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IR in Australasia: Coming of age or coming unstuck?

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Has IR “come of age” in Australasia?

- For something to come of age it will have:
  - “qualified to assume certain rights and responsibilities”
  - “reached maturity”
  - “transitioned from childhood to adulthood”
- Clearly IR is relevant in Australasia in 2010, but:
  - is it *mature*?
  - does it have the *capacity* to meet the needs expected of it?

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“Coming unstuck”

busted, coming unglued, defective, disabled, down, **exhausted**, fallen apart, faulty, feeble, gone, gone to pieces, gone to pot, haywire, **imperfect**, in disrepair, **in need of repair**, in the shop, inoperable, kaput, not functioning, on the blink, on the fritz, on the shelf, out, out of commission, out of kilter, out of order, out of whack, ruined, run-down, screwed up, shot, spent, unsatisfactory, weak, wracked, wrecked

http://thesaurus.com/browse/coming+unstuck

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Outline

1. Challenges and policy contexts
2. Institutional responses: two case studies and general
3. Towards new operating models

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A growing IR agenda

1990s

- Student life cycle (enrolment, retention, satisfaction)

Early 2000s

- Research performance
- Student equity
- Community and industry engagement

Late 2000s

- Rankings and ratings
- T&L and research performance indexes
- Operational performance (effectiveness, efficiency)

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The purpose and activities of IR

- To provide *objective*, *systematic* and *thorough* research that supports the institution's enrolment goals, planning, policy formulation and *decision-making* (AAIR website)
  - Maximising institutional performance
  - Maximising funding (Matulick, 2007)
- Activities of IR include "the *collection*, *analysis* and *interpretation* of information descriptive of an institution and its activities …." (Zimmer, 1995)

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Prerequisites for practitioner effectiveness

1. Capability and capacity to undertake rigorous research
2. Knowledge of the institution's planning and policy agenda (or at least elements of it)
3. Access to information necessary to allow "collection" and value adding steps ("analysis" & "interpretation")
4. Understand and have access to decision making processes.
5. AND Regularly meet 1-4 in a timely manner!

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‘Back to the future’ both sides of the Tasman

Australia

1990s: sector growth following 1987 reforms domestic students): 1993-1995 Quality Assurance Program audits; 1998 Annual QA Plans required

2000: AUQA established

2006: Preferred model for RQF released; 2006-2008: LTPF allocations Rewarding “excellence”; 2007: ERA announced; AUQA cycle 2 audits commence

2010: ERA full implementation, 2012: second ERA cycle.; 2011-2013: Participation targets; Compacts; TEQSA; My Uni website; Student demand driven (uncapped) funding

New Zealand

1993: NZUAAU established

2002-2007: First Tertiary Education Strategy

2003: Tertiary Education Commission; completion of round 1 performance funding

2007-2012: Second Tertiary Education Strategy; 2008: NZUAAU cycle 4 audits commence

2011-2013: Capped funding; three year contracts; some at risk funding

Our future national policy landscape?

Galwey & Ogilvie (2010)

Aspect	*Current*	*Future*
Emphasis	Risk – managing Crown's liabilities	Optimisation – maximising strategic outcomes
Success	Viability	Sustainable value creation
Performance management	KPIs, support control	Balanced scorecards, organisational learning, continuous planning
Culture	Low trust, rules based	High trust, self governance
Analytical focus	Historically orientated	Strategic and agenda setting

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Case studies: institutional mission & scale

UTS

- Mission focused on progressing professions, industry and communities of world
- 29,000 students enrolled
- 65% UG, 30% PG, 5% HDR
- Local competitors: four major Sydney metro unis

AUT

- Mission focused on serving regional, national and international communities
- 26,000 students enrolled
- 85% UG & PG, 15% pre/sub degree
- Local competitors: Massey (distance), Unitec, Auckland

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Case studies: 'IR' teams

UTS (FTE 6)

- Manager Strategic Intelligence
- Reporting and Analysis Manager
- BI Professionals x 2
- Bi Trainee
- Survey Officer

Temporary 2008-2010:

- BI Program Manager
- DW/BI Developer

AUT (FTE 4.2)

- Manager Institutional Research
- Strategic/data analyst (0.6 FTE)
- Modelling/forecasting analyst (0.6 FTE)
- Survey Officer
- DW/BI Developer

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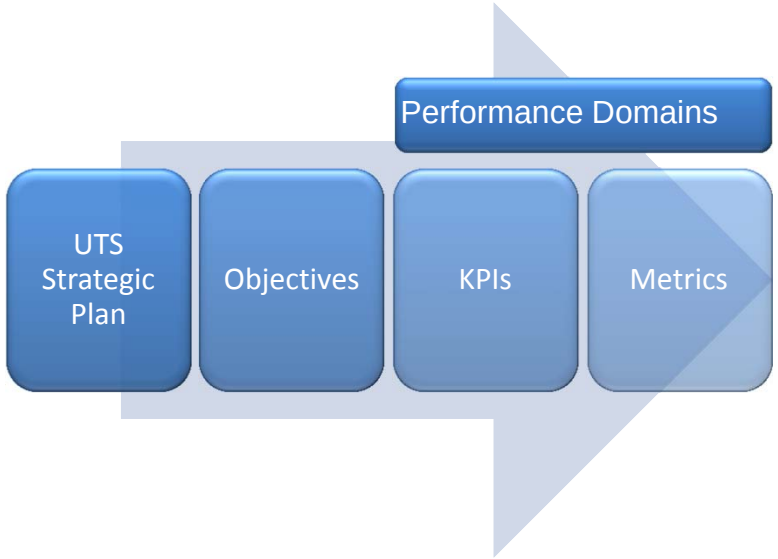
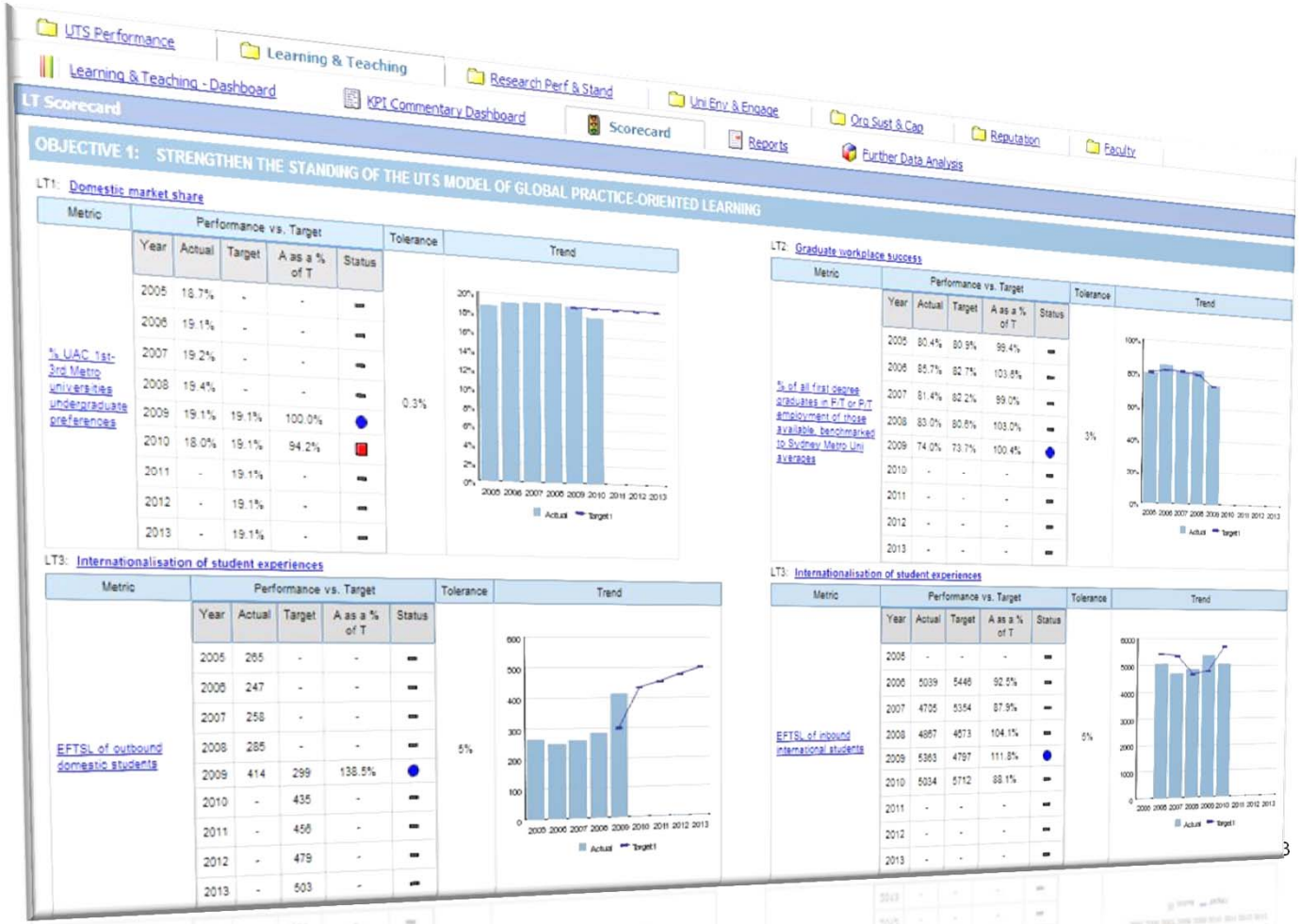
Case study: strategic approach to BI (UTS)



Case study: Current maturity (UTS)



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Institutional responses: general

- Hypothesis: reactive responses OK, but variability with proactive
- Three types of factors influence latter:
  - Structural: scope of mission; scope of student profile and fee regimes; competitive context; demographic profile of local catchment; location of IR team in structure; IR team size and capacity
  - Process: strategic planning framework; transparency of decision points; maturity of KPI framework and BI systems
  - Cultural: nature of research questions; empowerment of IR staff. (Leaders need “to allow the facts to interfere with some of the ‘good theories’ ” (Brian Lowe, 2002))

Reference points for IR unit self-assessments?

Towards new operating models

Pointers from the literature:

> Systems view (thinking, design, implementation), including anticipating unintended consequences of poor interventions

> Engagement with university processes

> Relationships with decision makers

> Advances in technical and analytical tools and skills

> Foundational elements (eg. effective communication, data integrity)

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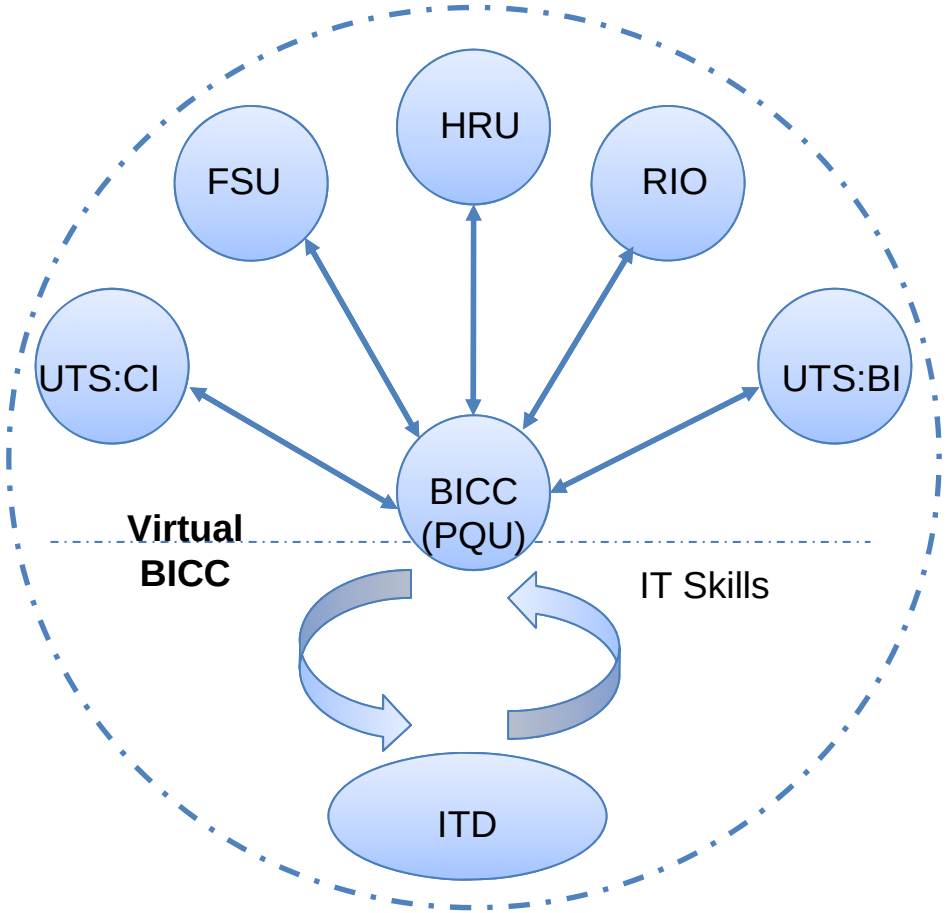
Potential tools:
1. Virtual IR teams (UTS)

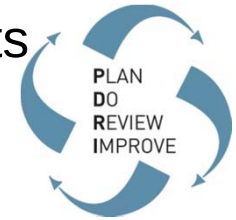


IR = BI?

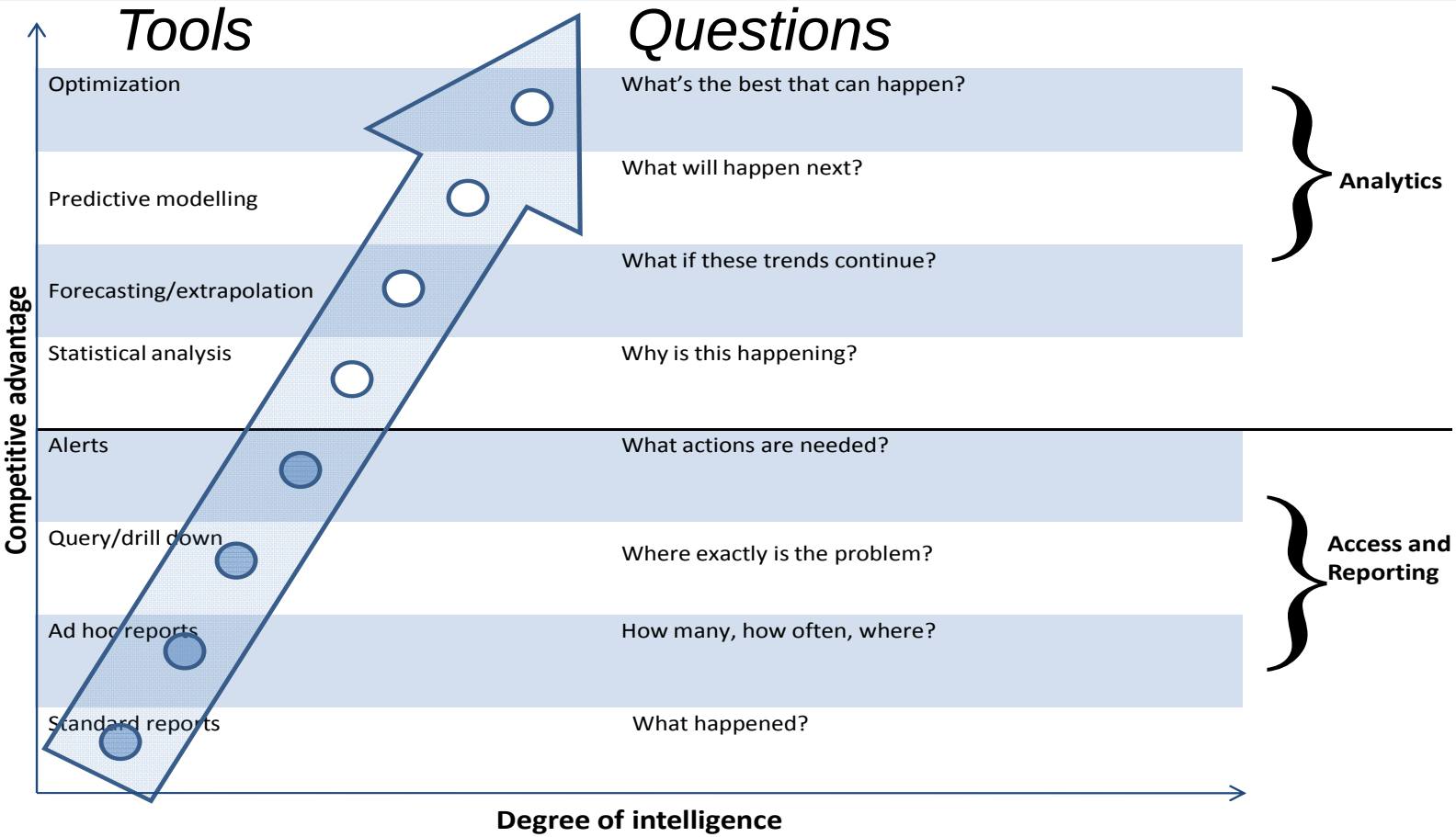
BICC:

> Cross functional team
> Champion BI technologies
> Define BI standards
> Manage BI projects
> Provide training and support
>i.e. an empowerment role

> Shared protocols for changing data, etc.
> Cooperative arrangements



Potential tools:
2. Lead indicators and business analytics



Source: Davenport & Harris, 2007, adapted from SAS

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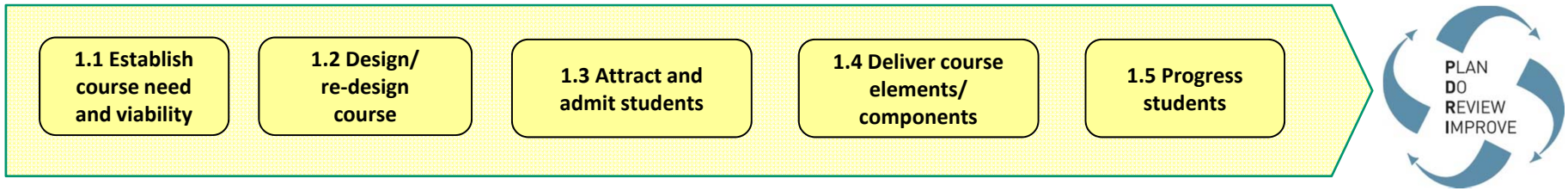
Potential tools:
3. Enterprise process architectures (UTS)

- Tool used extensively in other sectors but not higher education – why not?
- Core “value chains” are way organisations deliver value to clients – even universities!
- Architectures can serve as platforms for process governance, measurement and improvement
- University value chains are mostly student learning or research outcome focused – e.g.:

1 Develop Coursework Graduates



Potential tools:
4. Student segmentation and identifiers

>Tracking student groups of interest as they progress through lifecycle (pre-enrolment to post-graduation)

>Data mining tools, artificial intelligence: allow better harnessing of intelligence hidden in student data systems (multi-dimensional segments, not traditional cohorts)

>Introduction of unique student identifiers: Victoria 2011, other Australian states 2012

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Potential tools:
5. Trans-institutional studies

>Commonality of research questions, even across jurisdictions: place for supra-institutional research

>Growing trend to compare institutional performance

>Options:

- Heavily resourced (macro)
- Informal online inquiries (micro)
- In between (meso) – rigour for relatively little cost

>Pre-requisites for successful deployment: prompt agreement on lead researcher; role of third parties; funding arrangements; protocols for data sharing

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Potential tools:
6. Self-service management information

>If researchers initiate all information collection, analysis, dissemination, tool development: risk of IR team becoming a bottleneck

>Sustainable IR function needs to provide decision makers with some self-service access to answer day to day decisions

>Pre-requisites for successful deployment: web based; easy to use and intuitive; data up to date; data at useful level of granularity; and trust of data

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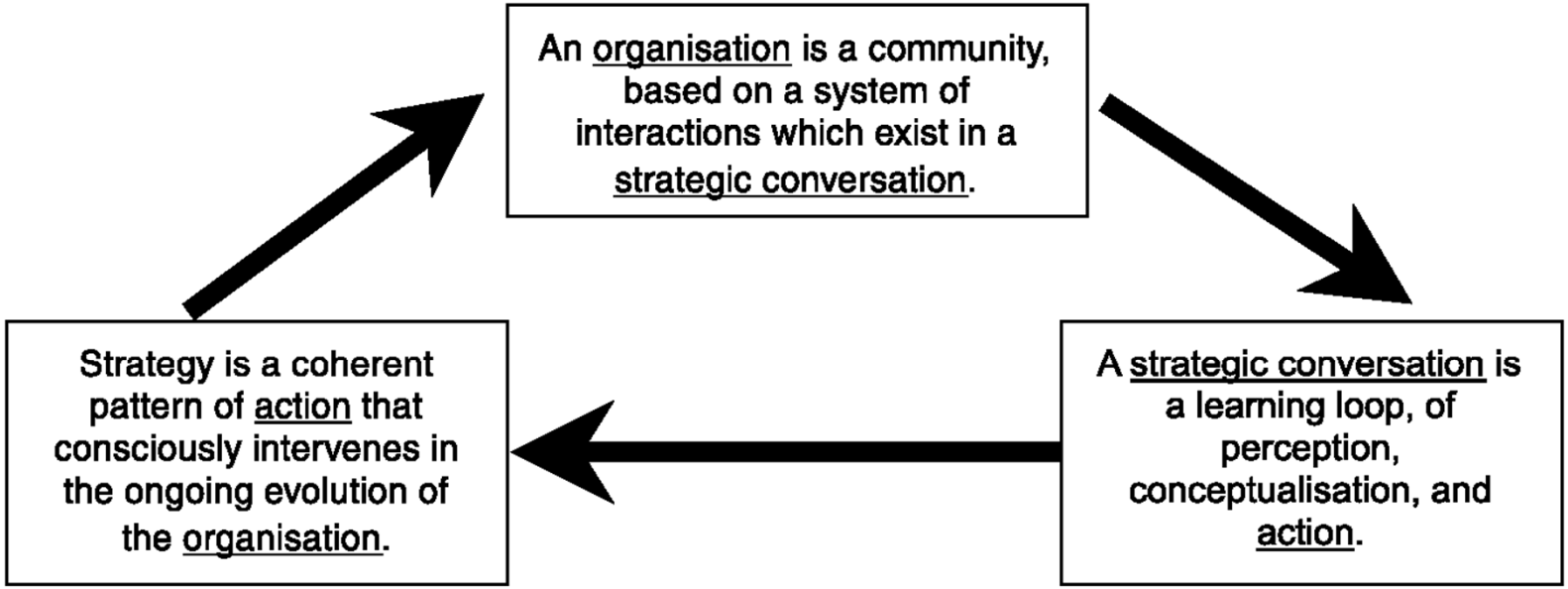
Potential tools:
7. Strategic conversations



Source: van der Heijden (1996)

>Tools not just about upskilling practitioners: leaders have role too
>Decision making processes transparent, accessible and ideally stable

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Conclusions

- Challenges facing IR practitioners are considerable: expanding IR agenda; shortened cycle times; limited resources
- BUT a range of tools are available to practitioners and leaders to reduce risk of “coming unstuck”
- IR units need to make choices to optimise capacity
- For IR to truly “come of age”:
  - leaders need to develop and resource roadmaps for capacity/capability development, and embrace evidence-based decision making
  - AAIR needs to have a place at national policy tables!