

An Action Research on the Introduction and Legitimization of Toilet Cleaning Activities in One Japanese Company

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Abstract

Although the importance of cleaning and toilet cleaning has been practically pointed out for a long time in Japan, the relationship between cleaning and corporate management has never been academically examined in Japan, let alone in other countries. In this study, through several years of action research, we present the process of introducing and continuing toilet-cleaning activities in one Japanese company. We clarify how the practice of cleaning toilets, which has a long history for many Japanese companies, but is a new practice for this company, is socialized within the organization. In particular, we clarify how the practice of toilet cleaning shakes organizations and people, and how the practice is legitimized within the organization. We will then explore how the results of the survey and the findings of the survey can be positioned academically. Specifically, we will examine whether toilet-cleaning activities can be positioned as a social practice in the context of management studies based on practice theories. In addition, in the context of organizational change theory, we will examine whether toilet cleaning activities can be positioned as a starting point for organizational innovation. We then aim to present the academic implications for practice-based management studies and organizational change theory.

Keywords: action research, practice-based management, organizational change, social practice, cleaning activities

1. Introduction

This study is action research that focuses on the process of introducing toilet cleaning activities in a Japanese company. The results of the action research, in which the researcher myself participated in the toilet-cleaning activities together with the company members, and thought and made suggestions together with them, will be presented.

Even today, there are many cases in Japanese companies and factories where company members are enthusiastically engaged in cleaning and tidying up under the name of “5S”. Furthermore, some prominent Japanese corporate executives (e.g., Konosuke Matsushita, Soichiro Honda, Hidezaburo Kagiya, Shigenobu Nagamori, etc.) have even called for a particular focus on toilet cleaning among cleaning activities. The reasons for focusing on toilet cleaning are different and diverse for each executive. For example, Nagamori (2005) of Nidec shows that toilet cleaning activities can lay the foundation for quality control. Kagiya (2005) of Yellow Hat shows that the company will become an organization that can be thorough in small things and never underestimate ordinary things. Such small and ordinary things are often called “bonji” in Japanese. Toilet cleaning activities can be positioned as one of the activities that have been cherished by Japanese companies beyond time, regions and industries.

However, although the importance of cleaning and toilet cleaning has been practically pointed out for a long time, the relationship between cleaning and corporate management has never been academically examined in Japan, let alone in Europe, the United States, and other countries. In this study, we present the process of introducing toilet-cleaning activities in a company. We will then explore how the results of the survey and the findings of the survey can be positioned academically. Specifically, we will examine whether toilet-cleaning activities can be positioned as a social practice in the context of management studies based on practice theories developed in sociology and philosophy, which have been developed in recent years. In addition, in the context of organizational change theory, we will examine whether toilet-cleaning activities can be positioned as a starting point for organizational innovation. We then aim to present the academic implications for practice-based

management studies and organizational change theory.

In the next section, we will review existing research on organizational change. Specifically, we will review the trends in various research approaches to organizational change and demonstrate that this study will attempt new research from the perspective of practice-based management, which has been developing in recent years. In the following sections, we will show the results of the action research that we conducted and participated in. In addition, we will examine the theoretical position of this research and the academic implications based on the findings.

2. Literature Review

There have been many different research approaches to organizational change. For example, in organizational development approaches, Lewin's (1947) three-stage model is often used as a basic model for research and development today (Burnes, 2004; Sonenshein, 2010). In this model, organizational change progresses through three stages: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. The model suggests that organizational change often fails to progress, especially in the first stage, because organizational members show discomfort or resistance to change.

The decision-making approach centered on March and Simon (1958) has also developed research on the issue of organizational change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995), and in particular, has shown that programs within organizations inhibit change. Programs are defined as "a highly complex and organized set of responses (March & Simon, p. 141)," a concept similar to today's organization routines (Nelson & Winter, 1982). Because of the costs involved in changing these programs, it has been shown that unless there is great dissatisfaction for many organizational members, programs tend to be continued, thus inhibiting organizational change.

Research approaches from the perspective of organizational culture have shown that organizational culture itself can inhibit organizational change (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). The more organizational members share the company's organizational culture, the faster they can process information. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that there is a danger of slowing down the response to new information and situations, or failing to recognize or understand the need for a response in the first place.

On the other hand, in the evolutionary approach, the punctuated equilibrium model (Gersick, 1991) has been presented. Although organizations usually make incremental changes, there are times when radical changes are required. This focuses on the importance of top management in particular during such periods of radical change. Research is being conducted on ambidexterity, which is what is required of top management to balance exploration and exploitation in organizational learning (Raisch et al., 2009; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2016).

In recent years, there has been a new research experiment called "Strategy as Practice" and "Communities of Practice" that has been developed mainly by European researchers, based on the theoretical background of practice theory in sociology and pragmatism in philosophy. This trend is sometimes referred to as the "practice turn" in the social sciences as a whole. It focuses on the process by which people and organizations are formed through the accumulation of daily practices, and the process by which strategies are created. It is sometimes expressed as "people, organizations, and strategies are embedded in practices. It is positioned as one of the process studies in management theories, and studies are being conducted to clarify the process of creating strategies and organizations, especially from the perspective of practices.

Such Practice-based management theories often call for research development that distinguishes between practice and praxis. More specifically, building on Reckwitz's (2002) work in practice theory, Whittington (2006) defines practices as "shared routines of behavior, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting and using 'things (p. 619)". In other words, they have sought to focus on things beyond the intentions of particular people, including traditions, and things that are not necessarily intentional or manipulative. On the other hand, praxis is defined as "actual activity, what people do in practice, (p. 619)" and the two are distinguished as more intentional and manipulative.

However, in recent years, there has been a trend toward research that does not focus on practices. For example, Kohtamäki et al. (2022) analyzed 340 papers on 'Strategy as Practice' and presented that they can be categorized into five research groups, especially that in recent years, research focusing on praxis has rapidly increased and accounts for a large number of papers. There are many studies that focus on praxis, which focuses on the process by which specific strategies are created within a company through more intentional activities, and conversely, it can be said that recent research trends are such that research focusing on practice is decreasing. Therefore, in this study, we will develop research that focuses on the process by which organizations and strategies are created from the perspective of original practice.

Furthermore, existing research on organizational change has focused on factors that impede organizational

change, namely organizational members, programs (routines), and organizational culture, and on how top management overcomes these impediments. On the other hand, practice-based management focuses on practice that goes beyond the intentions of specific people, and focuses on how practice creates organizations and strategies. In other words, practice is positioned as a facilitating factor rather than an impeding factor for companies. However, there are not many existing studies that position practice as the starting point for organizational change. Therefore, this study will develop research that focuses on the process by which organizations are transformed from the perspective of practice.

Many Japanese companies have been working on 5S for many years, regardless of company or industry. 5S is a practice that transcends the will or time of a specific person, and can be seen as a social practice for Japanese companies. The 5S stands for sorting, tidying, cleaning, standardization, and discipline. Furthermore, some famous Japanese managers often call for a special focus on toilet cleaning among the 5Ss. Therefore, this study decided to develop a study that focuses on the process of organization change, with a particular focus on the practice of toilet cleaning.

Since this study is a process research that focuses on how a specific practice transforms an organization or creates a strategy, it is essential for the researcher himself to go inside the company and conduct a careful research study. Therefore, this study developed action research as shown in the next and subsequent sections.

3. The Process of Introducing and Continuing Toilet Cleaning Activities in One Japanese Company

3.1 Before the Start of the Activities

The company under this study is a group company of a major equipment manufacturer, whose main business is the manufacture and sale of equipment mainly for public facilities. The company was founded in the 1940s, has about 150 employees, and is headquartered in Tokyo, with sales offices in each of Japan's six largest cities. The president is usually elected from the group headquarters. According to the consultant firm that was providing consulting services to the sales departments of the surveyed companies, they are facing problems similar to those faced by many long-established Japanese companies today. For example, there are sluggish sales and profits, no new innovations and proposals, low proactiveness and motivation of each employee, indifference to other departments and others, messy company, etc. It had a number of problems that often appear in companies with a long history.

On October 18, 20XX, a meeting was held with the then president, the head of the sales department, Mr. K, the middle manager of the sales department, and me along with the consultant firm. Although the consulting firm and the surveyed company had discussed the introduction of toilet cleaning activities in advance, the meeting took place over a long period of time because several questions and concerns about the toilet cleaning activities were raised.

Specifically, they wondered whether it would be pointless since the toilets had already been cleaned by a cleaning company, whether the same result would be achieved this time since no one had cooperated in cleaning the stairs in the past, and whether cleaning and rearranging the sales floors should be prioritized first. However, the president was not so much opposed to the idea as he was aware of the existence of such business leaders as Konosuke Matsushita, who placed importance on cleaning toilets, and he was also interested in decluttering, which was a bit of a fad at the time.

Rather, they had a desire to use whatever they could do, even if it was just cleaning the toilets, as an opportunity to turn the company around, and they decided to try a toilet-cleaning activities every morning 30 minutes before the start of the workday. In other words, although the surveyed companies or their presidents do not expect much, they would be happy if some employees other than the three core members (President, the head of the sales department, and Manager K) voluntarily participate in this toilet-cleaning activity someday, and this activity might become a trigger for the company to turn around. They are not sure what the biggest and most essential problem in the company is anymore, but this is just a toilet-cleaning activity that they are going to start anyway, as if they were grasping at straws.

The surveyed companies requested that middle management be invited to participate, but that participation be voluntary and not mandatory, and that it be a trial activity for a period of three months. I agreed to all of their requests, and in return, I requested that the president and the head of the sales department clean the toilets with everyone every morning as much as possible. I also stated that I myself would participate in cleaning toilets at least once or twice a week, and that there would be no need to pay me for any instruction or travel expenses. In return, we agreed not to disclose the name of the company or its employees, but that I would use your company for my research, and that the participants would be required to fill out a daily log in the form shown in Figure 1.

Day _____	(MM/DD _____)
Positivity level (_____ points)	Enjoyment level (_____ points)
Area cleaned: _____	
Today's comments	

Figure 1. Cleaning log

Source: Author's original work.

3.2 Start of Activities

On October 26, the toilet cleaning activities actually started. The day was the day of the monthly company-wide morning meeting for all employees, which was also relayed to the six sales offices via a video conference line. On the day of the meeting, the president and the head of the sales department reported on the previous month's business results, after which I gave a short speech. In the speech, I mentioned that the sales department would start a toilet-cleaning activities every morning starting today, that the activities was not mandatory but open to all, and that many of the leading companies in the industry, such as Seven-Eleven and McDonald's in Japan, place great importance on cleaning their stores. Even after the morning meeting was over, a free-participation restroom cleaning was conducted as a demonstration. The following is the consultant's email reporting the day's activities to his supervisor.

"Thank you for your hard work. X sensei's 30-minute heated lecture captured the hearts of everyone! It was great. And the demonstration was attended by all the managers! As expected, Mr. I was standing in front of the restroom before anyone else. Also, Ms. H, an associate employee and a woman, came to participate. Later, Ms. H also observed. Ms. S, a new employee, was a stranger. I was also impressed by the way the head of the sales department changed his clothes and did it without gloves. I am looking forward to seeing what will happen tomorrow."

3.3 First 7 Days

After the first day of toilet cleaning activities, the participating employees suggested that names be written on rubber gloves and that the work be divided between the urinal body and the water strainer. The following two days, October 27 and 28, had six and five participants, respectively. On the second day, hot water was prepared for cleaning, and a handmade lid was prepared to cover the sensor of the urinal to prevent it from reacting during cleaning. sponges for cleaning the toilets. On the third day, the administrative staff department began cleaning another toilet in the company. The surveyed companies consisted of three major departments: the administrative staff department, the sales department, and the production department. This time, through a consulting firm, the sales department introduced the toilet-cleaning activities, but the administrative staff department also started cleaning the toilets. When I asked the head of the administrative staff department, Mr. O, why he started toilet-cleaning activities, he replied that the restrooms near the administrative staff department were more frequently used by visitors.

By the fourth day, cleaning had naturally started in the sales department, and everyone was already familiar with the process and cleaning silently. The president told me to rest assured that we would continue to clean the toilet even if you didn't come every day. Due to the difference in the starting time of the workday, the administrative staff department starts at 8:00 a.m. and the sales department starts at 8:30 a.m., each for about 30 minutes to clean the toilets. After the cleaning is completed, the participants gather together, and each has a chance for someone to give brief feedback. For example, on the fourth day, an administrative staff commented that spontaneous cleaning felt good, while a participant of the sales department apologized for being late.

On the fifth day, in the sales department, yesterday's late participants are late again this day. On the contrary, the president arrives early and starts cleaning the toilets first, alone. The head of the sales department asks me if it would be better for everyone to clean the toilet together during the cleaning. Although it is true that they basically clean the toilets silently, the participants, including the head of the sales department, often comment

after cleaning that they feel a sense of unity, although they do not know why. The consultant also sent the following report email to his supervisor one day. In the administrative staff department, a large-scale cleaning was started by removing the washlet from the toilet bowl.

“I will report today’s toilet cleaning. The president and the head of the sales department are absent due to the nationwide branch manager meeting. Manager K is also half off in the morning. As a result, it was lonely, but there was a sense of unity even with a small number of people.”

On the morning of the sixth day, when I went to the restroom, I knew that Mr. O, the head of the administrative staff department, had hired a contractor to use a special solvent to dissolve and remove the urinary calculus that had stuck to the toilet the day before. After the cleaning was completed, Mr. S of the sales department expressed his opinion that he would like to remove the stones little by little by everyone’s hands without relying too much on solvents, etc. I told Mr. O, the head of the administrative staff department, of his opinion and suggested that it would be better to proceed by themselves as much as possible in the future, which was agreed to. I also suggested to the president that they clean the toilets together with everyone else, but the president replied that he did not want to see them cleaning the toilets in front of everyone else, and he would like to continue to do so on his own.

On the 7th day, Mr. O, the head of the administrative staff department, does not participate due to a business trip. In the sales department, the number of participants is fluid each day because not a few employees are traveling on business or going directly to customer sites. On some days, both the head of the sales department and Manager K are unable to attend. In the sales department, there are employees who arrive early to prepare for the meeting, employees who arrive late, and the president, who is the only one who cleans up early in the morning. Also, when the seventh day of the cleaning diary that I had requested ended, when I went to collect it, there were quite a few employees who hurriedly started filling in the entire weeks’ worth. In the administrative staff section, on the other hand, everyone comes down together from the second floor to the first floor restrooms at the start time. Also, everyone wrote a cleaning diary every day and submitted it to me. Still, in the sales department, each participant spontaneously brings something of his or her own devise. For example, on the seventh day, the sensor lid that was initially used was upgraded to a sturdy cardboard lid. Also, for several days, a string was added to make it easier to remove the water strainer. And from the ninth day, a clock for time keeping and attendance register were brought in.

3.4 Sales Department Meeting

As the above enthusiastic toilet-cleaning activities continued on a daily basis, a sales department meeting was held on November 14, which A researcher, i.e. myself, was also to attend. The sales department meeting is a monthly meeting attended by the president and employees of the sales department at the head office, and on the day of the meeting, Mr. O (the head manager) and Mr. S (leader) of the administrative staff department were also in attendance. The first half of the meeting consisted mainly of sales guidance and suggestions to young employees from the consulting firm. In the second half of the meeting, I led a review of past toilet cleaning activities and proposed future activities. To review the past activities, I first asked the cleaning participants for their thoughts and impressions after trying the activities. Specifically, the following comments were made.

The head of the sales department: “I didn’t notice it at all until now, and I didn’t even think about it, but I started to stop and look at it when I went to the bathroom. I don’t really know if I’m enjoying the change of beauty, but anyway, it’s become fun to look at. I’m having fun every day. Up until now, it was unimaginable. It’s a change of mind. Also, by using a clean toilet, I feel like I can’t handle it in a mess, and I can’t get it dirty. I used to think that toilets were naturally dirty, but now, even when I’m cleaning them, I no longer feel that the toilet is dirty. I used to clean the toilets at home out of necessity, but the toilets at work are for everyone to use. It’s a big change in my feelings that what I was given and felt dirty is no longer so. In addition, the big change is that I have come to use it with care anyway. that’s all.”

Mr. K (the middle manager of the sales department): “I don’t know what to say, I feel that it would be a good opportunity to change the history of this company and various things in the future, so I always participate when I can.”

Mr. S (the middle manager of the sales department): “After trying to clean the toilet, I thought that it would be fine if the toilet was clean at first, but I thought that cleaning was not the purpose. Through cleaning the toilet, everyone comes up with various ideas. To do this, what should we do? Recently, we forgot the time and clean up, so someone just put a clock. It is interesting to proceed while doing such simulations. There was one day when a contractor used a liquid agent to clean the toilet bowl, but I was disappointed in that method (laughs). It’s good to be beautiful, but I think it’s good to have everyone polish it for half a year or a year and finally become

beautiful.”

Tokyo branch manager: “First of all, my back hurts. I have been cleaning like this for a long time. I have also found that I have to be prepared for cleaning in a certain way. Also, as Mr. S said, the goal may be to clean, but I feel it is more important to be aware of various things.”

I also showed that the word “sense of unity” was often mentioned by the participants in their opinions after cleaning the toilet with everyone and in the collected diaries. Therefore, as a direction for future activities, I proposed cleaning areas other than toilets in order to share a sense of unity among as many employees as possible. Specifically, you will continue to clean the toilets once or twice a week, but since the toilets are already very clean, the remaining days of the week should be used to gradually clean the sales floors and sales vehicles. The reason for this proposal is that it is easy for female employees and employees who are reluctant to clean toilets to participate. Ultimately, not only will you experience a sense of unity through cleaning the toilets and cleaning the floors, but in the future, volunteers will gather a little early in the morning and start a new business while making use of the sense of unity that you have cultivated. I proposed that it be positioned as a preparatory activity to sublimate into a place where discussions can be held.

3.5 After the Sales Department Meeting

From the day after the sales department meeting, young employees and general employees who had not previously participated in the sales department began to participate voluntarily. The head of the sales department, K middle manager, and The head of the administrative staff department were also enthusiastic about my yesterday’s proposal. On the other hand, the president comes early as usual and cleans the toilet by himself.

Then, on November 21, the president called the consultant firm, the head of the sales department, K middle manager and told them that we would continue to clean only the toilets. Later that day, the consultant told me that only the president and a few other employees were elites seconded from the parent company, and that they were special in the company, even though the president had made various attempts over the past six or so years, including the introduction of the consultant company, but had seen little noticeable change. On the other hand, it was said that the reason for rejecting my proposal was that the sales department had become very lively in the short period of one month after the introduction of the toilet cleaning activity led by the researcher, and that it was not pleasant for the president. On the day of the 21st, it is said that the president said, “We are not students of X sensei’s seminar.”

Even after the president’s decision to reject the proposal, many employees who did not know about the decision continued to participate in cleaning the toilets for a while. There were so many people that there were days when a few people had already cleaned another area around the toilet. On the other hand, the head of the sales department, who already knows the decision to refuse, used to come to work earlier than the start time and start preparing to clean the toilet, but recently there are days when he comes to work just before cleaning starts or participates late. is increasing. According to another participant, the head of the sales department participates in cleaning the restrooms only on days when I visit the company.

In addition, complaints about toilet cleaning activities began to be issued from the production department and from within the sales department. As mentioned earlier, in the surveyed companies, the sales department and administrative staff department cleaned the toilets every morning. Only employees in the production department did not participate in this activity. Some employees in the production department complained that they couldn’t go to the bathroom immediately after coming to work because they cleaned the toilet every morning. The sales department complained that there was a list even though participation was supposed to be voluntary. The roster was quickly removed. Instead, a list of toilet bowls was displayed, and the form was changed to a check mark for toilet bowls that had been cleaned.

On the other hand, regarding the complaint from the production department, it was decided that half of the total toilets could be used at all times because the sales and administrative staff did not have the same cleaning time. At a later date, I heard from the head of the administrative staff department that this event symbolizes the company’s lack of a culture of praising each other, and rather pulling each other. Around this time, I and the S leader of the administrative staff department walked to the surveyed companies from the station in the morning together. On the way, I heard from him that it is a sign that many employees have a sense of crisis about the future of the company the reasons why they enthusiastically participate toilet-cleaning activities.

In the middle of December, the difference between the sales department and the administrative staff department became clear. In the sales department, the head of the sales department has more opportunities to travel on business, but the frequency of participating in toilet cleaning will be extremely low. The frequency of

participation by other managers decreased, and instead, it changed to a toilet cleaning activity in which K middle manager and young general employees participated mainly. Also, around this time, there were almost no ideas or improvements regarding cleaning methods. Below is an email I received from K middle manager in December. On the other hand, in the administrative staff department, the head manager comes to work early every morning, lays a towel in front of the toilet door, prepares hot water in a bucket, etc., and the same enthusiastic toilet cleaning as at the beginning. maintained. In addition, various ideas were introduced as needed, such as creating cloth doorknob covers and introducing a steam cleaning machine.

Mr. K (the middle manager of the sales department): “I realize how hard it is to bring about change. However, I am grateful that I can “learn” through various efforts to change. I am determined to continue working on it.”

3.6 Three Months after Starting Activities

On January 5, the first day of the company’s work, many employees in the sales department, including the general manager of the sales department, participated in the toilet cleaning activity, but after the new year began, most of the younger employees stopped participating. The consulting firm later reported to me that the Tokyo Branch Manager had discouraged the younger employees from participating. but after the new year, almost no young employees participated. Although the Tokyo Branch Manager himself participated in cleaning the toilets, it seems that the reason for this was that the relationship between him and the head of the sales department was not necessarily good.

In February, the number of days when only one person participated in the toilet-cleaning activity began to increase, partly because employees in the sales department had to go on business trips at the end of the fiscal year. There were several days when only Manager K or Mr. Y cleaned the toilet.

And only the president wrote the cleaning diary that I requested to the sales department before the toilet cleaning was introduced. The president points out that it is difficult to keep a cleaning diary because the sales department does not have the habit of writing even a business diary. On the other hand, employees in the sales department began to question whether the president really came to work early every morning and cleaned the toilets. Although the toilet bowl closest to the entrance was used as the toilet bowl for the president, it was pointed out that the toilet bowl began to show dirt. The toilet closest to the entrance may get dirty easily because it is used frequently, but it was certainly dirty compared to other toilets. At the decision of the head of the sales department, the rest of the employees will leave the president’s toilet untouched for a while and watch over it.

On February 1, a meeting was held in the administrative staff department to discuss the future of toilet cleaning, and it was decided to continue. According to S-Leader, there was no objection to the continuation at the meeting, and it did not even become a central topic of discussion. Rather, the toilets, including the walls and floors, have become sufficiently clean, so it is said that time was spent discussing the ongoing system change by reducing the number to two people every morning. And they decided to use it as a place for communication within the department by changing the pairing of the two each time. In addition, Mr. O, the head of the administrative staff department, will continue to participate every morning as before, and the administrative staff department will continue to clean the toilets with a three-person system including Mr. O.

On the other hand, in the sales department, I heard from the head of the sales department that they had to continue cleaning toilets beyond the initial three months without even setting up a special meeting. At the same time, I heard from him that there were no more complaints from the production department about cleaning toilets every morning. In other words, both departments decided to continue cleaning the toilets beyond the originally planned three months because there was no particular reason or objection to stop.

On the other hand, I suggested that the president stop cleaning the toilets at the end of March because there was a disconnect between the president who cleans by himself and the employees of the sales department. Since the president had said in the past, “ We are not students of X sensei’s seminar,” I asked the president to make a proposal through a consulting firm. At a later date, the president will accept the proposal.

3.7 Transformation of Organizational Structure in the Sales Department

Partly because the consulting firm wanted the surveyed companies to extend their contracts, they proposed an organizational reform plan within the sales department, and it was accepted. It was an organizational reform proposal to reorganize the entire department into four groups. Since there were many cases where each individual worked individually, the change was aimed at promoting work in groups. In addition, they aimed to create a workplace where young employees can easily play an active role by making four mid-level managers, including Manager K, the core of each group. A consulting firm asked me for my opinion on this organizational reform plan, so I pointed out the danger that if the sales numbers were to drop significantly under the new system,

criticism would concentrate on the selected mid-career manager. In order for the four groups to work as a team under each manager, I proposed using toilet cleaning. Specifically, I proposed that each manager should become a leader for each day of the week and have each group clean the toilet.

On March 29, a meeting was held at the surveyed company with the participation of the consultant firm, the head manager of the administrative staff department, and Manager K of the sales department. The consultant firm and Manager K have expressed the opinion that the key will be whether Manager M, who will be transferred from the Osaka branch to the new Tokyo branch manager, will be involved in cleaning the toilets in conjunction with the new organizational structure from April. Therefore, it was decided that not only would the president ask Mr. M to participate in cleaning the toilet, but I would also ask Mr. M about it.

After cleaning the toilet on April 12th, I met Manager M for the first time. Then I ask if he would like to participate in the toilet cleaning activity, and if it is possible to proceed with the cleaning activity as a team. Manager M replied that he would like to work on cleaning the toilet for about a month, and that he would like to think about it after understanding human relationships. After that day, even when Manager K was absent, there were days when Manager M would do the cleaning by himself. On the contrary, from April onwards, the head manager of the sales department did not participate in toilet cleaning at all.

3.8 Greeting Activities by New Employees

Four new employees joined the company in April. They received training for new hires at the parent company and started greeting activities at the entrance of the company every morning using the greetings they learned there. It is said that the management staff department also supported the start of the new employee greeting activities. Therefore, I propose that the S leader of the administrative staff department should be greeted with the other person's name as well. From the next day onwards, they will greet each other by name. However, there are complaints from employees in the production department that there is a problem with personal information. At the discretion of the head manager and S leader, it was decided not to respond to complaints from the production department and to continue as they were.

After the consecutive holidays in May, young employees from the production department up to their third year with the company voluntarily participated in the greeting activities. Originally, the greeting activities was scheduled to end at the end of May, assuming that the new employees would learn the names of the other employees, but it was decided to continue until June.

I heard from Mr. A, a young man in the production department who planned to participate in the greeting activities with new employees, that he was inspired by the toilet cleaning activities and wondered if the young employees in the production department could do something about it. When I talked to Manager K of the sales department about this, he replied that he was rather inspired by the greeting activities with the new employees and employees of the production department.

In the administrative staff department, each participant, including the head manager, had continued to keep a daily cleaning log, but they changed the format to have one notebook in the department and have one participant write the diary on behalf of the others on the same day, starting in May.

In the sales department, on May 14, about a month after Manager M began cleaning the toilets, he called for participation in cleaning the toilets within the department. As a result, many young employees started to participate again. In addition, mid-level employees who had not participated in the past began to participate continuously. I suggested that the sales department should continue the cleaning diary as a department in the same format as the administrative staff department. In other words, both the sales department and the administrative staff department switched from diaries for providing research data for researchers to diaries for recording departmental activities.

3.9 President's Retirement

The president of the company is retiring. He had been in office for approximately seven years. The new president will also be sent from the parent company.

On May 28, a meeting was held in my laboratory at the university, attended by the consultant firm and Mr. K, the middle manager of the sales department at that meeting, I suggested that you stop cleaning toilets. I reasoned that it would be difficult for the new president to manage the company in his own way with a consulting firm hired by the former president, and with toilet-cleaning activities recommended by outsider me. In response to the proposal to stop cleaning toilets, Mr. K immediately responded that he wanted to continue the toilet-cleaning activities as is. The reason was that some employees, including himself, had a strong sense of mission to make the company a better place, and he wanted to get a clue to that goal from the toilet-cleaning activities. Therefore,

after the appointment of the new president, I decided not to attend the toilet cleaning activities, although they would continue. Instead of visiting the company every week like before, I decided to visit once every few months.

Thereafter, the greeting campaign for new employees and young employees in the production department was continued until the Bon vacation in August. In September, the new president presented the company with an award for its past toilet-cleaning activities. The head of the administrative staff department proposed the idea to the new president, who agreed to the proposal. On January 21 of the following year, I visited the surveyed company and met the new president. The new president said that although he would not be participating himself, he would continue to watch over and support the toilet-cleaning activities. A few days later, I received an e-mail from 1 Manager K, reporting that every Friday they clean all areas of the company, including the sales department's floor. The following is the e-mail from Manager K.

"I will report after that.

Conducted from Friday, January 26

No time limit (actual implementation time is about 30 minutes)

Weekend trash disposal plus floor mopping

Employees who spontaneously participate and implement ... 20%

Employees who notice and participate after being instructed...50%

Employees pretending not to see... 30%

※The other day, about 15 people participated. It is still ongoing.

In addition, there is a renovated building in the enclave, and cleaning there has also started. It's not every day, but I'm adjusting the number of times while watching the situation. This building is used as a meeting room and dining room. This has been implemented since February 1, based on a request by two volunteers. I am responsible for carrying out activities.

I feel that the effects of the ongoing "toilet cleaning" are spreading in many ways. I would like to devise ways to further promote a sense of solidarity within the department in the future."

In June of the following year, the presidents of the surveyed companies changed again. The new president also comes from the parent company. Even in December, after two presidential changes, the sales department and the administrative staff department continued to clean toilets every morning. Although it was originally planned for three months, it has already been an ongoing activity for more than three years. In addition, the cleaning diary, which the sales department could not continue in the past, has been continued as a second notebook for both departments. With the retirement of the head of the sales department, Manager M has now assumed the post of head of the sales department, and Manager K has been appointed to lead new business development.

4. Findings

The following four points are especially presented as findings acquired through the action research described above. The first point is that organization and members can be shaken up simply by introducing toilet cleaning. The researcher introduced basically only toilet-cleaning activities to the company under this study. However, in the process of continuing the toilet-cleaning activities, the company members and the company as a whole were greatly shaken. For example, although toilet-cleaning activities were introduced only in the sales department, the administrative staff department also started cleaning toilets. Furthermore, the production department, which did not clean the toilets, started complaining about the toilet-cleaning activities by other departments. Toilet cleaning can be pointed out as having an impact not only on members and departments that are eagerly about it, but also on members and departments that do not engage in it.

The second finding is that when top management takes the initiative, toilet cleaning activities continue and become a habit. Mr. O, the head of the administrative staff department, always came to the office early and prepared to clean the toilet. As a result, the whole department continued to clean the restrooms with the same enthusiasm as at the beginning. On the other hand, even in the sales department, when the head of the sales department led the whole department in cleaning up immediately after the start of the activity, the participants also enthusiastically cleaned the toilets and devised cleaning methods. And the number of participants increased. However, it was decided not to expand the cleaning of new places other than toilet cleaning, and when the frequency of participation by the head of the sales department began to decline, no one in the department was devising cleaning. And the number of participants started to decline. Furthermore, when the president began to

clean the toilet first by himself, there were even voices of dissatisfaction with the president's cleaning alone and doubts as to whether the president really cleaned the toilet every morning. It can be pointed out that if top management does not take the lead in setting an example, not only will cleaning activities not become a habit, but there is also the danger of even creating a disconnect between members within the organization.

The third finding is that not only the researcher but also the company members under this action research came to take the position of both observers and practitioners. In action research, the researcher usually becomes both a practitioner and an observer (Schein, 2001). This time shows that the members of the company under this study were also sometimes observers as well as practitioners. For example, through the daily toilet cleaning activities, the president of the company pointed out the problem of the sales department's inability to keep a daily logbook. He was dissatisfied that the sales department could not continue to do anything at work. Conversely, a member of the sales department pointed out the president's problem of cleaning by himself alone. They were always frustrated that he wasn't close to them. The head of the administrative staff department pointed out the problem of the company's culture of complaining about cleaning the toilet every morning. He was disappointed with the company's culture of being negative about anything new. These problems were pointed out because they were not limited to toilet cleaning activities. They also pointed out that the company could turn around if these issues were resolved.

The fourth finding was that the more serious the participants were, the more they sought some meaning or utility from toilet cleaning. For example, many participants in the toilet cleaning activities in the sales department pointed out that through the activities, the sense of unity among the department members had been strong. Some participants also indicated that they were able to share a sense of crisis about their company among employees as a result of the ongoing toilet-cleaning activities. In addition, Mr. K, the middle manager of the sales department, noted that there were also benefits related to work. Specifically, he says that through the daily cleaning activities, he has been able to deepen communication with younger employees, and they now come to him for work-related advice. In the past, inexperienced young employees sometimes made hasty decisions that caused major problems at customer sites, and middle managers were sometimes forced to deal with the serious problems they caused. Now younger employees come to consult with their supervisor and report to them in advance, so middle managers can save post-processing of big troubles.

5. Discussion

5.1 Toilet Cleaning Activities as a Social Practice

In recent years, a new research trend has begun to emerge in business administration, particularly in the areas of strategy and organization theory. This is a new research experiment called "Strategy as Practice (SaP)" and "Community of Practice", based on the theoretical background of practice theory in sociology and pragmatism in philosophy. This trend is often referred to as the "Practice Turn" in the social sciences as a whole. This basic assumption is sometimes expressed as "strategy, organization and people are embedded in practice" (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Based on the definition by sociologist Reckwitz (2002), Whittington (2006) explained practice as "shared routines of behavior, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting and using 'things' (p. 619)".

Cleaning and toilet cleaning, the focus of this study, are activities that Japanese companies have traditionally cherished, and can be positioned as social practices for Japanese companies. This study focused on the process of legitimizing toilet cleaning as a social practice in one Japanese company.

This action research shows that practices are not necessarily legitimized in a steady upward trend, but rather that legitimacy sometimes declines or is lost, i.e., a "crisis period of practices" is necessary in the process of legitimization. In other words, a "crisis period of practices" in an organization is necessary in the process of legitimization of practices.

Specifically, in the surveyed company, the production department complained that the sales department cleaned the toilets. The researcher also suggested that the toilet-cleaning activities be discontinued when the president of the company was replaced. However, in each case, the company members who participated in the cleaning showed their willingness to continue the toilet cleaning activities. and in fact, it was continued.

We would like to point out that facing a crisis of practice presents an important opportunity to greatly increase the legitimacy of the practice in the organization. This is because when the legitimacy of a practice declines, the more the practitioner becomes aware of the existence of the practice, the more he or she has an opportunity to reconsider the meaning of the practice, and sometimes seeks to legitimize or institutionalize the practice by adding new meaning to it. In other words, it can be pointed out that changes and additions to the meaning and

significance of practices within an organization are necessary for practices to take root and become legitimized.

Kohtamäki et al. (2022) review 340 SaP papers published in the last 20 years and present the results co-citation analysis of for those studies. They show that many of the papers are process studies in common, and that the papers are divided into five clusters. There are five clusters of praxis, sensemaking, discursive, sociometrical and institutional and the analysis results show that research focusing on praxis in particular has increased rapidly in recent years. Especially, the research focused on strategy “doing”, and there is an increasing trend toward research on specific strategy (i.e., praxis) making or implementing processes.

Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) have indicated the need to focus on the three concepts of practice, praxis, and practitioner, as well as on the relationship between them, in order to develop research based on the original practice theory. However, in recent years, there has been a tendency for research to focus on praxis. In other words, there has been little development of research focusing on practices. As defined earlier, practices focus particularly on traditional and normative routines. Traditions and norms are often habitual and taken for granted in each country or region. While focusing on the relationship between practices and practitioners, this study can be positioned as a process that focuses on the process by which certain practices, which have been overlooked in existing studies, become habitual and traditional in actual organizations. In this process, it can be positioned as a study that points out that the crisis process of practices becomes indispensable in an organization.

5.2 Toilet Cleaning Activities as a Starting Point for Organizational Change

In addition, we would like to point out the necessity of not only promoting research on organizational change through work itself or highly profitable activities as in existing research (e.g. Burgelman, 1983), but also focusing on activities such as toilet cleaning activities, which are not original work or low-profit activities, and developing research that uses them as a starting point for organizational change. As mentioned earlier, people and organizations in companies were greatly shaken up by toilet cleaning activities. In almost companies, work is systematized and elaborated within the organization over time and experiences. And sometimes this causes the problem of rigidity, which leads to a lack of flexibility. However, cleaning toilets is not a job. It can be pointed out that both people and the organization run about in confusion due to the lack of values and systems in place to accept what is not a job. In order to make a rigid organization more flexible and fluid, non-work activities such as cleaning toilets are effective and can serve as a starting point for organizational change.

It is not that studies that view companies in terms of social practices, i.e., social behavior or habituated behavior, have not been attempted at all. One widely known example is Nelson and Winter (1982) “Organization Routines”. They define organization routines as “all regular and predictable behavioral patterns of firms (p. 14),” and also show organization routines examples, such as producing things, through procedures for hiring and firing, ordering new inventory, or stepping up production of items in high demand, to policies regarding investment, research and development (R&D), or advertising, and business strategies about product diversification and overseas investment. If there is no routine at all in an organization, not only is there a risk that various tasks will not be performed accurately and efficiently, but it can also cause a lot of friction and conflict among departments and members (Duhigg, 2012). The existence of organization routines, which are the habits of the organization, is essential for organizational stability. Organization routines can also be a source of sustainable competitive advantage because they are highly organization-specific and difficult to imitate. This is one of the reasons why organization routines have attracted particular attention in strategic management theory, which has continued to search for sources of sustainable competitive advantage.

As noted above, Nelson and Winter cite a fairly broad range of activities within organizations as examples of organization routines. However, all of the examples still remain within a limited category. All are work-related and for-profit activities. Based on their definition, organization routines should include activities that may not necessarily be directly related to work or peripheral activities that may not be profitable. On the other hand, the need to focus attention as a practice on trivial activities and interactions that have not traditionally been adequately illuminated, especially by early practice-based management researchers, has been proposed. (Whittington, 1996). Certainly, social practices should not be limited to the cleaning that this study focused on, but rather to those that have little to do with work in nature and are of very low non-profit nature. It is necessary to develop research that positions work-related customary behaviors as organization routines, and at the same time, to develop management research that positions peripheral activities that have little relevance to work or are not profitable as social practices, which have tended to be overlooked in conventional management studies.

Nelson and Winter’s theory, which they call “evolutionary theory,” is influenced by Darwin’s “theory of evolution. In the same way that Darwin showed that the survival of the fittest is determined by the selection of genes by the external environment, the survival of organizational routines is also selected by the external

environment. In other words, it is the environment, not management, that determines which of the company's routines are good or bad. Furthermore, it is also pointed out that even if a certain organization routine is intentionally changed or a new organizational routine is created and introduced, it is not uncommon for it to be eliminated or suppressed because of the strong interdependent relationship among organization routines. It is not easy to intentionally change or create only one routine. Basically, organization routines have often been shown to be not easy to intentionally transform or create, i.e., not highly manageable (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Becker et al., 2005).

In contrast, for the cleaning activities that this study focused on, these activities had high intentional manageability. Rather, they were activities that would be difficult to introduce or be legitimized within an organization without intentional management. In the process of introducing and sustaining these activities, the true nature of the organizations and individuals, including their strengths and weaknesses, were revealed, providing clues for organizational change. Through this study, we would like to show the possibility of developing organizational change theory based on low-profit activities with high intentional management potential.

In addition, there is an advantage for researchers in that it is easier for them to conduct research by positioning peripheral activities in companies as practices. If the activities are not directly related to work or non-profit activities, it is easy for the researcher to participate as one of the actual practitioners. The cleaning activities focused on in this study are exactly the kind of activities that are relatively easy for researchers to participate in and observe. By participating, sometimes as a practitioner and sometimes as an observer, one can learn and observe how the company's executive, managers, employees, and the organization as a whole change over time as these activities continue. On the contrary, it is not easy for many researchers to have the opportunity to participate in the work activities of companies and commercial activities themselves. Moreover, it is extremely unlikely that researchers will actually participate in the process of strategy formulation, which is the focus of SaP research in recent years, or that they will conduct in-depth investigations. Also, even if we have the opportunity, it is often difficult to actually publish the research. Therefore, from the perspective of the feasibility of research. Therefore, from the viewpoint of feasibility of survey research, we would like to propose the necessity of positioning peripheral activities in companies as practices and focusing on the process of habituation and legitimization of practices.

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