



Outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship: the case of the emerging field of positive psychology education

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Abstract

The phenomenon of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship may appear both paradoxical and opaque. We examine outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship by drawing on an in-depth qualitative case study of the emerging field of positive psychology education. We investigate how institutional entrepreneurs, located outside Kuwait's Ministry of Education, enabled actors inside the Ministry both to deviate from existing institutional arrangements and to institutionalize new practices. Our findings illustrate that outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields starts with 'normalization', that is, the production of claims, arguments, and evidence, about the effectiveness of the newly proposed practices. Our study contributes to the literature on outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields by identifying a set of critical activities associated with deviation from prevailing institutional arrangements, and the institutionalization of innovation.

Keywords Emerging fields · Institutional change · Institutional entrepreneurship · Outsiders · Middle East

Introduction

How do institutional entrepreneurs innovate in organizational fields? To answer this question, several studies on institutional entrepreneurship have focused on intervention strategies that bring about change in more *mature* organizational fields (e.g., Greenwood & Suddaby 2006; Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings 2002; Lounsbury,

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2002). This body of work explains how and why certain novel organizing solutions appear and become well-established over time. In particular, these studies have increasingly identified institutional entrepreneurs as instigators of change, whereby mature field characteristics shape the way they challenge prevailing institutional arrangements, despite institutional inertia (Harrison, Scheela, & Vivekarajah, 2018; Leca and Boxenbaum, 2009; North, 1990).

Institutional entrepreneurship can also occur in *emerging* organizational fields (Garud, Jain, & Kumaraswamy, 2002), the dynamics of which scholars have begun to explore (e.g., David, Sine, & Haveman, 2013; Maguire, Hardy, & Lawrence, 2004; Purdy & Gray, 2009). The point of departure from this research is that emerging fields differ significantly from more mature fields in terms of their development conditions, including their practices, norms and relationships. As such, emerging fields provide a ‘helpful lab’ to test and develop the notion of institutional entrepreneurship (Bruton, Ahlstrom, & Li, 2010; Sun et al., 2020) and address how institutionally embedded actors bring about institutional change (Garud, Hardy, & Maguire, 2007). However, research on emerging fields has largely focused on changes initiated by actors inside the field and its institutions (Dunbar & Ahlstrom, 1995), and has overlooked the innovative projects initiated by actors outside the field.

While the level of maturity of organizational fields influences the dynamics of institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana & D’unno, 2009; Fligstein, 1997), recent work suggests that the positions of institutional entrepreneurs (e.g., insiders vs. outsiders) in fields shape their entrepreneurial efforts (Gill et al., 2020; Hardy & Maguire, 2018; Pradies et al., 2021). In particular, unlike insiders, outsiders to a field lack the centrality and legitimacy to encourage field members to adopt their innovative ideas (Hardy & Maguire, 2018; Maguire & Hardy, 2009). Despite long-standing interest in the impact of external actors on the structure and behavior of institutions, the “roles that external actors play ... has been largely overlooked” (Lawrence & Phillips, 2019, p. 142). As such, we know far less about how less embedded institutional entrepreneurs located *outside* of a field bring about field-wide change. Outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship is especially relevant in light of current calls for developing practices to support human growth and well-being, in a world where societal values increasingly influence institutional processes (Howard-Grenville, 2021; Lambert et al., 2019). In response to these calls for research on outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship, it may be asked: How do outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurs innovate in emerging organizational fields?

Focusing on this key question, we challenge the dominant view of agency in institutional entrepreneurship. We shift the focus away from centrally positioned actors in an institution, to those located outside the institution and its other field-level institutions. Thus, we depart from much of the existing literature on emerging fields which focuses on entrepreneurial efforts initiated by actors inside an institution, who are embedded in institutional taken-for-grantedness (David et al., 2013; Hardy & Maguire, 2018; Maguire et al., 2004). Specifically, we unpack how outsiders, who are less embedded in the taken-for-granted institutional arrangements, enabled actors situated inside the established institution of the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Kuwait, to adopt new practices in the emerging field of positive psychology education within the education service. An institution in this case is specifically defined as a place of

social inclusion, that is “endowed by a society or community with material resources, meaning, and values at geographics sites where citizens have the right to access services for specific needs – as taken-for-granted, essential and inherently precarious” (Wright et al., 2021, p. 43). Since the MoE fulfils these criteria (the MoE is valued and well-reputed among Kuwaiti citizens, who access its education services to fulfil their education needs), we can consider the MoE to function as a sort of institution that is taken-for-granted and produces shared interaction sequences that drive behavior in its sector nationally (Bruton & Ahlstrom, 2003; Jepperson, 1991). Furthermore, the new practices within the MoE were institutionalized by actors detached from the institution and overall field, such as Sheikha Intisar Al Sabah – a member of Al Sabah Royal Family of Kuwait, rather than existing institutional members. Conventional understandings of institutional entrepreneurship do not appear to explain this situation because the institutional entrepreneurs were not associated with existing institutions, such as the MoE or other field-level institutions.

Thus, the focus of this study is to examine outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields. To accomplish this, we draw on an in-depth qualitative case study to investigate the establishment of Bareec – a positive psychology intervention project established at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education. This study unpacks how the efforts of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurs institutionalize Bareec within the Kuwaiti MoE. These efforts were by all indications successful, leading to the establishment of Bareec. Through a qualitative analysis, combining data from 21 interviews with institutional entrepreneurs and their collaborators engaged in efforts to establish Bareec, and extensive documents from 2013 to 2020, we explore the dynamics of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields, and analyze the actions that constitute it.

This study makes several contributions to the study of institutional entrepreneurship and institutional theory more broadly. First, this study extends our theoretical understanding of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields by contextualizing the constituent activities of institutional entrepreneurship. In other words, we provide an empirical example of how it works. The findings culminate in a process model for outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields. Our model shows that outsider-driven institutional change requires multiple forces, from within and outside the field, working for the change project. Second, this study maintains that outsider-driven change is more likely to succeed when legitimate insiders are mobilized behind the change project. We illustrate that in order for change to materialize, outsiders mobilized insiders, who are more aware of the conditions that maintain the status quo and have sufficient access to necessary resources. Third, this study helps to resolve the paradox of embedded agency by highlighting the role of certain types of human agents – outsiders – in transforming existing institutions. In doing so, it explicates how new practices were institutionalized by non-field members. Our study also provides practical implications for research on institutional entrepreneurs in emerging fields and societal grand challenges.

Institutional entrepreneurship and organizational fields

Institutional entrepreneurship explains how new institutions arise (Maguire et al., 2004) and can be changed. It focuses on struggles over stakes, resources and access within organizational fields, and the manner in which agency shapes the institutional context (Beckert, 1999). More specifically, institutional entrepreneurship refers to the “activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones” (Maguire et al., 2004, p. 657). The concept aims to “reintroduce agency into institutional analysis of organizations” (Garud et al., 2007, p. 957) and emphasizes on the agentic qualities of actors changing institutions (David et al., 2013; Hardy & Maguire, 2018; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Institutional entrepreneurs can be individuals (Maguire et al., 2004; Tracey, Phillips, & Jarvis, 2011), groups of individuals (Buhr, 2012; Dorado, 2013), organizations or groups of organizations (Garud et al., 2002; Greenwood et al., 2002), or insiders and/or outsiders to fields (Hardy & Maguire, 2018). They are socially and often technically skilled (David et al., 2013; Garud & Ahlstrom, 1997) and culturally competent actors (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006) who form a new system of meaning that links the functioning of a distinct set of institutions together (Garud et al., 2002).

Composed of networks of organizations and institutions that together establish a recognizable area of life, an organizational field develops through “patterns of social action that produce, reproduce, and transform the institutions and networks that constitute it” (Bruton et al., 2010, p. 428). Groups of organizations develop common practices and understandings through repeated interactions, and, in the process, institutional entrepreneurs may emerge to shape the institutions that define the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Bruton et al., 2010).

Research on organizational fields suggests that fields vary in their level of maturity (David et al., 2013; Dorado, 2005; Fligstein, 1997). Mature or established fields have collectively agreed upon norms, rules and practices to which members adhere (Purdy & Gray, 2009). Relationships and roles are relatively stable, and coalitions and power relations are sharply defined (David et al., 2013; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). In contrast, the situation is rather different when a field is emerging (Fligstein, 1997). Research on emerging fields suggests that organizational practices and norms have yet to develop, and no dominant logic has emerged (Beynon et al., 2021; Purdy & Gray 2009; Xing, Liu, & Cooper, 2018). As coalitions and power relations are developing, relationships and roles are neither clearly defined nor stable, (David et al., 2013; Fan & Zietsma, 2017; Guo, Tang, & Su, 2014). Such contextual diversity within an organizational field is important because the level of maturity affects the accessibility of resources facing institutional entrepreneurs and the constraints on their efforts (David et al., 2013).

Institutional entrepreneurship requires actors to deviate from dominant practices, present new ones, and then, ensure that these become widely adopted and eventually taken-for-granted by other actors in the field (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). But how do institutional entrepreneurs actually bring about change? Based on the literature, we identify three types of activities institutional entrepreneurs perform to achieve their

objectives: discursive strategies, resource mobilization, and assembling coalitions for change. These are discussed in turn below.

Discursive strategies

They refer to the use of persuasive language to manipulate the meaning systems that underpin institutions (Maguire & Hardy, 2006; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004; Whittle, Suhomlinova, & Mueller, 2010). Language may legitimate or resist an innovation, through promoting congruence or incongruence between existing institutional logics and templates of institutional change (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). According to Leca, Battilana & Boxenbaum (2008), such strategies comprise of two elements, specification and justification. Specification involves the use of referential texts, and identifying words to expose contradictions in institutional logics, thereby contesting the legitimacy of existing organizing methods and making comprehensible the need for change (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Justification involves actors delegitimizing the dominant institutional logics and legitimating the proposed change project at hand (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005).

In the early stages of an innovation, legitimacy is often based on comprehensibility – the extent to which the innovation connects with existing institutional logics (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Maguire et al. (2004, p. 658) note, “key to their success is the way in which institutional entrepreneurs connect their change projects to the activities and interests of other actors in a field, crafting their project to fit the conditions of the field itself”. To be accepted, institutional entrepreneurs must present their innovation within the existing set of understandings, norms and practices that constitute the institutional environment (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001). For example, institutional entrepreneurs justified changes in the activities and structures of accounting firms by showing consistency between those changes and the profession’s prevailing practices and values, and, by exposing contradictions within the existing logics of the established accounting field (Greenwood et al., 2002; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005).

However, in emerging fields, it is not possible to demonstrate consistency between the innovation and field’s norms because these norms have not yet developed (Purdy & Gray, 2009; David et al., 2013). Instead, institutional entrepreneurs in emerging fields draw attention to inconsistencies with broader social and cultural values (Lawrence & Phillips, 2004) and propose solutions that “invoke cultural elements external to their field” (David et al., 2013, p. 366). Research on emerging fields has shown that these broader cultural values often act as templates for the innovation possible within the field by providing important raw material from which institutional entrepreneurs can fashion new patterns of activity (Lawrence & Phillips, 2004). For example, in the emerging field of early management consulting, David et al. (2013) show that the insider-driven institutional entrepreneurs drew on logics outside their field and emphasized the benefits of their activities for society at large, to promote their new organizational form. Similarly, Lawrence & Phillips (2004) illustrate the role of insider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in the emergence of a commercial whale-watching field. They show how proponents of commercial whale-watching described it as consistent with the animal rights movement, in order to shift public

perception of whales from “monsters to be feared,” to “individuals to be appreciated and respected” (Lawrence & Phillips, 2004, p. 695 and 698). What remains to be examined is how outsiders to an emerging field connect with broader cultural values to bring about field-wide changes.

Resource mobilization

Resources, whether financial, political, discursive or material (Hardy & Maguire, 2008), are essential for actors who question existing institutions, particularly if they are to bypass the sanctions likely to be imposed on them (Leca et al., 2008; Peng et al., 2019) for non-conformance to existing arrangements (Dorado, 2005). Resources enable exchange and bargaining (Colomy, 1998; Yang, Dess, & Robins, 2019). Institutional entrepreneurs mobilize resources to use as a lever against other actors – allies, subsidiary actors, and external constituencies – in order to negotiate support for the change project at hand (DiMaggio, 1988 cited in Hardy & Maguire 2008). Dorado (2005) identified three processes of resource mobilization: leveraging, accumulating, and convening. Leveraging requires politically skilled actors capable of convincing others of the need for change. Accumulating does not involve a specific actor, but a web of independent actions and interactions of multiple actors (Andrews, 2013; Dorado, 2005), that accumulate probabilistically (Tushman & Anderson, 1986). Convening requires the creation of inter-organizational arrangements that brings together different actors and their functional strengths and resources.

Battilana (2006) shows that an individual’s hierarchical position may be a key resource for institutional entrepreneurs as it connects actors to the structural context in which they are embedded. Moreover, Maguire et al. (2004) illustrate how insider-driven institutional entrepreneurs affiliated with organizations in the emerging field of HIV/AIDS treatment, had the legitimacy to stimulate funding to combat the disease, and foster societal acceptance. However, outsiders to a field do not occupy organizational positions nor do they have access to resources inferred by these positions. The existing literature fails to show how outsiders mobilize the necessary resources to affect field-wide change in emerging fields.

Coalition for change

In situations where groups of actors are concerned about a common issue, the success of change efforts depends significantly on the coalitions actors deliberately forge, or emerge unpredictably during the distributional struggle (Hall, 2010; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010), Mutch (2007, p. 1137) states:

the actual spread and diffusion of institutional change depends not on the original actions of the agent for change, but on their enrolment in a wider network, work that might be carried out by other actors building on the possibilities now indicated by the original actor.

Institutional change consists of complex social processes that incorporate highly diverse perspectives and interests (Casas-Klett & Li, 2021; Wijen & Ansari, 2007;

Xing et al., 2018). This kind of change results from spatially dispersed, heterogeneous activities by a wide group of actors with diverse resources, and on the basis of mutual interests (Abumuamar, 2016; George et al., 2015; Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007; Monaghan, Gunnigle, & Lavelle, 2020) and is beyond the capacity of individual institutional entrepreneurs (Wijen & Ansari, 2007). Dorado (2013) argues that engagement in institutional entrepreneurship requires resources, opportunity and motivation, and these elements exist at the group level. For instance, Maguire et al. (2004) demonstrate how insiders in the emerging field of HIV/AIDS treatment created a coalition of diverse stakeholders to legitimate HIV/AIDS treatment in Canada. However, unlike insiders, outsiders to a field lack the communication networks, centrality, and legitimacy in the eyes of actors whose practices they are challenging (Collien, Sieben, & Müller-Camen, 2016; Phillips et al., 2004; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). How outsiders assemble coalitions to bring about field-wide change is less clear.

Prior research shows that the notion of institutional entrepreneurship offers a lens to explain how actors shape institutions. Their intervention strategies highlighted above – discursive strategies, resource mobilization, and coalition for change – are likely to be important in a variety of contexts, adopt different forms, and have different targets in emerging fields than in mature fields. This is due to the contextual challenges associated with their relative positions (outsiders vs. insiders). Outsiders to a field may find it easier to develop ideas for change because they are less embedded in the field (Maguire & Hardy, 2009), and thus, are more likely to be motivated to bring about change (Hardy & Maguire, 2018). However, the paradox in this case is that the focus is on how outsiders can mobilize field members to adopt their novel ideas, rather than how they initially developed the ideas for change. This role is generally framed as influencing, whilst the role outsiders play in shaping institutions “is not explored” (Lawrence & Phillips, 2019, p.143). These contextual differences call for fine-grained theorizing, with specific attention to the actions of institutional entrepreneurs located outside the field, who initiate field-wide change.

Methods and data

Methodology and case selection

To answer the research question, we conducted a detailed, qualitative case study to investigate the establishment of Bareec, a positive psychology intervention project established at the Ministry of Education in Kuwait to increase well-being among high school and university students. Bareec was developed in June 2016 by Alnowair, the first NGO in Kuwait to work in the field of positive psychology education, which was founded by Sheikha Intisar Al Sabah, a member of Al Sabah Royal Family of Kuwait, in 2013 (Alnowair, 2020). The aim of the case study was to extend and deepen existing theoretical understandings of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields. Qualitative research is appropriate to provide detailed accounts of the context within which individuals’ behavior takes place, and the various processes shaping their behavior (Bryman, 2016; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill,

2016). Moreover, qualitative research is well suited to discover, explain and understand poorly understood phenomenon from the worldview of actors involved in its social construction (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016; Kumar, 2014), as is the case here. As institutional entrepreneurship operates in a diverse institutional context, this requires a detailed analysis of institutional entrepreneurship that accounts for the contextual elements in which it takes place (Garud et al., 2007). In addition, case study research is ideal to address ‘how’ based questions, which is compatible with our research question (Punch, 2013; Yin, 2014).

We selected Bareec to study outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields because specific theoretical implications were evident (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2014). First, preliminary investigations revealed that significant changes in the field of positive psychology had been introduced within the MoE in Kuwait. It was apparent that these changes challenged the existing institutional arrangements. Such a novel context of an emerging field in a developing country provides a natural experiment to study the boundary conditions of prevalent theories, and thus contributes to the theoretical advancement of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship (Johns, 2017; Xing et al., 2018). This is particularly important as it is an area of research where context determines the institutional change process. Moreover, a “contextualised explanation can provide novel theoretical accounts that incorporate rather than deny complexity” (Welch et al., 2011, p. 757). Second, it was evident that actors outside the MoE had instigated the change project. Accordingly, the setting is a well-documented example of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship for which data collection and analysis were feasible. Third, since the actors involved in the project were identifiable and events concerned were well-documented, this meant that we could triangulate the data via multiple sources.

Data Collection

We used theoretical rather than representative sampling to guide the data collection (Eisenhardt et al., 2016). Interviews, conducted by the first author, and documents were the primary sources of information. The interviews focused on actors who championed the new practices of positive psychology, and their collaborators, to offer a vantage perspective on institutional entrepreneurship (Hardy & Maguire, 2018). An initial interview with the founder of Bareec – Sheikha Intisar Al Sabah – directed the researcher to other actors, and he continued this process until no new names were generated. 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted in English and Arabic, according to interviewee preference. The interviews took place in 2019, lasted between 45 and 75 minutes, and were tape-recorded and transcribed. The interviews focused on the development of Bareec and the set of actions that contributed to its institutionalization. In addition, the first author collected a range of documents from Bareec management, including Bareec publications, newsletters, internal communication, and correspondence. Given the high profile of Bareec, the first author also searched the media for coverage of Bareec. He used Google to search for media coverage on Bareec, using the terms ‘Bareec’ and ‘Alnowair’ in both, English and Arabic, during the period 2013 and January 2020, a period that starts before and ends after the establishment of Bareec. 48 news articles mentioned Bareec, and these were

included in the data analysis. Combined, these documents provided important background information about Bareec, insights into its strategic direction and the country context of the emerging field.

Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of four stages. The first stage involved developing a narrative account (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois III, 1988) that chronicled the emergence and institutionalization of Bareec with details of ‘who did what, and when’. The second stage involved assessing the form and degree of change that occurred within the Kuwaiti MoE, as a result of the new practices associated with positive psychology. The juxtaposition of multiple accounts of events from different sources and actors’ evaluation of these events clearly showed that significant change took place. New practices had been incorporated into pre-existing practices and were attached to pre-existing institutional arrangements within the MoE.

The third stage of data analysis involved identifying the institutional entrepreneurs who initiated and led the change. Building on Battilana’s (2006, p.657) conception of institutional entrepreneurs – “individuals who somehow break with the rules and practices associated with the dominant institutional logic(s) *and* thereby develop alternative rules and practices can be regarded as institutional entrepreneurs”, actors must fulfil two conditions to qualify as institutional entrepreneurs. They must initiate changes that challenge the existing institutional arrangements, *and* actively participate in the implementation of these changes that could transform existing practices, *or* bring to the fore new ways of working. All interview transcripts were analyzed to examine actors’ attributions of responsibility for the changes. Two individuals who met our aforementioned criteria were identified as institutional entrepreneurs. Namely, Sheikha Intisar Al Sabah and Rokaya Hussain, and our paper refers extensively to these two individuals. Our evidence strongly suggests that their activities were central in leading the change process and motivating the cooperation of other actors. The last stage of data analysis directly addressed our research question. It involved noting the actions taken by the institutional entrepreneurs and their collaborators. We examined the data and identified broad themes (Braun & Clark, 2006), refined them into more precise categories (Yin, 2014), and interrogated these categories by noting patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). This was a non-linear iterative procedure that moved between data, theories, and emerging patterns (Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003; Yin, 2014). We continued this process until additional analysis did not yield further insights, and we developed a clear sense of the relationships between categories and their related themes. From this we developed the resulting process model (Fig. 1). Figure 2 shows our data structure, highlighting the categories and themes from which we developed our model. To the extent that institutional entrepreneurship involves deviation from prevailing institutionalized arrangements *and* the institutionalization of innovation (Battilana, 2006; Battilana & D’unno, 2009; Leca et al., 2008), we examine which combinations of activities constitute the entrepreneurial process led by outsiders to (1) deviate from existing institutional arrangements and (2) institutionalize the innovation.

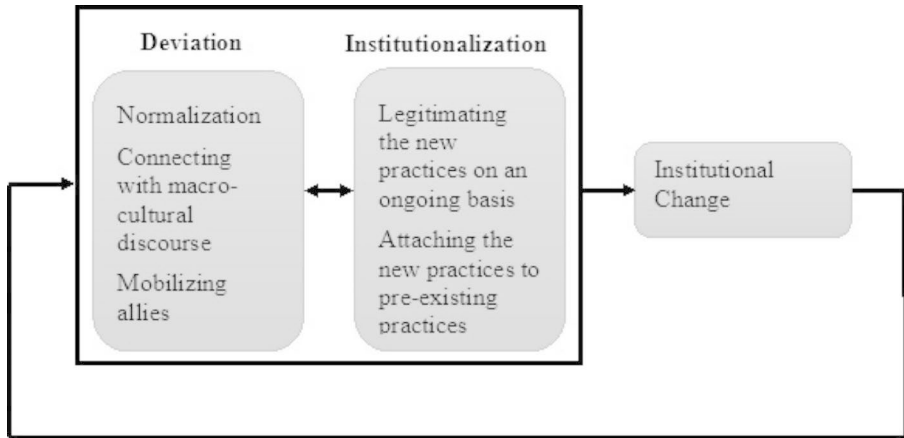
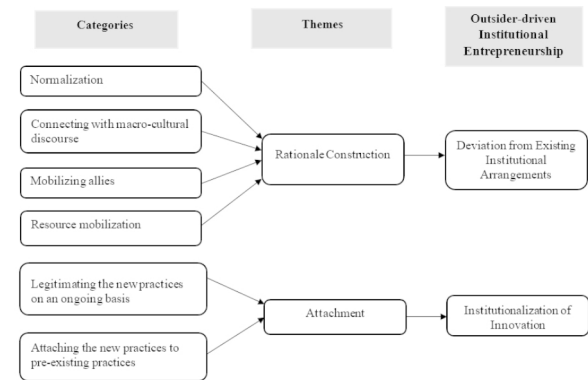


Fig. 1 The Process Model of Outsider-Driven Institutional Entrepreneurship in Emerging Fields

Fig. 2 Data Structure



Bareec: a case of outsider institutional entrepreneurs

The emergence of positive psychology in Kuwait

The State of Kuwait is a major oil supplier in the Middle East. It has the sixth largest oil reserve in the world, such that from 1946 to 1982 the country entered a Golden Era, during which it followed an oil-based development model (Lambert et al., 2019). It was considered the most developed country in the Arabian Gulf in the 1970s. However, the country was rocked by the crash of its stock market and Iraqi invasion in the 1980 and 1990s. Coupled with extreme oil price volatility, the situation resulted in an increase in unemployment and deterioration in standards of living. Kuwait has socio-economically stagnated in recent decades to the extent that it is now considered one of the least dynamic economies in the region (Olver-Ellis, 2019). According to a report by Gallup (2011) on the subjective well-being and health of citizens in the Gulf nations, 53% of Kuwait nationals were classified as ‘struggling’, reporting financial worry, daily stress and multiple sick days. The introduction of the ‘New Kuwait’

vision has brought urgency to the fact that the oil-based development model is not sustainable (Olver-Ellis, 2019). The new vision places great importance on human capital as a key pillar for development. As a result, the Kuwaiti government has welcomed intervention programs from different stakeholders in the public and private sector, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) that could boost its development plans.

In 2013, Sheikha Intisar Al Sabah, a member of Al Sabah Royal Family of Kuwait, founded Alnowair (Alnowair, 2020), the first NGO in Kuwait to work in the field of positive psychology. It sought to promote positive attitudes and well-being amongst youth and was intended to help play a role in the development and prosperity of Kuwait. The Kuwaiti population is a young population where youth constitute more than 70%. Children between ages (0–14) represent 37% of the total population, and young adults between ages (15–34) formulate 35% of the total population (UNDP, 2017). In 2015, Alnowair decided to incorporate some of their activities into educational institutions such as schools and universities. They conducted a pilot project to implement simple positive psychology exercises informally at three public high schools in the academic year of 2015/2016. At each school, one class implemented one exercise per week lasting 10 minutes. At the end of 2015/2016 academic year, Alnowair evaluated the pilot project and found that these classes recorded better results than other classes. In particular, students who participated in Alnowair's classes recorded lower levels of school absenteeism and violence. Subsequently, Alnowair decided to expand their intervention and develop a positive psychology curriculum.

Bareec: New Practices of positive psychology education

In June 2016, Alnowair developed Bareec, a program of 15-minute weekly interactive interventions delivered by teachers during regular class time. It targeted high school students (from Grade 10 to 12) at public schools in Kuwait, and students at Kuwait University (Bareec, 2020). The interventions used in the program came from positive psychology research and were modified to fit the demographic, cultural and contextual differences between high school and university students (Lambert et al., 2019). In summer 2016, Bareec management received a written approval from the MoE to implement Bareec at selected schools across the country, albeit without financial sponsorship. Prior to the intervention, Bareec management ensured that all participant teachers received the required training for effective Bareec implementation. The training took place biannually, before the beginning of each academic term. In addition, Bareec management awarded scholarships to the most qualified teachers to receive training on positive psychology at the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley. The training aimed to increase their knowledge of becoming trainers of positive psychology and develop their skillset. During the 2016/2017 academic year, 13 schools (including the pilot schools) participated in Bareec, and four colleges at Kuwait University (Social Science, Life Social Science, Engineering, and Computer Science) agreed to implement the program. Meanwhile, Bareec management along with the specialist who developed Bareec program conducted a study to assess the impact of the program on the students. Published in the

Journal of Social Indicators Research, the study found that levels of well-being were higher in both high school and university students who received the intervention compared to the control group (Lambert et al., 2019).

In the same year, Sheikha Intisar presented Bareec to Sheikh Nasser Al Sabah, former Prime Minister of Kuwait, who became the Honorary Chairman of the Board of Directors for Bareec (Ebaid, 2017). In summer 2017, Sheikha Intisar and Rokaya Hussain approached Dr Khaled Mahdi, the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD), to include Bareec in Kuwait's development plans. The SCPD supervises the development of Kuwait Vision 2035, New Kuwait, and identifies the state's developmental strategies (SCPS, 2020). In April 2018, the SCPD approved Bareec within the MoE's development plans (Bareec, 2019). Being listed in the development plans of Kuwait, meant that the MoE was obligated to implement Bareec and the program would now receive financial sponsorship from the MoE. The Cabinet approved the plan, allocated a budget, and the SCPD monitored its implementation. In the meantime, other schools began to express an interest in Bareec. In the academic year 2017/2018, 24 schools participated in Bareec, including over 100 teachers and 3000 students. Bareec management also developed Bareec application – a mobile application that students can use to implement Bareec activities and allows teachers to follow up with their students. In the following academic years more schools joined Bareec. In 2018/2019, the number of schools participating in Bareec rose to 36, with 275 teachers and approximately 8000 students. In 2019/2020, 48 schools participated in the program, 480 teachers and an estimated 11,630 students across different educational areas (e.g., Hawally, Capitol, and Jahra) in the country (see bareec.com for more information about Bareec). Moreover, Bareec management provided monetary awards for the best performing schools in the program and trained distinguished teachers at University of California, Berkeley, to become part of Bareec's training team.

Following its official launch, the program began to receive attention from the media, including state television (KuwaitTV, 2017, 2018) and plaudits from senior government officials. In an article by *Enferaad* news agency, the Assistant Under-secretary for Educational Development at the MoE stated that Bareec had positively influenced the student's social behavior and academic progress (Enferaad, 2019). Furthermore, in an article by *Business Women Magazine*, the Kuwaiti Minister of Education said:

The program [Bareec] is a complement to the Ministry's education system. It is the start of success in this experience [positive psychology], and we hope to expand the program and implement it in all schools in Kuwait. It [Bareec] is a complete and proven scientific project (Abualmajd, 2017).

On an international level, Sheikha Intisar participated in the High-level Interactive Dialogue on the International Day of Education on 24th January 2020 at the General Assembly of the United Nations. During the event titled *Aligning Inclusive Quality Education Policies with the Sustainable Development Goals*, Bareec was presented as an experience of institutional changes for transforming education.

Findings

Institutional entrepreneurs and deviation from existing institutional arrangements

Our research question asks, how do outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurs innovate in emerging organizational fields? In this section, we analyze the first set of actions that comprise the process of institutional entrepreneurship – deviation from existing institutional arrangements. In this study, the institutional entrepreneurs are actors outside the MoE. As such, the focus of deviation is on how the institutional entrepreneurs are able to mobilize actors inside the MoE, who are embedded in institutionalized arrangements, to deviate from the institutional determinism of MoE. After examining our data, we identified a broad theme that explained the deviation from existing institutional arrangements. The theme concerns the ways in which the institutional entrepreneurs constructed and communicated the rationale for their institutional project, a process we have termed ‘rationale construction’. We found the process of rationale construction to have four components: normalization, connecting with macro-cultural discourse, mobilizing allies, and resource mobilization. We argue that these actions enabled the institutional entrepreneurs to influence actors inside the MoE to deviate from the constraining conditions of MoE’s prevailing arrangements. How this occurred is explored further below.

Normalization. The field of positive psychology is an emerging field in Kuwait (Lambert et al., 2019). Research shows that institutionalized practices do not exist in emerging fields (David et al., 2013; Purdy & Gray, 2009; Xing et al., 2018), thus the specifying of failures of existing or dominant practices, or the negative impact of their continuance, is less important than in emerging fields. Our analysis suggests that for outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields, rationale construction starts with highlighting the positive impacts and the economic advantages associated with the proposed new practices of positive psychology. Thus, our starting point for rationale construction is the production of claims, arguments, stories and evidence, that promote the effectiveness of the newly proposed practices and build a case for their adoption. We refer to this process as ‘normalization’. We, however, maintain that normalization differs from legitimization. Legitimacy accrues when innovative practice “conforms to legal rules and gains endorsement from other powerful actors” (Rao, Morrill, and Zald, 2000, p. 241). Our case suggests that normalization is a key step towards achieving consonance. The institutional entrepreneurs produced claims to promote and normalize particular aspects of their proposed institutional project.

Our analysis reveals that the institutional entrepreneurs started normalization by conducting an informal pilot project at three high schools during the 2015/2016 academic year. Due to the absence of positive psychology practices in educational institutions, the institutional entrepreneurs borrowed some of the existing practices adopted by Alnowair to target students at the schools. The pilot project enabled the institutional entrepreneurs to produce claims and evidence about the viability of their newly implemented practices. At the end of the pilot project, they found that the students who participated in the pilot project reported positive changes in students’

behavior. For example, according to Amal – Principal of Al Salmiya Secondary School:

Many students have changed. One had been excessively obese and suffered with low self-esteem, and another student used to stutter and was shy to appear in front of an audience. Now, the first started to accept herself and thanked us for helping her boost her self-esteem and view herself in a positive light. The second is now able to speak to a public audience with confidence.

The analysis suggests that the results of the pilot project were pivotal in constructing the rationale for the main institutional project. On the one hand, the results enabled the institutional entrepreneurs to connect the implemented practices with improving student progress, well-being and behavior at schools, thereby producing claims about the advantages of adopting their program. On the other hand, the positive results received from the pilot study motivated the institutional entrepreneurs to approach officials at MoE, advocating for positive psychology interventions at all schools. To make this approach more convincing they consulted with positive psychology experts. Most notably, they created a formal curriculum (Bareec) which included selected practices from the positive psychology literature that was modified to suit the Kuwaiti context and culture. According to Sheikha Intisar:

The teachers noticed how much their students were improving... and this convinced us it would work. We decided to do something in an official capacity. So, we approached a positive psychology specialist, and we devised a curriculum (Bareec).

Based on the analysis, in outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields, where institutionalized practices do not exist, the institutional entrepreneurs produce claims and evidence about the positive impact of their newly proposed practices to promote their adoption. Our analysis reveals that the pilot project may lead to specification of potential problems through which the institutional project in question may provide a solution. While normalization constituted an important phase towards rationale construction, the institutional entrepreneurs still needed to disseminate the claims they produced about their newly devised practices, and legitimate them. In the next subsection, we discuss how the institutional entrepreneurs communicated these claims.

Connecting with macro-cultural discourse. To disseminate their claims and legitimate their new approach to education, the institutional entrepreneurs in our case drew on a wider macro-cultural discourse, a discourse that extended beyond the boundaries of the institutional field and is widely understood and accepted in society (Lawrence & Phillips, 2004). Specifically, they tapped into a discourse in Kuwait that advocated the role of well-being in promoting healthy lives and addressing behavioral issues among ‘adolescents’ at educational institutions. This discourse coincided with resolutions issued by international organizations, to which Kuwait was a signatory. For example, Kuwait signed *The Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health 2016–2030* issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) in

September 2015, which aims to improve overall health and well-being (EveryWomanEveryChild, 2016; WHO, 2015). In addition, the Emir of Kuwait signed the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 70/1 titled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* issued in September 2015 (UN, 2015). Goal 3 and Goal 16 of this UN resolution state:

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (UN, 2015)

To publicize this macro-cultural discourse, they courted the national media and communicated the claims produced about Bareec and emphasized its alignment with the resolutions. In particular, they emphasized that Bareec's pilot project showed a positive change in student's progress, well-being and behavior at school, and, that Bareec's objectives were consistent with the international resolutions Kuwait had signed. According to an article in *Sout Alkhaleej* newspaper, Sheikha Intisar said:

We conducted a pilot study for Bareec at three schools and recorded an improvement in student's behavior at schools. We aligned the international treaties and resolutions signed by Kuwait to our field while we were planning Bareec. Particularly, the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in relation to 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (Ebaid, 2017).

Since Bareec coincided with the signing of these resolutions, the institutional entrepreneurs positioned their statements in the public domain to gain exposure. As such, Bareec became increasingly central to the realization of the signed resolutions. According to Sheikha Intisar:

Kuwait signed the UN treaties which was part of the documents sent to the Ministry of Education to approve the research we were doing with the students. We wanted to notify the officials at the Ministry of Education that our work was in accordance with these treaties.

Thus, our analysis suggests that connecting with macro-cultural discourse is an important step that allows institutional entrepreneurs to disseminate their claims and begin to legitimate their institutional project. We maintain that communicating the claims produced about the viability of the institutional project, and its alignment with broader legal frameworks is central to bringing about change in emerging fields. This is because the institutionalized norms that provide the basis from which institutional entrepreneurs draw upon to justify new practices, do not exist in new fields. Instead, institutional entrepreneurs need to link their new project with widely accepted norms in society to garner support and legitimacy. Yet, the institutional entrepreneurs also need to mobilize allies and resources to legitimize their institutional project. We discuss mobilizing allies below.

Mobilizing allies. The institutional entrepreneurs sought to mobilize highly influential actors behind their institutional project, including prominent political figures, such as the former Prime Minister and senior figures at the MoE. They convinced these allies of the viability of their project and presented Bareec as an effective program of positive psychology that led to student progress, better well-being and included new approaches to tackling student's behavioral issues. The institutional entrepreneurs themselves enjoyed high social profiles which they leveraged in order to build relationships with potential allies and receive official approval for Bareec. According to Sheikha Intisar:

"We received official approval to work with the schools. What facilitated approval from the ministry was mine and Mrs. Rokaya's personal backing as we both have a very good reputation. We had an agreement with a senior figure at the Ministry of Education and because we know them personally, we informed them of our plans. We presented the new curriculum, and it was approved."

Rokaya echoed this view:

Sheikha Intisar's name was the most important resource... she created trust with those who we dealt with in the government. They knew that this program is in safe hands.

After receiving approval to work with schools, Bareec started to gain legitimacy amongst principals and teachers. For example, the school teachers and principals interviewed commented on the success of Bareec in building better relationships between teachers and students, and in affecting students' behavior. According to Amal – The Principal of Al Salmiya Secondary School:

We were among the first three schools (pilot project) that implemented the program in the first year. The program is very useful as it spreads positivity and instills good values within students that they implement in classrooms, school clubs and educational trips.

Thus, mobilizing allies to confer legitimacy upon the institutional project is an important stage towards rationale construction and deviation from institutional determinism. Central to mobilizing allies in outsider-driven change is the mobilization of influential insiders, who embrace, and secure further political support, for the institutional project. Thus far, the set of actions discussed enabled the institutional entrepreneurs to intervene in schools. However, this does not fully construct the rationale as they needed to mobilize tangible, as well as reputational, resources.

Resource mobilization. Sheikha Intisar personally financed Bareec's pilot project until it received approval and financial support from the MoE. After the MoE's approval to implement Bareec at schools and universities, the institutional entrepreneurs utilized the financial resources to fund two main sets of activities: Bareec's curriculum, and training. At the end of academic year 2016/2017 – the first year of intervention after receiving the MoE's official approval– the institutional entrepre-

neers decided to discontinue the implementation of Bareec at Kuwait University. To avoid depleting financial resources, they reasoned it would be more effective to focus solely on schools and expand the program to include all high schools in Kuwait. According to Sheikha Intisar:

We actually stopped the university program, because we didn't want to exhaust our resources. In a few years, we will go back. We intend to grow the team within high schools and cover all high schools in Kuwait within 5 years.

The institutional entrepreneurs mobilized financial resources to facilitate Bareec's implementation. Our analysis suggests that resource mobilization through successful "small steps" (Andrews & Bategeka, 2013, p. 30) is an important means of attaining progress towards the overall goal of institutionalizing new practices. This is particularly important in the early stages of institutional entrepreneurship.

Institutional entrepreneurs and institutionalization

We focus on the second set of actions that comprise the process of institutional entrepreneurship in this section. We are concerned with the institutionalization of Bareec within the MoE, and the process by which the innovation became accepted and taken-for-granted (Gill et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2004). In examining our data, we identified a broad theme that explained the institutionalization process. The theme concerns the ways in which the new practices of Bareec became institutionalized and taken-for-granted, a process we have termed 'attachment'. The new practices were institutionalized by legitimating and aligning them with different stakeholders' values on a continuous basis, and by attaching them to pre-existing practices. We also found that new norms were created as a result of these two actions.

Legitimizing the new practices on an ongoing basis. Key stakeholders need to perceive the new practices as legitimate if they are to be institutionalized (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007; Maguire et al., 2004; Waeraas & Sataøen, 2015). However, institutionalized norms that form the socially constructed basis regarding legitimate behavior do not exist in new fields and consequently, cannot be drawn upon to justify new practices (Purdy & Gray, 2009). Our analysis reveals that the institutional entrepreneurs drew on related mature fields and their associated institutions, to align the new practices with the interests and values of key stakeholders within those institutions, namely the SCPD and MoE. On one hand, SCPD is the governmental authority that is responsible for formulating the development plans and strategies that influence all governmental bodies. Thus, SCPD endorsement of Bareec would facilitate its integration into MoE's plans. On the other hand, MoE is the target institution where Bareec transpires. Combined, the institutional entrepreneurs attempted to gain legitimacy in order to institutionalize Bareec into the MoE's arrangements, plans and strategies.

The institutional entrepreneurs aligned Bareec to the *Human Capital* pillar of New Kuwait Vision, supervised by SCPD. They approached the Secretary-General of SCPD and presented evidence of their claims regarding the viability of Bareec, in order to gain his support and acceptance. A key pillar of the Kuwait 2035 vision

is “*Human Capital: Reform the education system to better prepare youth to become competitive and productive members of the workforce*” (New-Kuwait, 2019). The institutional entrepreneurs endorsed Bareec as a key contributor to this pillar, in preparing youth in schools and universities to become productive members of society by improving their academic progress, well-being and social behavior. According to Rokaya:

We met the Secretary-General of SCPD and presented the operational logistics of our program. We showed him testimonials from teachers, parents, and students, as well as the study we conducted and published. This provided evidence of the effectiveness of Bareec in impacting students’ behavior.

By aligning Bareec with the interests of SCPD, it became increasingly central to the realization of a key pillar of Kuwait’s development plan. As a result, SCPD endorsed Bareec as a contributor to the Human Capital pillar of the development plan. In addition, the data shows that the MoE had already begun to implement Bareec. As such, this facilitated the SCPD’s endorsement of Bareec. According to Khaled Mahdi – the Secretary-General of SCPD:

We have some gaps in education. Part of developing the education system in Kuwait is teacher development. This component includes developmental programs for education techniques. There is a theme that is always missing, the psychological theme. In order for teachers to communicate with students effectively, we need to use all themes, including the psychological one, to be able to share knowledge. Bareec bridges this gap. It was evidenced in the study they provided, which was published in a good journal. After we grouped the evidences and studied the program, we asked them to pitch the idea to the MoE under our blessings.

However, endorsement of Bareec by the SCPD alone, did not result in Bareec becoming part of MoE’s development plans and institutionalized arrangements. Rather, approval of Bareec from both the MoE and SCPD was required. To gain the MoE’s approval, the institutional entrepreneurs approached two senior figures at the MoE, whose authority was essential to confer legitimacy upon Bareec. In doing so, they reminded the two senior figures that Bareec is consistent with the interests and values of MoE in relation to education development. They continued to provide evidence and claims about the effectiveness of Bareec in tackling behavioral issues at educational institutions, and in positively affecting students’ academic progress. According to Sheikha Intisar:

There were two people at the MoE. One was unsure about Bareec. We then gave him the research that was published in Springer that says this [Bareec] works. The second person was dismissive, so we kept showing him why it works. We kept sending him principal and teacher testimonies on how they, and their students are changing. He later understood and approved as he could see legitimate value in the program. Now, he is a big advocate.

Through aligning Bareec with the interests of the MoE on an ongoing basis, Bareec gained the legitimacy and support of MoE and was incorporated into its development plans. After both institutions agreed, the SCPD officially approved Bareec as part of MoE institutionalized arrangements. In other words, Bareec became embedded into MoE's taken-for-grantedness. According to the Secretary-General of SCPD:

We approved Bareec within the MoE's plans... Since they already had connections with the MoE, it was not hard for us to approve it. Now, it is compulsory for the MoE to implement and the MoE cannot withdraw after a period of time. We [SCPD] will monitor the project, its implementation and output, based on what we agreed, and against the timelines. Our monitoring reports are sent to Parliament.

Based on these dynamics, we argue that in outsider-driven change in emerging fields, the institutional entrepreneurs draw on related mature fields and their associated institutions to legitimize their innovation. Central to legitimization is the constant alignment between the institutional project and the values and interests of key actors within those institutions. The institutional entrepreneurs in our case were able to legitimate their project by ensuring it aligned with the realization of development plans supervised by SCPD, and with the MoE's interests in education development. They achieved this by presenting the claims produced about the viability of the program. While legitimating the new practices on an ongoing basis enabled the institutional entrepreneurs to gain the legitimacy required for institutionalization, they were yet to discern the form of change through which the new practices become institutionalized. The next subsection discusses the form of change.

Attaching the new practices to pre-existing practices. Our analysis reveals that the institutional entrepreneurs attached the new practices of Bareec to pre-existing practices. The term 'practice' refers to "activity patterns across actors that are infused with broader meaning and provide tools for ordering social life and activity" (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007, p. 995). We use 'pre-existing practices' to refer to the pre-existing activity patterns operating at the educational institutions that are institutionalized, and that are distinct from the new practices of Bareec. The institutional entrepreneurs attached new practices of positive psychology to existing practices at the educational institutions.

Our data shows that teachers at the educational institutions incorporated and integrated the new practices into their day-to-day activities. Teachers from diverse academic disciplines started to incorporate the new practices within their fields' (curriculum) pre-existing practices. By attaching Bareec's practices to pre-existing practices, the institutional entrepreneurs ensured ongoing reproduction of Bareec's practices. Over time, the repeated activation of the new way of behaving contributed to the new practices becoming taken-for-granted. For example, the teachers interviewed at Salah Eddin Secondary School mentioned that they had integrated Bareec within their classes. Ali Shawwaf – Teacher of Chemistry at Salah Eddin – stated:

Bareec composes of a set of tools and activities that teachers present within classes. Those activities last between 5 to 10 minutes and take place within any

module. It is part of what is implemented in the class. It could be part of any module.

As new practices are attached to pre-existing practices, new norms are created around these new practices. We reiterate that widely shared norms do not exist in emerging fields (Xing et al., 2018). Thus, new norms are created during the institutionalization of new practices, as they are aligned with stakeholders' values and attached to existing institutional arrangements. According to Ali Brogerdian – the Vice Principal of Salah Eddin Secondary School:

Some teachers implemented Bareec not because they agreed with the idea, but because they did not want others to look at them negatively.

Based on these dynamics, we argue that the institutional entrepreneurs in emerging fields are likely to attach their innovative practices to other pre-existing practices associated with related institutionalized fields. This is because institutionalized practices do not exist in emerging fields, and new practices are most likely to be institutionalized when they are embedded in the durable practices of related mature fields. We also argue that, as the new practices are attached to pre-existing institutional arrangements and aligned with stakeholders' values, new norms are created around these new practices.

Discussion

In examining outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in the emerging field of positive psychology education, we have addressed two specific strategies – deviation from existing institutional arrangements, and institutionalization of innovation – and we have identified critical components associated with each aspect. The analysis suggests that institutional entrepreneurship is not a strictly sequential process, but one in which different sets of actions occur in parallel, simultaneously. For institutional entrepreneurship, the success of field-level change is dependent on a range of activities (struggle, negotiation, leveraging and mobilizing) performed by actors. We found that field-level change was dependent on the actions of two highly influential institutional entrepreneurs (Intisar and Rokaya), a key finding echoed by Maguire et al., (2004). Consistent with abductive reasoning employed in the study, the findings develop further the notion of institutional entrepreneurship and offer a more fine-grained understanding of the entrepreneurial acts initiated by outsiders to an institution. Figure 1 shows how the deviation from the constraining conditions of existing institutional arrangements *and* institutionalization of innovative practices enabled the institutional entrepreneurs to bring about institutional change.

With regards to deviation from existing institutional arrangements, we found that rationale construction enabled the institutional entrepreneurs to influence actors inside the target institution to deviate from institutional constraints. After examining rationale construction, we found that (1) normalization, (2) connecting with macro-cultural discourse, (3) mobilizing allies, and (4) resource mobilization, enabled the

institutional entrepreneurs to construct a rationale for their institutional project. These are important in emerging fields due to the lack of cultural elements, established structures of domination for actors, and clearly defined relationships and roles, that provide a resource on which the institutional entrepreneurs can draw on to justify their institutional project (David et al., 2013; Fan & Zietsma, 2017). Our findings suggest that rationale construction commences with normalization to produce claims about the effectiveness of new practices and make the case for their adoption. Our concept of normalization resonates with Maguire and Hardy's (2009) notion of 'bodies of knowledge.' They argue that the construction of practices as effective, beneficial, and appropriate to normalize certain ways of behaving, is a particularly demanding approach to challenge the prevailing institutional arrangements. They show how 'bodies of knowledge' normalize the abandonment of taken-for-granted practices of Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloro-ethane (DDT) use which resulted in a decline in sales from 67 million pounds to 22 million pounds (Maguire & Hardy, 2009). Barberá-Tomás, Castelló, De Bakker, & Zietsma (2019) also show that entrepreneurs naturalize certain practices by presenting themselves as knowledgeable, and this leads to gradually enacting change.

In examining the institutionalization of Bareec, we found that the institutionalization of the new practices of positive psychology depends upon (1) ongoing legitimization of the new practices by aligning them with the interests and values of key stakeholders (2) and attaching them to pre-existing practices associated with related institutionalized fields. Our findings suggest that the repeated activation of the newly attached practices contributed to the new practices becoming taken-for-granted. As the new practices are institutionalized, new norms are created around them. This is consistent with studies that have shown that enacting shared values collectively, and ongoing social interactions, increases actors' commitment to adopt new practices and further agency (Fan & Zietsma, 2017; Jasper, 2011; Lockett, Wright, & Wild, 2015). Emerging fields are characterized by the absence of institutionalized practices and "widely shared, convergent norms" that form the socially constructed basis for legitimate behavior (Maguire et al., 2004, p. 674). Thus, it is necessary for institutional entrepreneurs to draw on related mature fields and their associated set of institutions to legitimize their institutional project. This aligns with the works of Gill et al., (2020) and George et al., (2015) who show that practices can only be understood and be made meaningful through other practices. Such new practices are more likely to be adopted following legitimization, alignment and attachment.

Contributions

The resulting model of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields offers three important contributions to the literature on institutional entrepreneurship, and to the broader institutional theory literature. It contributes to the institutional entrepreneurship literature by providing a contextualized view of the constituent activities of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields that highlights the strategies for deviating from existing institutional arrangements and institutionalizing new practices. It shows that outsider-driven entrepreneurial change in emerging fields requires multiple forces from within and outside

the field working for the institutional change. More specifically, the lack of a dominant regulatory framework that could impose field-level standards in emerging fields creates a vacuum in which institutional entrepreneurs can create new practices that did not exist before, and produce new claims that promote the adoption of their practices. The findings indicate that institutional entrepreneurs in emerging fields draw on related mature fields, and their associated institutions, to legitimize their innovation. This suggests that emerging fields are not created in isolation from mature fields. Rather, emerging fields coevolve with related mature fields that provide resources for legitimate behavior, as illustrated by Bareec. These findings add to the insights of Gill et al., (2020), who highlight that practices are not institutionalized in isolation, but within the context of other practices in the field.

Secondly, the study maintains that outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship is more likely to succeed when legitimate insiders are mobilized behind the entrepreneurial effort. Our study illustrates that mobilizing insiders who are more aware of the conditions that sustain the status quo, and who may control sufficient access to resources necessary to realize change, is essential. The institutional entrepreneurs in our case garnered a broad support base and enrolled a large number of actors in their project. Each actor had a different, but complementary role. The findings offer empirical support to existing literature that emphasizes the mobilization of a wider and heterogeneous group of actors to drive entrepreneurial change (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Monaghan et al., 2020). In addition, this research adds to the insights of Xing et al. (2018) and answers their call to explore how the interaction among a multitude of actors fosters entrepreneurial processes. Our study also lends support to the work of George et al. (2015) emphasizing how legitimacy depends on the position of actors within institutions.

This study helps to resolve the paradox of embedded agency (Garud et al., 2007) by highlighting the role of a certain type of human agents – outsiders – in deviating from prevailing institutional arrangements and transforming existing institutions, through the emergence of new practices. This process attends to the influence of institutional entrepreneurs and their collaborators outside the field, thereby answering numerous calls to explore the role of external actors in shaping institutions (Gill et al., 2020; Lawrence & Phillips, 2019) and calls to take “the viewpoints of actors other than institutional entrepreneurs more seriously” (Hardy & Maguire, 2018, p. 275). Our study supports and extends various studies that attempt to address the paradox of embedded agency (David et al., 2013; Maguire et al., 2004; George et al., 2015; Xing et al., 2018; and Bartram et al., 2020) by shifting the focus away from centrally positioned actors in an institution to those located outside the institution.

Limitations and future research

Our study has one key limitation. As a single case study, the limitation concerns the specificity of the emerging field of positive psychology education, and the Kuwaiti context. This distinctiveness might influence the dynamics of institutional entrepreneurship. However, the focus on a single case is necessary to understand how nested and complex activities within the entrepreneurial process occurred over time (Maguire et al., 2004). Moreover, by contrasting our study with the literature on mature

fields and insider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields, we were able to identify distinctive elements of outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields. Despite this, there is considerable opportunity for future research to address this limitation. Future research could focus on multi-case comparative studies to examine which combination of contextual variables lead to specific outcomes in terms of deviation from institutional determinism, and the important institutionalization and securing of innovation and its outcomes (Tomizawa et al., 2020). Future research could also focus on the systematic comparison of insider and outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurship in mature and emerging fields, to ascertain the similarities and differences between these two forms of institutional entrepreneurship, depending on the maturity of the field.

Conclusions

Understanding how institutional change occurs is a key challenge to institutional reports of organizational behaviors. In this article, we examined how outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurs innovate in emerging organizational fields. Through an empirical qualitative study of institutional entrepreneurs who were the first to introduce new practices of positive psychology (Bareec) in Kuwait and the Middle East – a new context for studying institutional entrepreneurship, we document the constituent activities of outsider-driven entrepreneurial efforts that brought about field-wide change. Our findings stress on the importance of mobilizing legitimate insiders who become gatekeepers for outsiders to materialize their innovative projects. In addition, we have conceptualized and further examined the entrepreneurial process on how outsider-driven institutional entrepreneurs innovate, detailing particular nuances, and we provide new terminology for such processes.

Our study has two major summary implications. The first concerns research on societal grand challenges (Grimes & Vogus, 2021; Grodal and O'Mahony, 2017; Howard-Grenville 2021), in particular, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, which are regarded as the most universal and widely accepted grand challenges (George et al., 2016). Our study implicates activist interest groups, social movements and other external actors who seek to shape practices and arrangements in a particular organization in an attempt to ensure healthy lives, promote well-being and peaceful and inclusive societies, as Alnowair did. Actors should embrace the discursive strategies (e.g., making the case for change), but also establish stable coalitions. They should not let a lack of apparent material power, resources or size dissuade them from attempting to shape practices and form relationships that define their target organization or institutional arrangements. A second implication concerns the institutional entrepreneurs in emerging fields. This study suggests that there are specific resources and skills that institutional entrepreneurs will need for field transformation: an understanding of the cultural norms of a wide array of stakeholders; personal and extended networks that facilitate stakeholders' connections; and an ability to assemble stable coalitions and mobilize legitimate actors inside the field. Aspiring institutional entrepreneurs should consider the wide range and forms of social capital, resources and power that may be at their disposal.

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