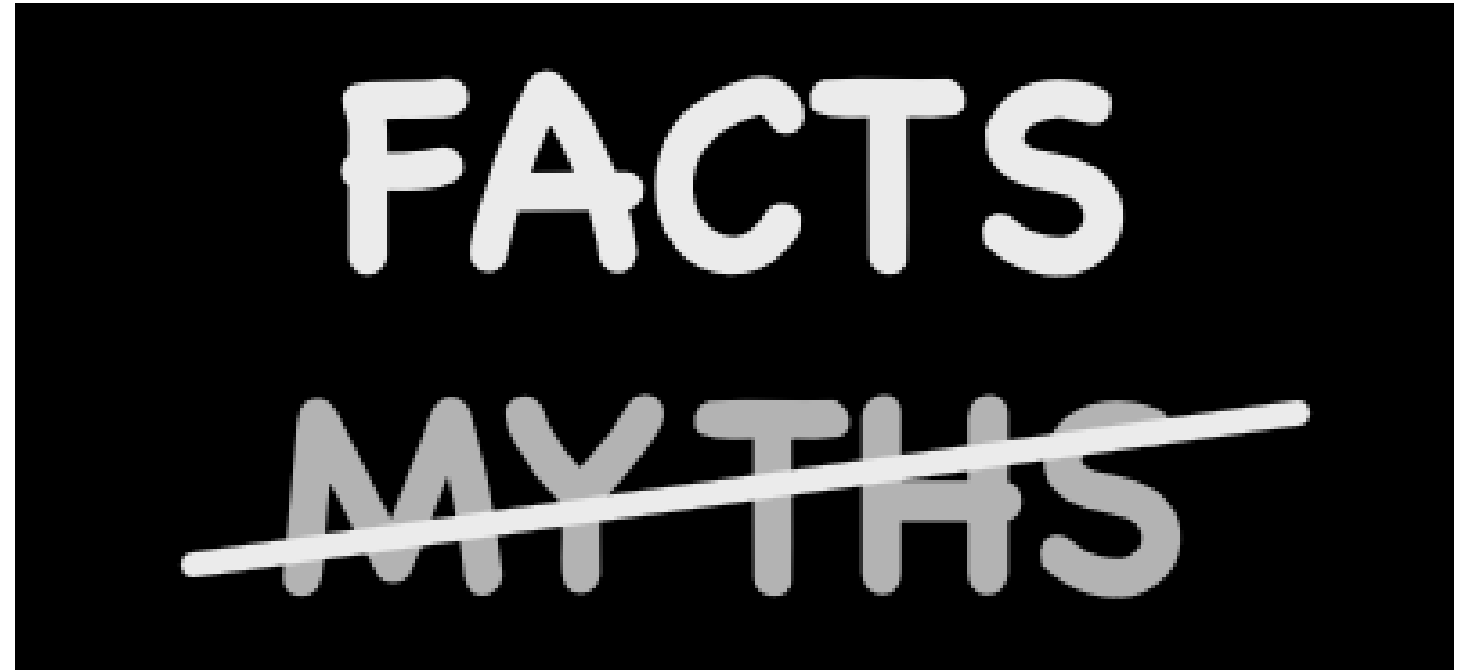
Note: smaller units were excluded to avoid breaching anonymity (e.g., OVC)

DATA ANALYSIS: IDENTIFIED OPEN QUESTIONS

Unit	Respondents	Comments +	COMMUNICATION	Improvement	COMMUNICATION	Staff COMM.	Change communication
FAST	67	48	11 (22.9%)	65	31 (47.6%)	16 (23.8%)	35 (52.2%)
FBL	70	58	16 (27.5%)	68	13 (19.1%)	23 (32.8%)	32 (45.7%)
FEH	64	58	17 (29.3%)	63	21 (33.3%)	13 (20.3%)	24 (37.5%)
FHS	95	85	36 (43.5%)	91	9 (9.8%)	21 (22.1%)	39 (41%)
Finance	17	11	9 (81.8%)	14	9 (64.2%)	1 (5.8%)	1 (5.8%)
HR	23	19	6 (31.5%)	19	7 (36.8%)	3 (13%)	7 (30.4%)
IT	20	18	1 (5.5%)	20	15 (75%)	8 (40%)	3 (15%)
Marketing	52	48	17 (35.4%)	48	18 (37.5%)	13 (25%)	10 (19.2%)
RIFS	12	11	1 (9%)	11	6 (54.5%)	1 (8.3%)	2 (16.6%)
SAS	140	131	56 (42.7%)	132	52 (39.3%)	37 (26.4%)	41 (29.2%)
		487		531		136	194

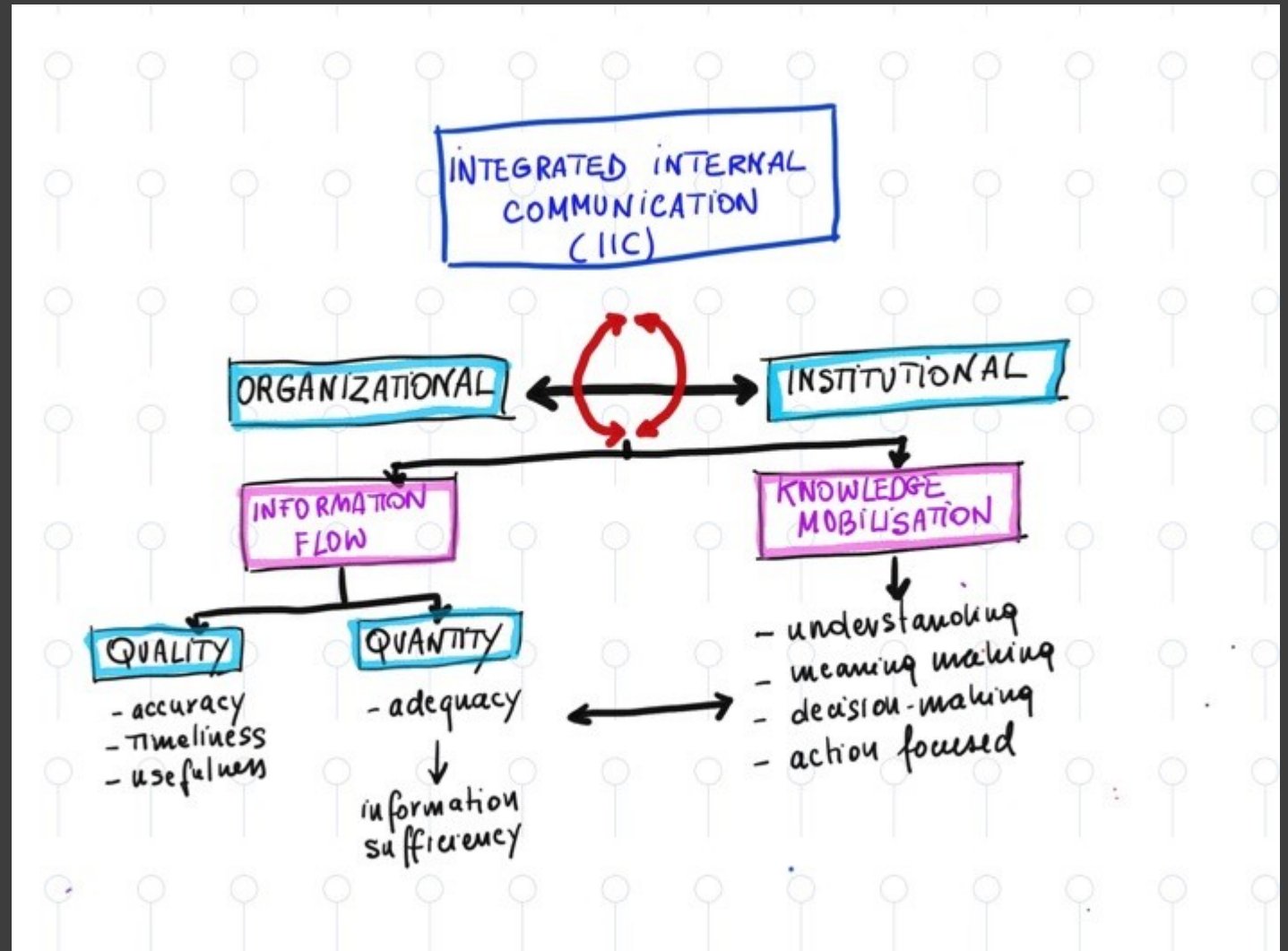
MYTH BUSTING

- While academics might be more vocal and critical about communication, concerns are shared across all faculties and departments
- The focus, nature and features of the concerns might be different, but they all contribute to achieving the same goal: effective communication



BASIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

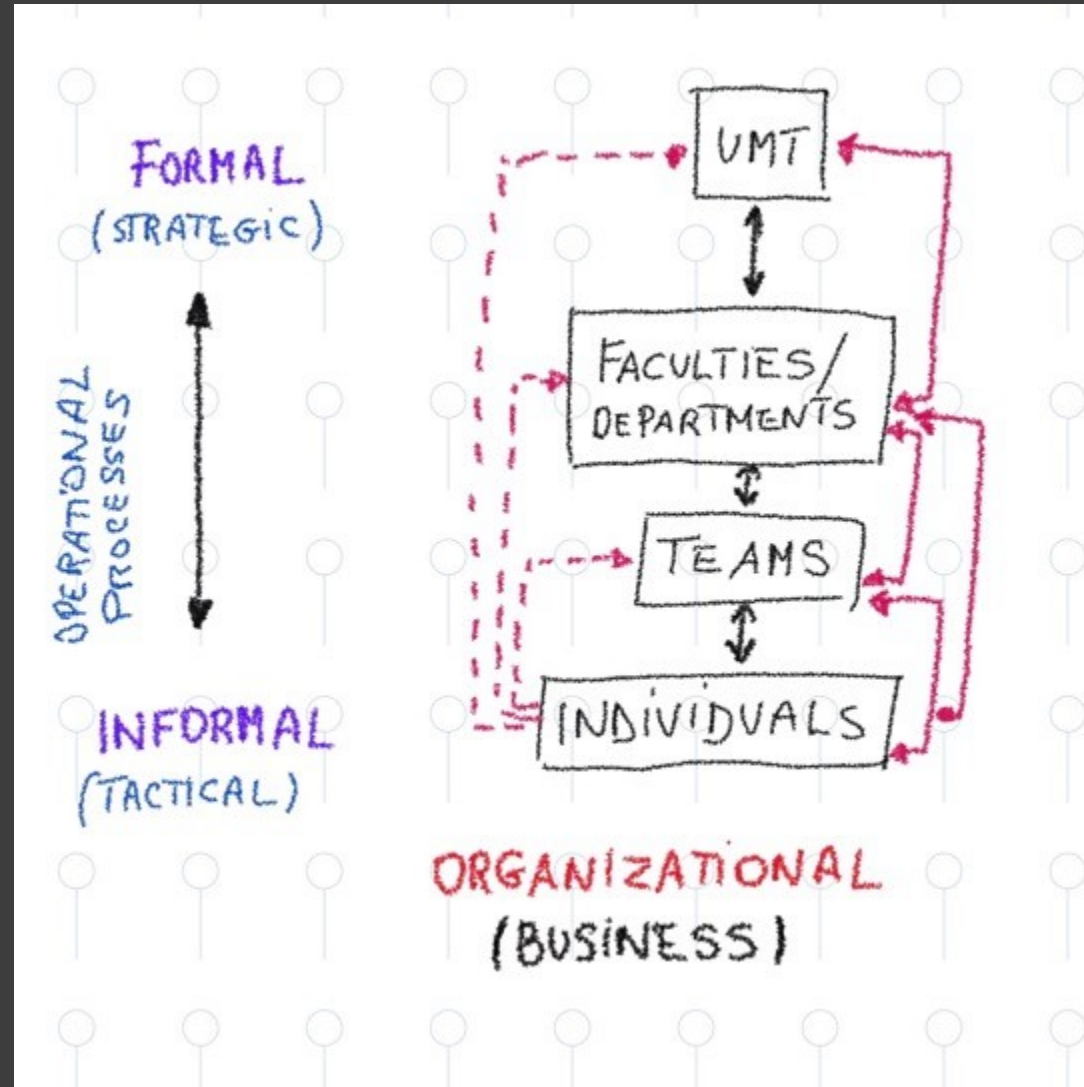
- **Definition** - 'a central process by which employees share information, create relationships, make meaning, and construct organisational culture and values' (Berger, 2008 in Men, 2014: 256).
- **ORGANISATIONAL** – the business aspect of the university
- **INSTITUTIONAL** – the 'academic' aspect of the university



'An organization is a culturally suffused, living system of interconnected communicative relationships among a conglomerate of interdependent coalitions, composed themselves of interconnected relationships and bound together by their homage to a common mission and dependence on a common resource base with multiple and often incompatible instrumental and interactive goals and objectives'. (Nicotera, 2020: 10)

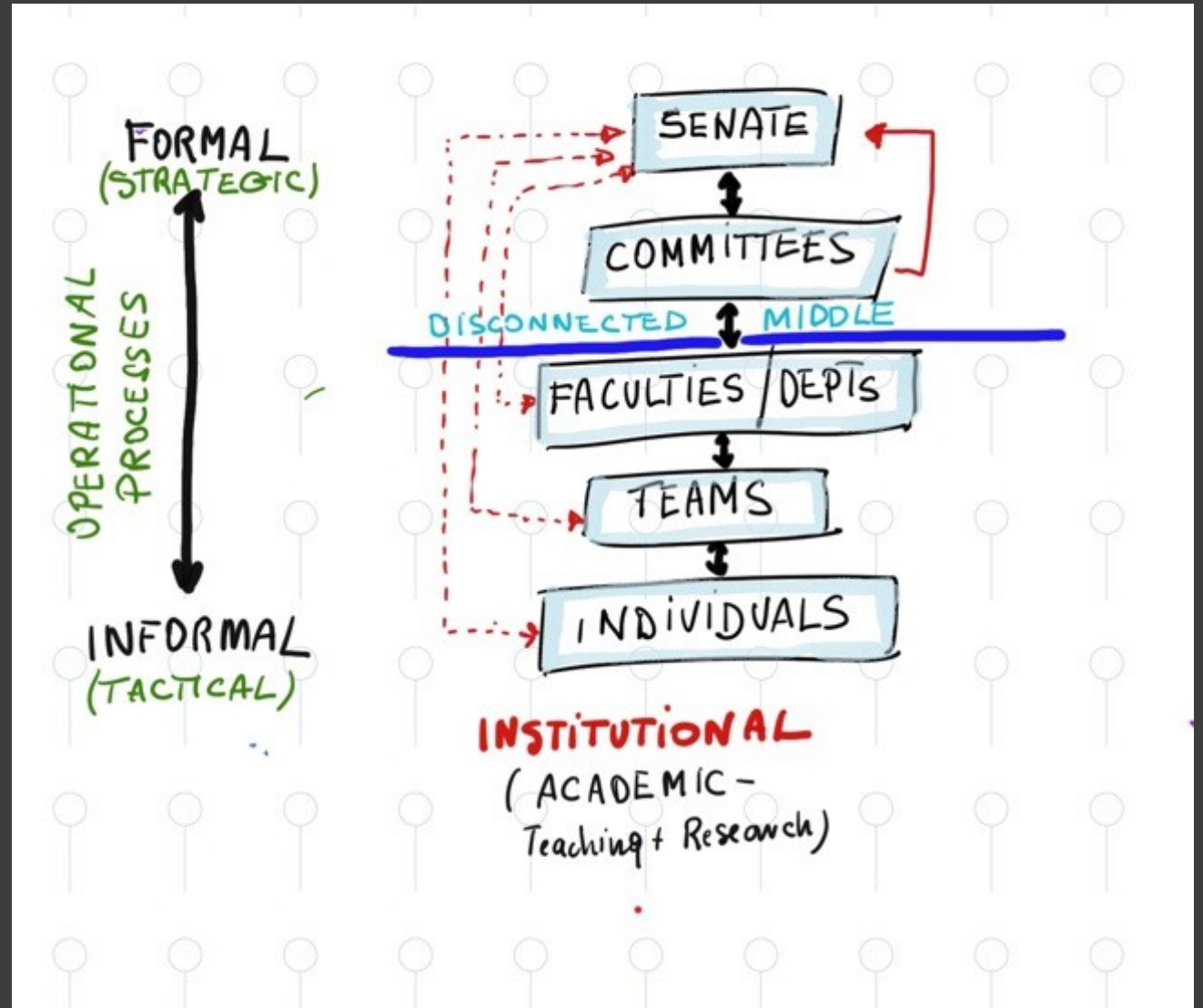
ORGANISATIONAL FLOW

- Mismatch between current systems of information sharing
- Possible gaps in the process of cascading information, including information on how to provide feedback and be part of decision-making
- Word-of-mouth, Chinese whispers and rumours



INSTITUTIONAL FLOW

- Mismatch and gaps in the process of information sharing, feedback and decision-making
- **Disconnected middle**
- Insular processes of information gathering and sharing
- Word-of-mouth, Chinese whispers and rumours



IN A NUTSHELL





PHASE 2





PROPOSAL FOR PHASE 2