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# Doctoral Thesis

## **STRATEGY TEXT ROLES: Exploring practices-in-use and academic managers strategizing behaviours**

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Ao meu pai.

## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the use of the strategy text in strategizing from the view point of academic managers. Strategy research has become interested in practices, activities and behaviours of practitioners of different organizational levels in strategizing. Additionally, micro level activities and the relevance of strategy text in implementation process have thus become an interesting focus of research in different organizational settings. Even though the literature have acknowledged the significance of practitioners and practices in organizational strategy, the relationship between practitioners, practices and strategy texts in effective strategy implementation remains still little ascertained.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the strategy text in strategizing; exploring how variations in practices of academic manager's engagement in strategy practices and in strategy text usage can explain enhanced outcomes in strategy implementation in the university setting. As such, the activities, practices and perspectives involved in the construction and implementation of strategy text are studied through narratives of academic managers regarding their views and roles within the strategy process. In this manner, this study uses a qualitative design, with the application of an exploratory multiple case study, where semi-structure interviews with 42 top and middle academic managers in three typology of public Spanish universities were applied (technological, research and regional), which constitutes the primary data. Additional data is comprised of documentation of the official strategy processes of the three institutions, also observation notes, and informal conversations. The exploitation of these multiple sources of data grounded in strategy as practice as theoretical lens, informed by theory of discursive approaches to strategy making, supported by the grounded theory on analyzing the data, allows the identification of distinct patterns of narratives regarding strategy texts roles, strategy practices in use as well as strategizing behaviours and contextual elements driving this relationship.

Based on the analysis of distinct forms of strategizing behaviours and practices in use, six roles of strategy text in strategizing are described: consultive, conversational and authoritative roles, which presented higher enabling engagement potential; prescriptive and contingent roles, which were associated with higher constraining engagement potential and the ambivalent role that presented a borderline perspective between the previous roles.

By showing how both top and middle academic managers use strategy texts in strategizing, this study adds to our understating of elements that influences in strategy implementation and alignment. The study suggests that different academic managers engage in strategy and use the strategy text in different ways (in a more creative or restrictive form), however these differences are strongly context specific of the internal and external practices that frame strategizing behaviours, which consequently might derive into constraining or enabling text creative uses. The study proposes a dynamic framework that integrates strategy text roles within internal and external contextual elements, practices in use and patterns of strategizing behaviour and shows the relevance of the interaction of strategy text with elements that could be reinforced, changed or withdrawn when promoting the forms of interactive strategizing behaviours and text creative consumptions. Therefore, the study provides strategy research with new understanding of the role of strategy texts in the practice of strategy.

**Keywords:** strategy text, strategizing, strategic management, strategic planning, pluralistic organizations, academic managers, strategy tools, strategy implementation, university management, narrative analysis, qualitative design.

## RESUMEN

Este estudio se centra en el uso del texto estratégico desde el punto de vista de los directivos académicos. La línea de investigación en estrategia se ha interesado por las prácticas, actividades y comportamientos de los directivos en los diferentes niveles organizacionales durante la formulación de estrategias. Además, las actividades a nivel micro y la pertinencia del texto estratégico en el proceso de implementación se han convertido en un interesante foco de investigación en diferentes contextos organizacionales. A pesar de que la literatura reconoce la importancia de los estrategas y las prácticas estratégicas de las organizaciones, la relación entre los practicantes, las prácticas y los textos estratégicos en la implementación efectiva de la estrategia permanece aún poco explorada.

El propósito de este estudio es examinar el rol del texto estratégico en el *strategizing*, explorando de qué modo las variaciones en las prácticas de implicación y alineamiento del directivo académico y los diferentes usos atribuidos al texto estratégico pueden explicar mejores resultados en la implementación de la estrategia en diferentes universidades. Como tal, las actividades, prácticas y perspectivas involucradas en la construcción e implementación del texto estratégico se estudian a través del análisis de las narrativas de los directivos académicos con respecto a sus puntos de vista y roles dentro del proceso de formulación e implementación de la estrategia. De esta manera, este estudio utiliza un diseño cualitativo, con la aplicación de un estudio de casos múltiple y exploratorio, en donde se han llevado a cabo entrevistas semiestructuradas con 42 directivos académicos (alta dirección y mandos intermedios) en tres tipologías de universidades públicas españolas (tecnológica, de investigación y regional), que constituyen los datos primarios.

Los datos complementarios se componen de la documentación oficial de los procesos de la estrategia de las tres instituciones, asimismo, de notas de observación y conversaciones informales. La explotación de estas múltiples fuentes mediante la utilización de la “estrategia como práctica” como lente teórica, la teoría de los enfoques discursivos en la elaboración de estrategias, y el apoyo de la teoría fundamentada, permite la identificación de distintos patrones de narrativas respecto a los roles de los textos estratégicos y las prácticas, así como comportamientos del *strategizing* y elementos contextuales que caracterizan esta relación.

Con base en el análisis de las distintas formas de *strategizing* y las prácticas utilizadas en las diferentes universidades, se determinan seis roles atribuidos al texto estratégico en la práctica de la estrategia: roles consultivo, conversacional y autoritario, que presentan un mayor potencial facilitador de implicación; roles prescriptivo y contingente, que se asocian a un potencial de mayor restricción de la participación; y el rol ambivalente que presenta una perspectiva ambigua, y que se encuentra en la frontera entre los roles anteriores. Al mostrar de qué modo los directivos académicos (alta dirección y mandos académicos) utilizan textos estratégicos en el desarrollo de estrategias institucionales, este estudio aporta un mayor entendimiento acerca de los elementos que influyen en la implementación de la estrategia y su alineamiento.

El estudio sugiere que los diferentes directivos académicos participan en la estrategia y utilizan el texto estratégico de diferentes maneras: de una forma más creativa u otra más restrictiva. Sin embargo, estas diferencias están muy asociadas al contexto específico de las prácticas internas y externas que determinan los diferentes comportamientos presentes en el *strategizing*, y por lo tanto pueden llevar a restringir o habilitar el uso creativo del texto. El estudio propone un marco dinámico que integra los roles del texto estratégico con los elementos contextuales internos y externos, las prácticas en uso y los patrones de comportamiento de los directivos en la práctica de la estrategia. Además, muestra la importancia de la interacción del texto estratégico con elementos que podrían ser reforzados, cambiados o eliminados en la promoción de las diferentes formas del *strategizing* interactivo y del consumo creativo del texto. En definitiva, el estudio proporciona al ámbito de investigación de la estrategia nuevos conocimientos acerca del rol de los textos estratégicos en la práctica del *strategizing*.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Chapter Structure

This chapter places the core focus of this doctoral research, illustrating an overview of the study background in order to bring upon the problem statement regarding the issue that is to be investigated with the goal of finding an explanation and contribution. In addressing the research problem, the researcher had to identify the specific questions for which data is needed to be gathered in order to solve the research problem. As such, in this chapter, the research questions are developed. Therefore, this chapter also addresses the objectives of this research, derived from the research problem and questions. On these grounds, the research objectives explain the purpose of the research in measurable terms and specify what the research should achieve. The chapter concludes with an outline of the overall structure of the PhD dissertation.

#### 1.1. Background to the Research

This research project is placed within the stream of strategy discipline, with a central focus on the strategy text, strategizing practices and narratives approaches. As such, this study applies a strategy as practice perspective in order to study strategizing in universities. This approach is particularly useful because it attempts to shift attention away from merely a focus on the effects of strategies on performance alone to a more comprehensive, in-depth analysis of what actually takes place inside the activities that deal with strategy making. Fundamentally, the potential offered by this perspective lies in its ability to explain how strategy-making is enabled and constrained by prevailing organizational and societal practices (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011).

Within this context, this study deals on the one hand, with the problematic of implementing strategy in pluralistic organizational (Jarzabkowski and Fenton 2006) contexts such as universities, and on the other, contributes within the discursive perspectives on strategy, placing the focus of analysis upon the narratives of practices and behaviours regarding the production of strategy documents and their use at different types of universities. The construct of “strategic planning” has been widely investigated by a great number of scholars and there is now a vast literature on planning for business enterprises and governmental organizations. This is totally justifiable when we look at the results of the Annual Management tool survey conducted by Bains and Company since 1993. The results of these surveys have shown that strategic planning has been one of the top most used tools by top managers in organizations worldwide and the last survey (Rigby and Bilodeau 2013) has found that strategic planning is still amongst the most popular management tools used around the globe<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Management Tools identifies and explains the most important concepts and tactics used in business today, based on Bain & Company research: [http://www.bain.com/Images/BAIN\\_BRIEF\\_Management\\_Tools\\_%26\\_Trends\\_2013.pdf](http://www.bain.com/Images/BAIN_BRIEF_Management_Tools_%26_Trends_2013.pdf)

However, the introduction of strategic management tools in universities have been latecomers in comparison to the corporate world and its “beginnings” have tended to focus on the United States, from which a widely range of literature on strategy, strategic planning and strategy change can be found (e.g. Birnbaum 2000b; Checkoway 2001; Davies and Thomas 2002; Keller 1983). Also, these studies deal with the pitfalls of adapting strategic planning as management tool into complex organizations such as universities. Overall, strategy making in universities has been portrayed as loosely coupled system as stated by Weick (1976) or as garbage can (Cohen et al. 1972), perspectives which reflect that strategy emerges from the random confluence between problems, solutions, participants and choice opportunities. Therefore, the formulation and implementation of strategy in universities are not simple, as the different interest groups in the university pursue their own goals in relative isolation, with little collective strategic action for the university as a whole.

In addition to, the higher education landscape and different governance systems in various contexts have influenced in the strategy development in higher education institutions. Invariably the discourse on strategic planning in higher education has become contextualised against the background of neo-liberalism and New Public Management (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004); (Denman 2005) and its appropriateness to higher education institutions as workplaces. Taylor and Miroiu (2002) suggest that New Public Management imports certain characteristics to universities, including: priority setting and use of performance indicators, strengthening of the administrative and leadership functions within universities, a client orientation and a value for money emphasis. Kogan et al. (2006) suggest however that despite the introduction of New Public Management approaches, subsequent behaviour at the departmental and faculty level remains relatively unchanged.

The ideas and impact of managerialism have been widely studied in the Anglo-Saxon area and in some European countries, although in the Spanish context, scanty studies can be found which analyze the influences of these trends upon the strategic practices of the universities (Giroto et al. 2013). Nevertheless, perhaps influenced by the economic crises landscape and by the increasingly deficit within the public university system, the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports has been working on a document called “University governance diagnostic”, and according to the conducted analysis, several proposals were derived. This brief analysis has led to the conclusion that if the proposal about a new model of governance has to take place in order to develop a much more efficient system, there is a clear need to change some of the articles of the organic Law (LOU). However, the diagnostic also allows taking some steps forward without having the necessary obligation to change the Law, which in some cases would

allow more room for manoeuvre in the improvement of some aspects of the current Spanish university governance model.

In addition to these policy levels and higher education governance issues to be taken into account as the background of this study in the specific Spanish context, the development of different forms of management has been closely connected with the structure of universities, especially public institutions. Fundamentally, the activity of developing strategies and putting them into practice must be understood within the institutional larger context, framed in the diversity of interests that characterizes the collective action (Townley 2008). In general, emphasis on practice illustrates how interactions between individuals, activities and the context in which they are located, are socially integrated and articulated and are interpreted through stories and narratives that create meaning about the defined issues (Brown and Duguid 1991).

In such perspective, strategy is carried out through discourse and individual action and is contextually embedded in a set of social, political and economic factors (Hendry 2000). Correspondingly, strategizing involves several people, and it is based on the idea that organizational actors ensure mediation between action and cognition through conversations on the day-to-day basis, thus contributing to the structuring of strategic change processes (De la Ville and Mounoud 2003). The process of strategizing usually involves a lot of talk and text (e.g. meetings, presentations, conversations, etc.) in like manner the outcomes of strategizing are also discursive in their nature, i.e. strategic plans, vision statements, official speeches, etc. (Maitlis and Lawrence 2003). In such a way strategic discourse is not unanimous enterprise but a polyphonic project that receives different kinds of emphasis in different contexts (Seidl 2007) that is to say that strategy discourse can be used by managers in different ways for their own benefit (Suominen and Mantere 2010).

Therefore, studying strategizing entails giving more room to explore how different organizational actors transform the grand discourse of strategy. As a consequence, investigating strategy making process actually means operating an equilibrium between discourses of “grand strategy” (Barry and Elmes 1997) and the minutiae of everyday practice through developing a more systematic sensitive to narratives. Thereupon, issues of contexts, power, politics, emotions and a lot of other factors all add to the complexity of strategy formulation and implementation. As argued by Hrebiniak (2006) while the implementation view would characterize the success of the strategy realization in terms of organizational members activities being redirected in a specific way, the usefulness and usability of the official strategy possibly should also be treated as a success factor for strategy realization in order to confront popular concepts like resistance to change, staff understanding and subunits goals or control structures and practices.



As respect to the strategy as practice (SAP) perspective, it has contributed to advance sociological theories in strategic management discipline, offering alternative outcomes to economic performance, widening the empirical contexts of strategy research and has promoted new methodologies (e.g. Chia and Rasche 2010; Tsoukas 2010). Specifically, research based on strategy as practice perspective has demonstrated the enabling and constraining aspects of strategy practices, the role of skilled performance in changing the course of the events, and the social constructions of strategy practitioners. Three key concepts have been used to encapsulate the SAP approach: practitioners, practices, and praxis. This **3P framework** helps reveal the micro-level aspects of strategizing by focusing on the “who”, “how”, “where”, and “when” of strategic actions (Whittington 2006). Furthermore, in chapter two, this framework is further explored. Accordingly, within this perspective different questions have been raised, mainly exploring the previously mentioned three great areas relate to:

**1) PRACTICES:** enabling and constraining effects of it (e.g. Vaara et al. 2004; Jarzabkowski and Fenton 2006; Giraudeau 2008; Ocasio and Joseph 2008; Eppler and Platts 2009; Vaara et al. 2010; Kornberger and Clegg 2011).

**2) PRAXIS:** what goes on in episodes of strategy-making (e.g. Maitlis and Lawrence 2003; Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009; Sillince et al. 2012; Clarke et al. 2012; Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011).

**3) PRACTITIONERS:** roles and identities of actors involved in strategy-making (e.g. Mantere 2005; Rouleau 2005; Laine and Vaara 2007; Angwin et al. 2009; McCabe 2010; Rouleau and Balogun 2011).

A further issue involved in this triangle (practices, praxis and practitioners) is the strategy text role in strategizing, which also has been a focus of analysis although its overall exploration is still limited (De la Ville and Mounoud 2010). Exploring narrative and language in strategy-making elucidate the various narrative practices that constitute an inherent part of strategy and strategizing, which involves the production of texts in strategy formulation, but also the use of these texts in the “implementation” of strategies. This view allows the understanding of the crucial role of strategy texts and ongoing interpretations in strategizing.

Additionally to the questions put forward by the strategy as practice perspective, other previous strategy research has pinpointed important issues that also drive this dissertation. The study is initially motivated by strategy implementation literature and its problematic applied to the strategy management of higher education institutions. Several authors have acknowledged

strategy implementation difficulties and challenges (see, for example, Noble 1999). Strategic management is often divided into two phases: strategy planning/design and strategy implementation. The role of implementation is to guarantee that the often-abstract strategic plans designed by the strategic apex of an organization become manifested in to everyday work. From this perspective, strategic planning and implementation are, in fact, not phases but continuum of strategic management.

For instance, the literature on this topic discusses different factors that affect strategy implementation success (e.g. strategy formulation and relationship among different units/departments and different strategy levels, issues of executors, communication, tactics, consensus, commitment, or also organizational structure and administrative systems). Some examples of such studies can be found in Hrebiniak (2006); Aaltonen and Ikävalko (2002); Beer and Eisenstat (2000) or Heracleous (2000).

Consequently, this doctoral research, which is based on three case studies applied to different typologies of universities in the Spanish higher education system, explore the experiences of academic managers in strategizing practices through their narratives, and describe the patterns of strategy practices acquaintances (enabling or constraining) as well as the role of strategy text in strategizing. Notwithstanding, few studies have taken, as a central focus of analysis, particular in the context of universities, the artifact (strategy texts) itself and the patterns of behaviours when it comes to use the strategy texts, and what implications it might brings for the strategizing outcomes.

This dissertation is a qualitative study in the higher education sector, focused on the identification of elements and practices that enhance strategy text usefulness and foster engagement in strategizing amongst academic-managers. In the remaining of this introduction chapter, the problem statement, type of study, the research questions and objectives, the research context, and the structure of the thesis are introduced.

## **1.2. The Problem Statement**

Sekaran (2000) defined the problem statement as a clear, precise and succinct statement of the question or issued that is to be investigated with the goal of finding an answer or solution. The basic motivation for this research is, therefore, to explore the experiences of academic managers in strategizing practices through their narratives and describe the role of strategy text in this dynamic.

In line with a discursive approach to strategy research field and the narrative turn into strategy as practice research (Fenton and Langley 2011), this study interest lies in identifying and exploring patterns of activities and practices that supports strategy making and academic managers engagement in strategizing. This topic is in conjunction with strategy implementation issues, where several challenges have been discussed, particularly in the context of the higher education institutions. In this manner, by concentrating on the analysis of the practices of strategizing and on the strategy text functions and uses from different academic managers perspectives, this study intend to extend the knowledge concerning the role of the strategy text in strategizing, in order to help organizations in achieving a higher degree of understanding in regard to their strategy effectiveness based on the usefulness and usability of its strategy texts.

Consequently, the research problem requiring investigation is as follow:

*How strategy texts are used when engaging academic managers in strategizing practices?*

The research gaps identified in the literature review, pinpointed the need for additional information to clarify the research problem. Qualitative approaches, using exploratory research, were deemed appropriated for this purpose. The selection process was guided by the contrasting position of leading scholars, such as Yin (1994; 2003); Miles and Huberman (1994); Stake (1995); Patton (2001); Eisenhardt (1989); Pentland (1999) and Creswell (2003). As such, this study used a constructivist approach as knowledge claim (the idea is to rely on the participant's view of the situation being studied and to interpret meanings others have about the world), a qualitative strategy of inquiry, and interviews as the research method.

I develop a multiple case design in order to carry out a qualitative inquiry regarding elements enhancing and constraining strategizing practices, uses of the strategy texts and academic-managers engagement in different types of universities, and a framework of those elements are proposed, grounded in the views of the interviewees of the study and the institutional documents being analyzed. As of the method for collecting data, this study used in-depth interviews with semi-structured open questions to gather the interviewee's point of view about the research topics. Additionally, informal conversations were held in the three universities, visit observations and document analysis.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

In order to address the research problem, the researcher had to identify the specific questions for which data is needed to be gathered in order to satisfactorily solve the research problem.

Intrinsically, in the particular context of this research, it aimed to answer the following main questions:

- RQ1. What is the role of strategy text in strategizing?
  - RQ1.1. What are the relevant elements, practices and behaviours associated with strategy text usage?
  - RQ1.2. How those elements, practices and behaviours interact among them to promote strategy text usefulness in academic manager engagement in strategizing?
  - RQ1.3. How the strategy text is used by academic managers?
- RQ2. How can variations in practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy text usage explain better academic manager's engagement and superior strategizing outcomes?

#### **1.4. Research Objectives**

The research objectives explain the purpose of the research in measurable terms and specify what the research should achieve (Zikmund 2003). Accordingly, the main objectives for this research, derived from the research problems and questions, are listed below:

- To describe patterns of elements, practices and behaviours associated with strategy text usage in different typologies of universities.
- To determine how those concepts interrelate and influence the achievement of a higher level of academic manager's engagement in strategizing practices.
- To explain the link between the strategizing practices, patterns of academic managers behaviours, with strategy text usability in the context of the different universities.
- To propose a dynamic framework linking strategizing practices, patterns of academic managers behaviours, contextual elements, with strategy text roles, which could be used to improve the level of understanding of academic managers engagement in the strategizing process in the context of higher education institutions.

## 1.5. Research Context

This section sets the stage for the multiple case studies on the role of strategy texts when engaging academic manager in strategizing practices. The research sites and the approach guiding the research are presented, following an introduction to the larger context from which the idea and motivation to carry out the study have emerged. In terms of context, this section describes the three typologies of universities (the sites at which I conducted my research), and my research approach as an organizational and management PhD student, as well as the research philosophy guiding my study of the strategy text roles and engagement of academic managers in strategizing at the Spanish higher education sector.

Everything started back to 2007, when the UNESCO Chair of Higher Education Management (CUDU) has carried out a research project entitled *The Status of Strategic Planning in Spanish Universities* (Llinàs-Audet et al. 2011) which gave responses to the need of knowing the situation of the Spanish universities regarding their process of strategic management. The motivation to conduct such study emerged from the significant increase in the number of Spanish universities that had initiated their path in strategic planning process in recent years; however this growth occurred in a dispersed manner both regarding content and process being used. One of the earliest experiences of strategic planning in a Spanish university dates back to 1988, when an agreement was signed between the UNESCO and the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya – UPC, in order to carry out a study regarding the University role in the development of society. This agreement was formalized in a document called "Plan for the future of the UPC". This document was probably the first framework for strategic planning which appeared in the context of the Spanish higher education sector.

The above mentioned growth in the use of strategic management tools by the Spanish higher education institutions (HEIs) has not been accompanied by any kind of formal study. Concern for a study of this type came from the CUDU, based on such query: How good were the strategic plans being developed by the Spanish universities? Therefore, the purpose of the project was to conduct a comprehensive study on the strategic management of the Spanish universities, looking first to identify and draw a map about the situation of the individual universities strategy process throughout the national territory. The first objective of the project was to explore the aims pursued by the universities, the contents of their strategic plans, processes used and results obtained (Llinàs-Audet et al. 2011).

In a second stage of the study carried out by the CUDU, interviews with top management teams of target Spanish universities were conducted. As a result, nine institutions were chosen for the

interviews applications, with the aim of exploring their strategy practices. As a collaborator in this larger study, I had the opportunity to participate in the development and reporting of the study results, from which the idea of going deeper into the analysis of the strategy text themselves arose as one of the identified lines of future research. Consequently, the idea for the current doctoral dissertation picked up from two specific needs being identified, one the one hand it was the need of going deeper into the case studies analysis, and on the other, to apply a more discursive approach to study strategizing activities within the university sector. The first of these lines of work proposed the exploration of the importance of discourse and rhetoric to communicate and articulate the strategy. The second line brought forward the relevance of middle managers, deans or head of departments, in terms of not only facilitating the alignment of the strategy at a more "low level", but also as important elements in creating the strategy.

Upon this context, the backdrop of this previous study has helped me on identifying the criteria for choosing the research sites in the Spanish context in order to apply the empirical study of my doctoral research. Two universities have been chosen amongst the nine target universities in which the interviews have taken place during the second stage of the previous study carried out by the CUDU. The third university has been chosen based on its ranking position as a research university in the Spanish higher education system as well as the university foundational background project was taken into consideration, which is known as an innovative strategy in the design of a modern type of university. As follows, a brief description of the research sites is introduced.

### **1.5.1. The Research Sites**

This section contains an abridged and condensed version of the history of the strategy process development within the three typologies of universities, which constitutes the multiple cases, the description and position of the typology and classification of the chosen universities as well as the selection criteria and justification.

In Spain, the institutions responsible for tertiary education are universities, which may be in public or private ownership. The public universities are set by acts from the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Community, where the university is to be established, or by a Parliamentary Act in accordance with the government council of the corresponding Autonomous Community. According to section 6 of article 27 of the Spanish Constitution, any individual or legal entity may establish a private university. In order to be recognised, the preliminary report from the General Assembly for University policy is mandatory within the framework of the general organisation of university education. There are secular universities

and universities of the Catholic Church. The latter are subject to special agreements between the Spanish State and the Holy See. At the present there are 50 public universities in Spain and 29 private universities<sup>2</sup>. The empirical study was conducted in three public universities: two belonged to the Catalonia Autonomous Community and one belonged to the Valencia Autonomous Community.

Universities, like other professional organizations such as hospitals, cultural organizations and professional service firms, typically have diffuse power relationships and autonomous professional workforces, and they deal in knowledge based goods and services (Hinings and Leblebici 2003). In such way, universities can be insightful research sites for examining the dynamics of practices of strategizing and strategy text uses by different organizational actors. There is not a clear and concise definition of typologies of HEI, in the case of Spain we have the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and the CRUE (Conference of Rectors of the Spanish Universities) that classify the tertiary universities as: public, private and catholic and dependent of the Ministry.

However there is no precise classification that goes beyond its diversity. Internationally, we can find the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher education<sup>3</sup>, which has been the leading framework for recognising and describing institutional diversity in the U.S. higher education, widely used both as a way to represent and control for institutional differences, and also in the design of research studies to ensure adequate representation of sample institutions, students or faculties. The Carnegie basic classification talks of public (rural, sub-urban, urban, special use) and private (for-profit and not-for-profit) and research universities (high and very high research activity) and other special focus institutions and colleges. In the United Kingdom and European level existing typologies of universities are covered by the different university guides at national contexts, an example being “The Times Good University Guide”<sup>4</sup>.

Giving the lack of a clear definition and classification, this research study draws upon existing typologies (Taylor 2006), adapting it to the Spanish context. Fundamentally, cases were selected from three types in order to reflect the broad parameters of approaches within the Spanish university sector: Technological (technical focus), Regional (strong territorial focus) and

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<sup>2</sup> Facts and figures of the Spanish higher education system (2011-2012): consulted October 2012: (<http://www.educacion.gob.es/dctm/ministerio/educacion/universidades/estadisticas-informes/informes/2012-datos-y-cifras-11-12.pdf?documentId=0901e72b81230a74>).

<sup>3</sup> The Carnegie Classification is the leading framework for recognizing and describing institutional diversity in U.S: <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/>

<sup>4</sup> The Good University Guide offers comparison on eight measures which include views on undergraduates, quality of research, graduates employment successful rates, etc.: [http://extras.thetimes.co.uk/public/good\\_university\\_guide\\_landing](http://extras.thetimes.co.uk/public/good_university_guide_landing)

Research (research intensive and international focus) universities respectively. As follows, three cases that were within a realistic travel distance for rich qualitative data collection were selected on the basis that they offer equally-quality access and were well-ranked examples of their type within Spanish university system, heightening the comparability process. On top of that, another selection criterion used was associated with their background and relationship with strategy process development. Hence, the multiple-case study is constituted by *Technological, Research and Regional universities*, which are followed described.

#### 1.5.1.1. *The Technological University*

The Technological University is a designation employed in a wide range of learning institutions awarding different types of degrees. It may be a HEI and advanced engineering and scientific research or professional vocation education, specialized in science, engineering, and technology or different sort of technical subjects. Essentially, one university specialized in technical subjects has been chosen to be the site of the first case. One strong justification for its selection is also due to the fact that this institution has a relevant background of strategy planning process development. For the purpose of this study, I will use the term “*Technological University*” to describe the institution that characterises the Case 1 of the multiple-case study.

The *Technological University* was created in the beginnings of the 1970s from a merger process of various technical colleges that existed by the time, which may offer a widely range of categories of different structures and cultures “put together”, where each of which has a story to tell about themselves. Thus, this characteristic allows the possibility of looking into the complexity of how the dynamics of academic-managers strategizing takes place in this particular context. The institution has undergone a significant and intensive planning process, including the development of four planning cycles. Each planning cycle refers to the launch of a new strategy document. Each document covers a period of four years horizon. This background holds the opportunity of coming across with a variety of discourses and narratives amongst its organizational levels actors and academic units.

The *Technological University* has a matrix-type structure of schools, departments and institutes. It focuses on teaching and research in the fields of architecture, engineering and applied sciences. Its organizational structure comprises 11 campuses and regional centres in Catalonia, with 23 schools distributed in 8 Catalan cities. Specifically regarding research, it counts with 42 departments, 6 research institutes, 17 specific research centres and around 180 research groups. The university has around 29.500 students (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycles), employing around 2.600 teaching and research staff and about 1.480 administrative and service staff.



### 1.5.1.2. *The Regional University*

The Regional University is identified as being “regional” on the basis that it is primarily physically located in a regional area and provides services mainly to its regional community. However, there is no accepted definition of what constitutes a “regional university”. In some instances regional provisions constitute a single physical campus, while in others it comprises a multi-campus provider operating both physically and virtually across a number of sites. In meeting these criteria, a university with a single campus and a strong regional influence was selected to be one of the settings for the application of the empirical case. As such, I use the denomination *Regional University* to explore the Case 2. Both cases 2 and 3 are examples of relatively young institutions, counting with little more than 20 years of foundation. Currently the university plays an active role in different areas of its regional community, offering 28 different degrees to about 13000 students.

The university structure is constituted of 4 Centres (3 faculties and 1 School), 24 departments and 3 pre-department units, also 11 research institutes, with around 1000 teaching and research staff, and 560 administrative and service staff. The main knowledge areas in which the university focuses its teaching and research are related to social sciences, legal and economic sciences, health sciences and technical and technological studies. This university as in Case 1, has a long relationship with strategy development, giving the fact that it has been building and fostering a strategic management process in a systematic way since the year 2000. According to their annual reports and official strategy discourse, the development of the strategic management system overtime and its implementation into the university centres, departments and services, suggested to have promoted a high degree of professionalism and quality improvement of the university management across levels.

Another interest point for studying strategizing practices, strategy text uses and academic manager’s engagement in strategy in this university is, as noted before, the institutional project itself, which is reflected in four basic strategic orientations (focus on innovation, on the community, on people and on action). The politics of quality management in all areas of the university, the implementation of a systematic strategic planning dynamic and the formalization of its policy on corporate image and communication, support it as an entity that focused on quality, participatory and transparent management, with a strong social commitment. This background brings upon an interesting site for analyzing the practices, behaviours and strategy text usage in a specific context.

### 1.5.1.3. *The Research University*

A starting point to distinguish the Research University is the predominance of research within the institutional mission; hence the use of terms such as “research-intensive” or “research-led”. This does not mean that the institution is not committed to teaching and learning or to the social and community role of universities; it rather means that their research base shapes the nature and content of these other activities. Furthermore, its characteristics include the existence of pure or “mode one” research alongside applied or “mode two” research and some idea of disciplinary breadth (Taylor 2006). In this manner, the Case 3 of the multiple-case studies is constituted by the *Research University* that has been chosen because it comprises with the characteristics described above, and it presents relevant indicators regarding research activities, both in scientific production as in incomes from research projects and knowledge transfer. Observing the mission of the three universities, amongst them, the Case 3 is the only one that gives emphasis on its research strong character specifying on its mission statement that they have “a resounding orientation towards research and innovation”.

Furthermore, this strong research character is reflected by the institution visibility in international university rankings. The 2012 edition of the “Times Higher Education (THE)”, one of the prestigious university rankings worldwide presents that the chosen institution is very well positioned in the European context and world-wide, being the second university in the Spanish State that has managed to get in among the world’s 200 best universities. Also the other prestigious ranking of Shanghai displays the institution between the 400 best universities in the world and between the seven tops of the Spanish context. Other indicator that brings forward excellence in research is the number of ERC Grants (European Research Council), which reflects the 20% of the total being granted in Spain and around 40% in Catalonia.

As in Cases 1 and 2, I have used the denomination of *Research University* along this dissertation to describe the institution. Regarding its organizational structure, it currently has around 9000 students in official degrees, and similar to Case 2, it offers degree courses in all fields (from experimental, health and life sciences to human and social sciences and technical studies). The university structure is also a matrix-type (schools, departments and research centres), comprised of 7 faculties and 1 school and 4 affiliated centres (4 schools), 8 departments and 7 research institutes (4 being affiliated). The core values that characterise the university can be summarised in “public, urban and cosmopolitan” which has indicators such as high level of internationalization, continuous innovation and good position in the field of research. The University’s teaching and research activity is organised according to three

campuses and three areas of knowledge: (i) social and human sciences, (ii) information and communication sciences and technology, and (iii) biomedical sciences.

The evolution and growth experienced by the Research University, culminating in the creation and consolidation of its three campuses, with quite successful overall results, even considering that it is a relative young institution. Since its foundation, the representatives who were working on the draft of the university model, were clear concerned with giving responses to market needs regarding a new model of modern university in the Catalan and Spanish context, which could address issues of quality, research and internationalization. These were the main indicators that have guided the evolution of the university in the two decades of its existence. Therefore, this background also brings upon an interesting site for analyzing the practices, behaviours and strategy text usage.

## **1.6. Structure of the thesis**

The overall structure of this thesis is as follows:

**Chapter 2** positions this research by reviewing insights from the literature on strategic management (the intersection between the literature on strategy and organizational studies with strategy as practice approach) and narratives approach to strategy research (the combination of the literatures on linguistic turn into management studies). The chapter ends with a summary of the gaps identified and develops concepts and frameworks for the empirical study.

**Chapter 3** introduces the research design and methodology, including the rationale for and the organization of the multiple case studies, as well as the research approach, methods, data and analysis process.

**Chapter 4** presents the findings of the study.

**Chapter 5** introduces the conclusions and discussions concerning the study contribution, the theoretical and practical implications, and also highlights the limitations of the study and put forward future research.

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Chapter Structure

This chapter positions the research study in the field of strategy research, taking a strategy as practice perspective, and focusing on elements and practices of strategy implementation and on patterns of strategy text usability. As such, the literature review explores the concepts of strategy, strategy process, strategic management and strategic planning, followed by the examination of key concepts of practices, practitioners and strategy text in the strategy process, specifically focusing on the engagement of practitioners in strategy making. Based on reflections on these streams of literature, contributions and gaps in the literature are described. The concept of narrative approach to strategy making is presented and a conceptual analytical framework for analysing the elements, practices and behaviours as well as patterns of strategy text usability is suggested. The contributions and potential gaps to each literature stream are summarized in the end of the chapter.

## 2.1. Strategic Management Overview

### 2.1.1 Research Streams on Strategic Management

The field of strategic management has offered a variety of frameworks and concepts during the last half century. Research conferences and resulting books and journals have provided intellectual momentum, augmented by stimulation from challenges to “conventional wisdom” experienced in the global market. The global dynamics within which strategic management work takes place create great challenges for both researchers and practitioners. Different teachers and researchers will mark conceptual transitions within the strategic management field in somewhat differing ways and times, but a few of the key events are well documented. Various versions of the field’s history can be found in Taylor and MacMillan (1973); Ansoff et al. (1976); Schendel and Hofer (1979); Grant (1988) and Rumelt et al. (1994).

Two broad streams of research were integrated by a number of participants during the decade following the mid-1950s. One stream might be described as examining “people and organizations unconnected to economic performance,” and the other could be characterized as viewing “economic entities without human participants.” The “business policy” field has sought to provide integration between the two. With hundreds of scholars contributing a vast number of articles and research reports during recent years, there have been many more advances in the strategic management literature, touching subjects such as the criticism of the role of economics in strategic management (Ferraro et al. 2005), the decision-making behaviours of the strategists (Lovallo and Kahneman 2003), or the effects of leadership on organizational strategy (Hambrick et al. 2005; Simsek et al. 2005).

In addition to studying effects of industries and leaders on strategic performance, researchers have recognized that globalization has become an increasingly important force as borders have opened, communications costs have declined, and collaborations among loose collections of firms and individuals has been greatly facilitated (Doz et al. 2001). As part of the effort to incorporate globalization issues into the study of strategic management, there arises the almost inevitable debate about which are the better paradigms and tools for the work (Shenkar 2004). These are only a few approaches with a more economic drive to study strategy.

For instance, Whittington (1996) has distinguished the various approaches to strategy according to their target levels and their dominant concerns. Emerging in the 1960s, the 'planning' approach focuses on tools and techniques to help managers make decisions about business direction. Key analytical aids include the portfolio matrices, industry structure analysis and the concept of core competence (e.g. Hamel and Prahalad 1994; Hedley 1977; Porter 1980). From the 1970s onwards, 'policy' researchers have developed a new focus, analysing the organizational pay-offs to pursuing different strategic directions.

The classic policy option considered has been diversification strategy, but much work has also been done on innovation, acquisitions, joint ventures and internationalization (Markides 1995). Since the 1980s, 'process' researchers have been exploring how organizations come first to recognize the need for strategic change and then actually to achieve it. The best-known process studies are those of Pettigrew (1977) and Johnson (1987) on the processes of change at ICI and Fosters respectively. In recent years, has emerged a distinct approach for studying strategic management, organizational decision-making and managerial work, which focus is on strategy as social practice.

In this approach "practice" is concerned with the work of strategizing: all the meeting, the talking, the form-filling and the number crunching by which strategy actually gets formulated and implemented. Some referential authors in this approach are Jarzabkowski et al. (2007); Johnson et al. (2003) or Whittington (1996). In this sense, treating strategy as practice implies a new direction in strategic thinking, it shifts concern from the core competence of the corporation to the practical competence of the manager as strategist. Like the older planning tradition, therefore, it too is aimed at the managerial level but now the focus is broader than the simple analysis of strategic direction, the concern is upon the managerial activity, how managers "do strategy" (Whittington 1993).

The ways of doing strategy in each organization harden into distinct and regular patterns, so that knowing the 'done thing' locally is essential to being able to get things done. Accordingly, this

provides not only an organizational perspective into strategy but also a strategic angle for examining the process of organizing, and thereby serves as a useful research approach for connecting contemporary strategic management research with practice-orientated organizational studies. Nevertheless, the “ways of doing strategy” is going to vary according to the typology of the organization. As we saw, the different streams of research into strategy subject have advanced the contemporary analysis of strategy, on these grounds, has moved far beyond the early notions of heroic management, which was related to identifying the “right” strategy, gaining organizational adherence to it and organizing its attainment, or as well as with notions of strategy as plan. Notwithstanding, context, culture and process are placed alongside evaluation and leadership as central to understanding of how strategy is formed, emerges and is implemented (Wall and Wall 1995).

Henceforth, what modern strategy literature attempts to do is to understand the generation, patterning, implementation and review of real challenges on which approaches to study the strategy formation and implementation. Nowadays, it is exceptional to come across an organization that does not have any plans or objectives labelled as *strategic*, whether it is operating in the private, public or third sector (Suominen and Mantere 2010). As a matter of fact, strategy seems to have penetrated almost every organization, obligating managers to follow suit and submit themselves to the principles of strategic management, a discourse (Knights and Morgan 1991) which has almost become an industry, and whose members construct and produce strategies and strategic practices that are further applied in different organizational settings (Whittington 2006).

In another perspective, critical management scholars have started to recognize that strategic management is not a value-neutral body of knowledge of factors influencing organizational performance or competitive advantage. In this sense, strategic management is also an ideology (Shrivastava 1986). It can subjugates as well dominates the way we manage other and are managed ourselves (Suominen and Mantere 2010) not only for operative and middle managers (Mantere 2008), but also managers at the very top of the organization (Knights and Morgan 1991; Lilley 2001). Those notions of managers being subjugated by the strategy discourse reflects that while managers may often have a choice about which strategy they choose, they seldom have a choice about whether to incorporate a strategy or not (Inkpen and Choudhury 1995; Knights and Morgan 1991; Shrivastava 1986).

Yet, while strategy is something that contemporary managers have little choice about, they are not completely subordinate to it. Instead, they use the strategy discourse in their life situations, throughout inventing novel and creative ways of consuming strategy in their everyday practices.

This perspective places managers as users of strategy, which consume it in a creative way according to their own purposes through their discursive practices, which means that while managers have little choice over accepting strategic management as the dominant management discourse, they exert agency over what to make of this discourse in their practice (Suominen and Mantere 2010).

### **2.1.2. Process Study of Strategy**

As we could observe in the previous section the “prehistory” of strategic management as an academic field lies in studies of economic organization and bureaucracy (Rumelt et al. 1994). However, the birth of the field of strategic management during the 1960s can be traced to the works of Chandler (1962); Ansoff (1965) and Learned et al. (1965). With these authors, research shifts from a deterministic one-best-way approach to a more contingent perspective where organizations need to adapt to their environment. Nonetheless, these studies were managerially oriented, with an emphasis on normative prescriptions rather than in analysis, with results being hardly generalizable. In response to this issue of generalizability, during the 1970s, a transition started towards a research orientation, based on very different ontological and epistemological perspectives.

Among other dichotomies (Clegg et al. 2004; Knights and Mueller 2004), literature makes distinction between process and content of strategy, as well as formulation and implementation. As examples of different views, content research focuses on linking decisions and structures to performance, whereas process research centres on the actions leading to and supporting strategy. From another point of view, strategy formulation concentrates mainly on generating decisions, whereas strategy implementation is interested in how decisions are put into action. Therefore, the “process approach” consisted essentially of descriptive studies of how strategies were formed and implemented. This research based on observation of actual organizational decision-making led to more realistic conceptions of process, in which strategies were arrived at indirectly and, to some degree, unintentionally. Quinn (1980) and Mintzberg and Waters (1985) are examples of such studies.

Due to the number of studies and to the amount of literature being accumulated on the past decades, the existing literature also provides the researcher with detailed reviews of different perspectives (e.g. Huff and Reger 1987; Furrer et al. 2008; Fahey and Christensen 1986). Intrinsically, the complexity of the construct makes it impossible to find a single right answer for strategy definition. As Whittington (1993) pointed out, the various conceptions of strategy

have radically different implications for how to go about “doing strategy”. According to Whittington (1993), the concept of strategy implies that all the multitudinous individuals who make up an organization can be united around the effective pursuit of a coherent goal. In practice, organizations tend to perceive their activities as processes, and activities around strategy are not an exception. Therefore, the uniting activities chasing a coherent goal can be captured as processes. Thus, what kind of answers do different approaches give for strategy process in practice?

Whittington (1993) classifies conceptions of strategy in four different approaches: 1) *Classical*, in which the strategy process is a process of calculation, analysis and rational decision-making of top-management, followed by implementation (by changing structures); 2) *Evolutionary*: in this approach the environment defines survival and the question of strategy process of an organization is irrelevant; 3) *Processual*: in this approach instead of formal planning process, strategy process is a pragmatic process of learning and compromise, which can also shape strategy; 4) *Systemic*: in this approach the process depends on the particular social system in which strategy-making takes place. The author further noted that seeking one best way to see strategy hardly succeeds, but in matching strategy to market, organizational and social environments, each approach may have its place, depending on the level of the discussion.

From the *practice research perspective*, the strategy process has opened up the “black box” of the organization and recognized the importance of organizational politics (Pettigrew 1977) and organizational tensions (Normann 1977). Yet, such work tended to be at the fore in the 1980s and early 1990s. Increasingly “process studies” have come to be concerned with the systems and processes of organizations as wholes as the units of analysis (Chakravarthy and White 2002; Chakravarthy and Doz 1992), neglecting the practice that is inside such processes (Brown and Duguid 2000).

For example, *strategic planning* has long been seen as a central interest in process studies of strategy. Yet for decades the research focus here was the search for a relationship between the presence of such planning and performance outcomes of the firm (Miller and Cardinal 1994), neglecting almost entirely the detailed activities involved in such planning. It is hardly surprising that so many contradictory findings resulted. Only recently have there been signs of an interest in asking more detailed questions of the planning process in organizations (Grant 2003).

Within the “process field” one response in the 1980s and 1990s that sought a more rigorous base of understanding the role of individuals with regard to strategy was work on *managerial*



*cognition*. The underlying rationale here was that individuals did indeed play a key role in strategy development, and therefore understanding the way they made sense of strategic issues was important. This gave rise to a whole research agenda usefully summarized by Walsh (1995) and Hodgkinson and Sparrow (2002). A good deal of the early work on managerial cognition attended to how managers made sense of strategic issues; it therefore tended to privilege the individual. However, there appears to have several problems here. On the one hand, it cannot be assumed that, because individual or individuals make sense of a situation or a problem in a given way that can be taken as a sufficient explanation for what they do.

There are strong arguments to suggest that how people engage with an uncertain and complex world is explained as much by their “doing” as by their cognitive representations of the world (Taylor 1993); indeed that the two are intimately linked. On the other hand, whilst it might be interesting to understand how individuals make sense of their strategic world, strategies are rarely developed by and individual; they are developed by groups of people. As Weick and Roberts (1993) pointed out, understating the sensemaking of groups inevitably involves understanding the activities of groups in terms of what people do as they interact. Indeed many of those engaged in cognitive or sensemaking research now embraces the concern for understanding practice and the activities of people.

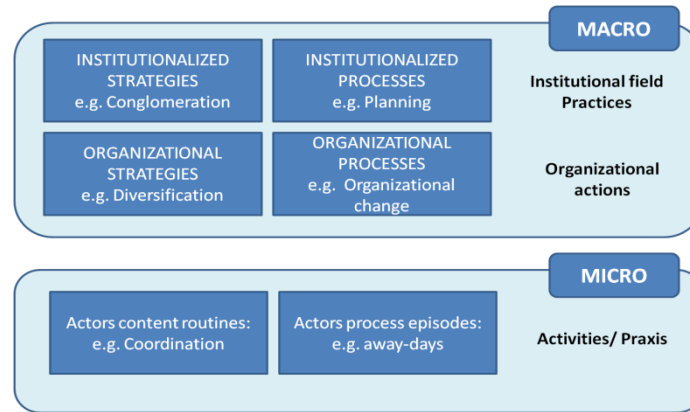
### **2.1.3. From Strategy to Strategizing**

In the current strategic management literature there is limited analytical vocabulary to describe how managers practice strategy, as well as limited research attention has been given to this topic as compared to the body of strategy scholarship, despite the emergence of the strategy-as-practice approach. Traditionally, conceptual and theoretical dichotomies within the strategy process area (think vs. act, content vs. process, micro vs. macro, rational process vs. political process) have bounded our understanding with respect to the day-to-day activities of strategy managers. Further, most process research has been fragmented, characterized by limited cumulative theory building and empirical testing (Rajagopalan et al. 1993). Figure 1 summarizes the key areas in strategic content and process research presented across the macro and micro levels.

Most research has been carried out at the macro-content level and to a lesser extent at the macro-process level. Accordingly, strategy academics realized that there was a need for an area of research that would deal specifically with the actions and interactions of managers within and around the strategy process. The focus of such research is firmly at the “micro” level as shown

in the figure being adapted from Whittington (2006). This theoretical and empirical challenge has been pursued by researchers examining “strategizing” or “strategy-as-practice.”

**Figure 1. The micro and macro levels in strategic management research**



Source: Adapted from Whittington (2006)

Therefore, *Strategizing* refers to the strategy work (Vaara and Whittington 2012) and encompasses all the continuous practices and processes through which strategy is conceived, maintained, renewed, and executed. An explicit and widely agreed definition of strategizing does not exist in the literature; however the main definitions being found are resumed in the following table.

**Table 1. Principal definitions of the construct of STRATEGIZING**

DEFINITION	SOURCE
‘the detailed processes and practices which constitute the day-to-day activities of organizational life and which relate to strategic outcomes’ (2003: 3)	(Johnson et al. 2003)
‘the meeting, the talking, the form-filling and the number-crunching by which strategy actually gets formulated and implemented’ (1996: 732)	(Whittington 1996)
‘the concept of strategizing emphasizes the micro-level processes and practices involved as organizational members work to construct and enact organizational strategies, through both formal and informal means’ (2003: 111)	(Maitlis and Lawrence 2003)
‘an organizational learning process... new strategies evolve over time, not from discrete decisions but from indeterminate managerial behaviours embedded in a complex social setting’ (2000: 87)	(Floyd and Wooldridge 2000)

Source: Own elaboration

Strategizing focuses on the what, when, how, and why of making and executing strategy and demonstrates the way strategies unfold over time, that is the way strategies are developed, realized, reproduced and transformed in an ongoing process (Johnson et al. 2003). Further, strategizing encapsulates the micro-level activities through which organizational members construct and enact strategies by utilizing both informal and formal means (Whittington 1996).

This approach also echoes the argument by Balogun et al. (2003) that “most strategy research has been about know what, whereas strategizing research looks for know how, know when and know where” (2003, p. 199).

The following section (2.2) of this chapter further explores the SAP research and the strategizing concept.

## **2.2. Strategy as Practice (SAP) and Practice Research**

As it could be observed in the previous subsections, practice-based analysis of organizations are becoming increasingly widespread in management disciplines because of their special capacity to understand how organizational action is enabled and constrained by prevailing organizational and societal practices (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011). Upon this view, the last decade has seen a stream of studies focusing on activities and practices in and around strategic management, usually, but not only, under the label of Strategy-as-Practice - SAP (e.g. Golsorkhi et al. 2010; Johnson et al. 2003; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Whittington and Cailluet 2008). The SAP label carries with it a double meaning: “practice” signals both an attempt to be close to the world of practitioners and a commitment to sociological theories of practice.

The key insight of these studies has been that strategy work (Strategizing) relies on organizational and other practices that significantly affect both the process and the outcome of resulting strategies. While SAP research has commonalities with other approaches such as Strategy process (Burgelman 1983; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Pettigrew 1985) and the New Micro-foundations approaches to strategy (Eisenhardt et al. 2010; Foss 2011), it focus on the ways in which actors are enabled by organizational and wider social practices in their decisions and actions and provides a distinctive contribution to research on strategic management.

The overall literature in this stream highlights that SAP research has helped on the understanding of the ways in which strategizing takes place, however, current calls for further research (e.g. Chia and Rasche 2010; Ezzamel and Willmott 2010; McCabe 2010; Orlikowski 2010) noted that it has not yet fully realized the potential that lies in the practice perspective, especially in its recognition of how activities are embedded in broader societal or macro-institutional contexts, which calls for more epistemological and theoretical depth as well as arguments for linkage between institutional theory and SAP research (Whittington 2010).

The origins of the “practice perspective” can be traced to Wittgenstein (1951) or Heidegger (1962), but the past few decades have seen the proliferation of theories of practice, that some authors called it “practice turn” in the social sciences generally (e.g. Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki et al. 2001). This practice turn includes seminal and diverse contributions by philosophers (Foucault 1980); sociologists (Giddens 1984; de Certeau 1984); anthropologists (Bourdieu 1990), activity theorists (Engeström et al. 1999); discourse scholars (Fairclough 2003) and many more. This practice turn is also visible in many areas of the social sciences today, including organization research (e.g. Brown and Duguid 1991; Nicolini et al. 2003). In short, “practices” implies more than simply practical, it links strategy research to deep traditions of theoretical and empirical work in other disciplines.

Accordingly, practice theory pays close attention to human activity, often termed “praxis” (Reckwitz 2002). However, in practice theory, individual behaviour is always embedded within a web of social practices: praxis relies on practices. The practice perspective thus confronts one of the central issues in social studies: how social structures and human agency link together in the explanation of action. Thus, in one way or another, the human actor is never a discrete individual detached from context, but rather a social being whose possibilities are defined by the practices in which he or she is immersed. In this view, for practice theorists, practices are the substructure beneath the busy surface of events. Practice theorists particularly emphasize how these underlying practices can have significant but hidden effects. For example, discourse theorists draw attention to how actors are constituted by the everyday discursive practices they use: people are people in part because they talk (Fairclough 2003).

Moreover, practices are always subjected to incremental processes of adjustment that, in the urgency of the action, are typically hardly conscious (Bourdieu 1990). There is therefore an emergent as well as deliberate quality to social worlds. Practice theories are increasingly influential in research on management (Tengblad 2012), management learning and power effects (Gherardi 2009), accounting (Ahrens and Chapman 2006), organizations (Miettinen et al. 2009), marketing (Korkman et al. 2010), and technology (Orlikowski 2007). Fundamentally, SAP research is seen as part of a general trend and can learn from parallel work (Whittington 2011). However, practice approaches are diverse. Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) have distinguished three types of practice approaches: *empirical, theoretical and philosophical*. The empirical approach studies practices as crucial parts of the everyday activity of organizing, in both its routines and improvised forms. For SAP research, this empirical approach may simply imply a micro-focus in instances of “strategizing”, without substantial reliance on practice theory (Johnson et al. 2003).

The theoretical approach explicitly draws from theories of practice; the focus of analysis here is on practice effects and how practices are produced, reinforced and changed. This practice theoretical approach is thus more capable of making the link between micro-activity and macro institutions argued by SAP research. The philosophical approach then involves ontological commitment to the primacy of social practices, recognized as shaping activity across time and space, a perspective that can also be used in critical analysis (Knights and Morgan 1991) which highlights the potential value of SAP research of all kinds of empirical analysis, but also argues that unleashing the full power of practice perspective requires drawing deeper on its theoretical insights and taking its ontological commitment more seriously.

### **2.2.1. Overview of SAP Research**

Studying “practices” enables one to examine issues that are directly relevant to those who are dealing with strategy, either as strategists engaged in strategic planning or other activities linked with strategy, or as those who have to cope with the strategies and their implications (Golsorkhi et al. 2010). In such a way, SAP emphasizes the usefulness of studying “practical reason”, the starting point in Bourdieu 1990’s or Tuomela 2005’s analysis of social practice. Hence, the focus lies on the actual practices that constitute strategy and strategizing while at the same time reflecting on our own positions, perspectives and practices as researchers. This includes a need to draw from, apply and develop various theoretical ideas and empirical methods.

In this fashion, a practice approach to strategy should not merely focus on the behaviours or actions of managers but seek to examine how these behaviours or actions are linked with prevailing practices. To such a degree, a fundamental insight in practice theories is that individual behaviours or actions are always related to the ways in which social actors are supposed to think or feel or communicate in and through language in a given situation. Likewise, most practice theories emphasize the latent connection to material aspects of social reality; in other words, specific behaviours or actions are closely linked with or mediated by material resources. Whereas views on the linkage of practice and activity differ, most scholars emphasize the potential of the concept of practice to explain why and how social action sometimes follows and reproduces routines, rules and norms and sometimes it does not (Golsorkhi et al. 2010).

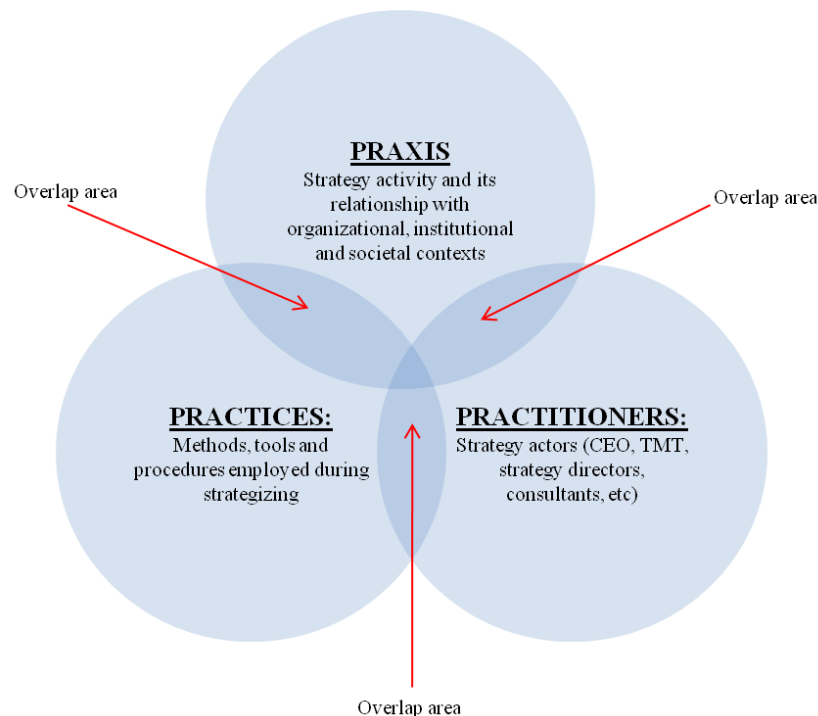
Therefore, while theoretical roots of SAP research lies in theories of practice, its substantive origins can be traced back to closely observed studies of strategy in various organizational contexts. Thus, SAP research partly draws on the Process approach to strategy-making

(Burgelman 1983; Mintzberg and Waters 1985), as well as other related approaches concerning, for example, decision-making (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988), planning (Langley 1989), sensemaking (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991) and middle manager strategizing (Floyd and Wooldridge 2000). It was in the early 2000s that SAP research started to build a more concrete identity following some earlier influential publications, both theoretical; (Hendry 2000; Knights and Morgan 1991; Whittington 1996); and empirical (Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Oakes et al. 1998).

Thereafter, it can be found in the literature a growing stream of empirical studies published in articles (e.g. Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2003; Rouleau et al. 2007; Whittington 2007; Whittington and Cailluet 2008) or in books (e.g. Golsorkhi et al. 2010; Heracleous and Jacobs 2011; Jarzabkowski 2005). Nevertheless, the predominance of conceptual articles observed by Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) in an earlier review has been displaced (Vaara and Whittington 2012).

As such, as previously mentioned, three key concepts have been used to encapsulate the SAP approach: practitioners, practices, and praxis as illustrated in the figure beneath:

**Figure 2. 3P SAP Framework (Integration of praxis, practitioners and practices)**



Source: Adapted from Whittington (2006)

According to this widely used framework across the SAP research scholars, works have focused on practices, praxis and practitioners (e.g. Hardy et al. 2000; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007;

Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Whittington 2006). This SAP framework interconnects the concepts of “**Practices**”; “**Praxis**” and “**Practitioners**”. More concrete and updated definitions of these three elements can be found in the work of Vaara and Whittington (2012) who noted that: “*Practices refer to the various tools, norms, and procedures of strategy work, from analytical frameworks such as Porter’s Five Forces to strategic planning routines such as strategy workshops. Praxis refers to the activity involved in strategy-making, for example, in strategic planning processes or meetings. Practitioners are all those involved in, or seeking to influence, strategy-making.* (2012, p. 6)

Importantly, across these three concepts there are areas of overlap, as indicated in figure 2, which each area of overlap raises a number of interesting questions about the conduct of strategy. For instance, in the overlap of *Practitioner and Practices*, a question related to what kinds of methods do the different practitioners in specific contexts (e.g. CEO, academic manager, public manager, etc.) use to help them strategise could be raised. Also in the overlap between *Praxis and Practices*, studies could explore what kind of actions take place in strategy workshops that help to think in innovative terms. According to Vaara and Whittington (2012), SAP research enriches traditional strategy research by means of distinctive features. In first place, it primarily draws on sociological theories of practice rather than economic theories.

Although SAP research links with some theoretical traditions established in strategic management field, such as sensemaking tradition (e.g. Balogun and Johnson 2005; Rouleau 2005) or dynamic capabilities perspective (Regner 2003; Salvato 2003); SAP also brings into strategic management research social theorists (Abbott, Bourdieu, de Certeau, Giddens, Habermas and many others), this feature allows a wider engagement of the strategic management discipline with the social sciences beyond economics. Secondly, SAP broadens the scope of what strategy research explains.

Whereas “performance” has been the most important keyword in the strategic management literature in the period 1980-2005 (Furrer et al. 2008), SAP research concerns itself with a range of outcomes (i.e. political consequences of particular strategizing episodes, effects of strategy tools, involvement of particular kinds of practitioner), allowing broadening the understanding of performance by extending the range of the outcomes. The third feature refers to the extended sectoral scope of strategic management research explored in the SAP perspective, which have taking it beyond the profit-seeking firm (e.g. not-for-profit organizations such as: universities, city administrations or public hospitals), consequently it has had to address institutional contexts, further than the narrowly defined economic environment.

The fourth feature deals with the methodological shift. The strategic management discipline has traditionally preferred statistical studies, with ever increasing sample sizes (Ketchen et al. 2008; Phelan et al. 2002). In the period 1980-2006, just 7.9% of empirical articles in the Strategic Management Journal were purely qualitative in methodology (Molina-Arozin 2009). In SAP research there is a strong orientation towards qualitative methods, often carried out in single organizations. These studies have often been based in interviews, typically at many organizational levels (Mantere 2005; Regner 2003; Regner 2008). However, SAP researches made efforts to get even closer to their research subjects, and this means that other methods were explored, such as participant observation (Samra-Fredericks 2010); action research (Heracleous and Jacobs 2008), photography (Molloy and Whittington 2005), research subject diaries (Balogun and Johnson 2005) or shadowing (Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008).

In this perspective also various kinds of discursive approaches have gained ground, for instance it has closely analysed strategy talk and texts (Clarke et al. 2012; Vaara et al. 2004). On the other hand, intimate detail of the subject has often been achieved by tight focus on micro “episodes” of strategizing, such as a meeting or a few sentences of a conversation (Hendry and Seidl 2003; Samra-Fredericks 2003a). Recently SAP researchers are combining micro-analysis with a processual sensitivity to longer-run evolution of episodes over time (e.g. Denis et al. 2011; Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011). Therefore, empirical studies in SAP research are increasingly providing us with accounts of the ways in which managers strategize (e.g. Maitlis and Lawrence 2003; Oakes et al. 1998; Salvato 2003 or Wilson and Jarzabkowski 2004).

For instance, substantial central themes have been at the focus of the SAP research agenda in recent years (Golsorkhi et al. 2010) placing practices, praxis or practitioners in their empirical foreground. For instance one focus has been: *strategizing methods in different organizational settings*, which most studies have concentrated on organizational processes, activities and practices in particular contexts such as different business organizations (King 2008; Ambrosini et al. 2007), multi-business firms (Paroutis and Pettigrew 2007), airlines (Vaara 2004), and universities (Jarzabkowski 2003; 2004; 2005; Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002). Another focus has paid attention to the *formal strategic practices*, which studies have mainly explored the strategic role of strategy workshops (Hendry and Seidl 2003; Bourque and Johnson 2008; Whittington et al. 2006), strategy meetings (Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008), various administrative routines (Jarzabkowski 2003); and strategic planning (entire special issue of Long Range Planning by Whittington and Cailluet 2008).

*Sensemaking in strategizing* is another relevant focus of the SAP research, in which researches have focused on the socially negotiated nature of sensemaking (Balogun and Johnson 2005;



2004; Gephart 1997), the political context around the framing of strategic issues (Kaplan 2008), the interaction between individual-level and organizational-level sensemaking (Stensaker and Falkenberg 2007) and also the influences of the wider societal context on sensemaking activities at the organizational interface (Rouleau 2005). Within SAP research one theme to which praxis studies have brought a closer focus is strategic sensemaking, where the mainstream tradition has typically been high level (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991).

Thus, SAP scholars are increasingly examining praxis not simply to document activity in itself but also to illuminate the performed nature of practices: praxis and practices are mutually constitutive, that means that the outcomes of small instances of praxis are found to be sometimes unexpectedly significant: not just a strategic decision or non-decision, but also the legitimation or delegitimation of particular actors, choices, or practices (Vaara and Whittington 2012). For example, Balogun and Johnson (2005) draw on manager's own diaries to show how everyday informal interactions between middle managers (the gossip and the rumour mongering) shaped the sensemaking around a strategic change in a manner beyond top management control. Somewhat similarly Stensaker and Falkenberg (2007) descended down to the organization to understand how the individual interpretations of employees and middle managers affected the implementation of a strategic change: the common experience of "unresolved sensemaking" tends to lead to organizational paralysis.

Another focus has centred on exploring the *role of material artifacts in strategizing*. For example, Kaplan (2011) has shown the central role PowerPoint presentations in strategy meetings, with clumsy "decks" of slides liable to derail strategic initiatives. In an action research study Heracleous and Jacobs (2008) examined how representational artifacts in the form of Lego bricks can promote new strategic understanding and consensus in senior management teams. Furthermore, *discursive aspects of strategy* have also become increasingly popular in recent year and have been another central focus of analysis. Three influential works have given the direction. For instance, Knights and Morgan (1991) examined the historical emergence of strategic management discourse, its assumption and implications on management.

Furthermore, Hendry (2000) provides another influential account of strategy as an essentially discursive practice and in the same way, the seminal work of narrative analysis by Barry and Elmes (1997) elaborates on the role of strategic storytelling. Vaara et al. (2004) examined the legitimating of alliance strategies in and through discursive practices such as problematization, rationalization, objectivation, framing, and naturalization. Further on Ezzamel and Willmott (2008) have in turn examined how accounting practices gained strategic significance in and through discourse with major performative implications for organization's strategy. Similarly,

Whittle and Mueller (2010) have highlighted the role of management accounting systems and the related discursive practices in the construction and legitimation of strategic ideas.

Additionally, SAP studies addressing the praxis of “framing” (the deliberate manipulation of sense) allow more managerial influence over events. For example, Sillince and Mueller (2007) described the deliberate activities of middle managers to frame and reframe responsibility for a strategic initiative, according to its evolving prospects for success: in this way middle managers changed the understanding and the nature of the strategy over time. This precarious but influential nature of strategic sensemaking and framing supports the growing concern for the *text and talk in SAP*. For instance, Spee and Jarzabkowski (2011) have reported from their close observation of the unfolding of a strategic text document that written texts can be used to discipline the flow and content of managerial talk, as the same time as enhancing the agency of their producers.

Another focus lies upon the *role and identity of managers and other organizational members engaged in strategy and strategizing*. Two main lines of studies have explored on the one hand strategy specialist and on the other, the role of middle managers. As respect to the strategy specialists, this goes in line with evidence for the survival of strategic planning, for instance, Angwin et al. (2009) and Whittington et al. (2011) have documented the continued influential role of strategic planners in large organizations, shown that strategic planners are far from top-down formulators and controllers of strategy, but typically precarious facilitators requiring high political and negotiating skills: strategy analysis is the small part of their job. Also, Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007) show that corporate-level strategic planners are constantly engaging in organizing, training and supporting business units teams working on their own strategies. Many of these strategic planners come from consulting background and some research is emerging on consultants as strategy specialists (Nordqvist 2012; Nordqvist and Melin 2008).

As respect to the interest in exploring the role of middle managers, studies have shown the potentially crucial role of middle managers as creators, interpreters and communicators of strategy in their organizations (Mantere 2005; Mantere 2008; Rouleau 2005). For instance, Suominen and Mantere (2010) have demonstrated how middle managers involvement in strategy is not necessarily only “instrumental”: on the one hand, they may engage with their organization’s strategy “intimately”, that is something they come to identify with personally and passionately; on the other hand, they may treat it “playfully”, regarding their organization’s strategy with ironic detachment or scepticism. As such, middle manager’s engagement is a delicate mix of formal and informal mechanisms, with social networks and in this sense ad hoc “strategic conversations” are particularly important (Hoon 2007).

Consequently SAP studies have shown how the role and identities of practitioners are constructed in and through discursive and other practices. Practices and subject positions (structures of rights that practitioners have) are closely linked as noted by Vaara and Whittington (2012). Thus, certain kinds of strategy discourse (e.g. mystification; disciplining or technologization) can render some actors central as “strategists”, leaving others excluded from strategizing (Mantere and Vaara 2008). Additionally to this, *issues of power* have been a focus of attention, such as power position. For instance, Laine and Vaara (2007) have illustrated how some managers mobilize strategy discourse to legitimate their power positions, while employees distance themselves from strategy by appealing to other discourses. McCabe (2010) has in turn elaborated on the various ways which power is exercised and what it means for managerial initiative and resistance.

Additionally, SAP research has explored *the way in which specific tools and techniques are utilized in strategizing activities*, such as the way in which tools and techniques change according to context (Seidl 2007; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2006) as well as strategy tools as potential boundary objects (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2009). Growing attention to analytical practices, particularly with regard to their practical value in use, has been noted. For instance, Jarratt and Stiles (2010) have identified three ways of using strategic tools, arguing that there is no absolutely correct way of using tools: adaptation of standard techniques is not abuse; but assists in strategic creativity. In this line, Moisander and Stenfors (2009) have argued that conventional tools designed for rational problem-solving may be ill-matched to the epistemic culture of contemporary organizations, which requires tools that support collective knowledge production and learning. Furthermore, Cabantous et al. (2010) show how rational decision making techniques do not stand above the social, but require the patient and careful mobilization of practitioners, theory and material artifacts.

These contributions and advances have called upon new challenges for more studies (Golsorkhi et al. 2010) to build further the SAP research agenda in order to strengthen both theoretical and empirical fronts, its linkages to other important sub-fields in strategy, such as strategy process school, institutional approaches to strategy, the resource-based view, cognition and sensemaking in and around strategy, or learning and communication in strategic management. Some research targets identified include further examination within the linkage of the macro and micro levels in strategy, where there is a great deal of work still to be done to explain how widely held assumptions about appropriate strategizing methods influence what is actually done in organization, and how these activities, then, reproduce or at times transform prevailing understanding and practices.

Along these lines, although previous studies have made important advances, challenge lies in developing a nuanced understanding of strategic agency as taking place in a web of practices. We already know a great deal about practices that are associated with strategic planning, however there are others organizational practices that are not often recognized as “strategic” but which have a important role in strategy making (Chia and Rasche 2010; Tsoukas 2010). This call emphasize the diversity of these practices and the polyphony that they produce in and around strategy making, the agency in and through strategy-making is more complex, precarious and distributed than much of the previous research indicates (Vaara and Whittington 2012).

*Coping and resistance* are another stand up challenge in order to better understand the social processes in strategizing. Additionally, practitioners and their knowledge are seeing as another target research gap, where further research should challenge the prevailing view that holds that academic knowledge is superior to practical knowledge. Moreover, another target issue is the exploration of the *development of strategy as discourse and praxis to new areas*. In this manner, apart from studies of strategizing in business organizations, it is also important and relevant to examine the spread of strategy as body of knowledge and praxis to other types of organizations such as government, municipalities, universities or hospitals. These types of settings are often characterized by all kinds of complexities and struggles which can provide interesting examples of recontextualization and hybridization of practices, coupled with illustrations of innovations for dealing with problems and challenges.

Furthermore, strategizing practices have evolved in distinctive ways in different national context, as such the literature acknowledges that studies need to zoom in on these differences and examine trends of practice convergence and crossvergence in cross-national comparisons. Along with there is a call for more studies of a longitudinal character to explore the processes of strategic decision-making and change. This type of historical studies can help on providing a better understanding of how practices have evolved and developed. Other point in further research is the issue of *emergence in strategy-making*, to date, SAP research has concentrated on formal planning and strategizing activities, however emergent strategies are important too (Mintzberg and Waters 1985) and this have received little attention.

Appendix 1 summarises the main contribution of reference papers that have explored the social practice within the strategic management field of research and highlights some potential gaps that are especially of interest within the broad research focus of this dissertation.

### **2.3. Strategic Planning Research**

As part of this doctoral dissertation I will analyse organizational documentation within the three case studies, specifically related to official strategy processes (e.g. strategic planning, governments plans, actions plans, etc.), which argues for exploring existing literature about strategic planning more in detail. Additionally, I will focus the review on the strategic management subject in the context of the HEIs as complex organizations, and the development of the strategic planning as a management tool within this context. Along with, reviews of studies of strategizing in universities undertaken within the strategy as practice approach are also examined.

Therefore, strategic planning has its roots in the military and has emerged as a focus in business organizations in the mid-1960s to mid-1970s (Dooris 2003; Mintzberg 1994a). Studies concerning strategic planning, many of which adopt the classical approach to strategy, have tried to find an answer to the question: What kind of planning process, if any, should organizations employ? Typically, the strategic planning process is considered as including the scanning of environmental and market trends, consumer needs, and competitors' activities. Also, the strengths and weaknesses, goals and objectives of the organization in question are analyzed and defined in order to choose and write down the strategies (cf. Armstrong 1982; Grant 2003; Reid 1989).

Studies about planning processes have analyzed the relationship between environmental characteristics and planning systems (Kukalis 1991; Lindsay and Rue 1980), for example, the effectiveness of planning (Ugboro et al. 2011; Nutt 2007; 1989; 1986); the contribution of formal strategic planning to decisions (Armstrong 1982; Sinha 1990); the influence of the strategic planning process on strategic change (Dutton and Duncan 1987); the behavioural problems of managers in strategic planning systems (Lyles and Lenz 1982); the characteristics of strategic planning systems (Grant 2003); the relations of planning practices and performance (Boyd 1991; Brews and Hunt 1999) and the reality of strategic planning (Reid 1989).

Despite the number of studies conducted in the field of strategic planning, however, it has been noted that the measurement of the construct “strategic planning” has weaknesses due to the inconsistency of the measurement schemes, a priori assumptions of dimensions, the simple level of analysis, lack of tests of reliability and validity, as well as parsimony of the instrument (Boyd and Reuning-Elliot 1998). Armstrong (1982), in a review of twelve studies of the evaluation of formal planning, observed that most of the studies did not include any description of the planning process. Despite this limitation, he found some evidence for his hypothesis that “it is

valuable to have a formal process to gain commitment”. Despite an aspiration for a shared process (Armstrong 1982; Reid 1989), the formal planning process has traditionally seemed to be a task of a small group in the organization. It has been suggested that, at its best, planning can be considered institutional learning within management teams (Degeus 1988). Planning has been suggested most useful where changes were large, but, in general, explicit objective setting and monitoring results have been considered the most valuable aspects of strategic planning (Armstrong 1982).

As an exceptional example, compared to the number of studies of strategic planning processes using questionnaire studies, Grant (2003) conducted in-depth case studies of the planning systems of eight oil companies to identify key features of strategic planning systems and to explore the changing characteristics of the strategic planning processes of oil companies. Semi-structured interviews and document material were used for writing case studies, describing the main features of strategic planning, the changes in these systems over time, and the role within broader management processes. Grant (2003) suggested that strategic planning process may act as a context for strategic decision-making as well as for coordination of its decentralization, and provide a mechanism for control.

Brews and Hunt (1999) suggested that lessons from both design and learning schools were needed for successful strategic planning. By combining the deliberate, rational and linear process of the design school and the adaptive, incremental and complex learning process of the learning school (for ten schools of strategy, see Mintzberg et al. 1998), a more fertile result could be achieved. Thus, specific plans may represent the ‘intended’ strategy while the inevitable incremental changes that follow as intentions become reality represent the emergent, or ‘realized’, part of the firm’s ‘deliberate’ strategy, as stated by Brews and Hunt (1999). Respectively, Sathe (1978) defined emergent structure as the actual behaviour of organizational members on the various dimensions of organizational behaviour. Also Grant (2003) refers to the long debates between the “strategy-as-rational-design” and “strategy-as-emergent-process schools”, and points to a process of planned emergence in which strategic planning systems provide a mechanism for coordinating decentralized strategy formulation within a structure of demanding performance targets and clear corporate guidelines.

Even if widely challenged (Mintzberg 1994a; 1994b; 1994c), strategic planning remains, in some form or other, one of the most popular management technique (Rigby and Bilodeau 2013). Certainly, strategic planning has been the subject of a long stream of research, focused on the traditional question of its relationship with performance, but this research has become increasingly inconclusive and frustrated as previously commented (Brews and Hunt 1999).

Despite heavy criticism and a declining interest in strategic planning within the literature, recent studies illustrated that planning remains a popular activity within organizations (Whittington and Cailluet 2008; Hodgkinson et al. 2006). According to Spee and Jarzabkowski (2009), such studies on the persistence of planning highlight that power relations are inherent in planning activities (Narayanan and Fahey 1982); for example, senior managers and corporate planning departments hold control over who participates in planning activities and ultimately in the content of the plan (Grant 2003; Mantere and Vaara 2008).

As such, planning activities thus ascribe different roles to organizational members (Mantere 2008) and influence the suppression or promotion of different interests within the organization (Hardy and Clegg 1996; Lukes 1974). Furthermore, strategic planning is perceived as important for communicating an organization's strategy internally and externally (e.g. Bartkus et al. 2000; Beer and Eisenstat 2000; Kotter 1995). While most of these authors have assumed that communication occurs after the formation of the plan, others indicated that communication is important during the formation of the plan (e.g. Grant 2003; Ketokivi and Castaner 2004; Lines 2004).

From the practice perspective, the formal strategic planning process is seen as an archetypal strategizing activity and within the SAP orientated research, some productive insights into strategic planning is offered (e.g. Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2003; Johnson et al. 2007; Whittington 2006). These studies argued for a focus on strategy making as it occurs through the actions, interactions, and negotiations of multiple actors. Thus, strategic planning has taken a central place in SAP research, in sharp contrast to the strategic management mainstream (Furrer et al. 2008; Whittington and Cailluet 2008). Moreover, SAP research reveals how the practice of strategic planning can enable more complex and flexible praxis than traditional accounts.

For example, Jarzabkowski (2003) highlights how strategic plans act as mediator of organizational contradictions: for instance, the very collaborative activity that strategic planning demands can help resolve the strategic challenges such as lack of organizational cohesion that it is intended to address. Hendry et al. (2010) have shown that so-called "procedural" strategic planning, with its formal budgets and planning processes can be used deliberatively by senior managers in order to block strategic change, rather than promote it. Nonetheless, strategic planning can also be a source of flexibility, not just rigidity.

Thus, Giraudeau (2008) examined how iterative strategic planning simulates creative collaboration with each successive iteration accommodating new understanding. More recently

strategic plans themselves have been examined in detail. For example, Vaara et al. (2010) have analyzed how a city's strategic plan enrolled discursive practices such as self-authorization; special terminology; discursive innovation; forced consensus and deonticity (obligation) in order to legitimate a move from the city's traditional Nordic welfare regime. Correspondingly, Kornberger and Clegg (2011) have highlighted the performative effects of the discursive practices surrounding the creation of a strategic plan for the city of Sydney. Their findings suggested that the language used in the strategic plan recast the city as an economic entity, prioritizing some interests while marginalizing others.

Also, two interesting works on strategic planning from a practice lens deal with the communicative purpose of planning (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011) and strategic integration within strategic planning mechanisms (Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009). The first author's findings suggested that communication is not a process that occurs after the strategic plan has been developed but rather is something that is integral to the planning process itself, proposing it as a further dimension of planning. Participation in the planning activities (Mantere and Vaara 2008) is also part of the communication process.

This communicative view of strategic planning suggests that while many individuals participate in the strategic planning activities and are thereby able to raise concerns and suggest amendments to strategic plan's content, it is only a few who, due to hierarchy and position, are actually able to amend a strategic plan's content, thus a plan's content may have been influenced by many who participated in the communication process, albeit that its actual text has been constructed by a few key players. Spee and Jarzabkowski (2011) also pointed out that the recursive communicative process constituting the strategic plan production cycle that is of significance, rather than the communication of the plan itself (Bartkus et al. 2000; Beer and Eisenstat 2000).

Specifically concerning issues of communication and participation, Jarzabkowski and Balogun (2009) findings, shows how differences between business units, such as planning experience and relative power, create different experiences of inclusion or exclusion and dominant or subordinate roles in strategy making and therefore different responses to communication and participation activities within strategic planning process. Based on these findings, they have proposed a model which shows that planning processes should not be reified in the way they often are as imposed actions that actors resist or comply with, but rather how different participants (and their subject positions), strategic plans, and strategic outcomes both shape and are shaped by each other through activities of resistance and compliance.



As respect to enabling and constraining effects of practices, some studies have explored the effects of strategic planning over time and practices renewals. For instance Ocasio and Joseph (2008) found out that General Electric did not, as often claimed, lead in abandoning strategic planning, but continually renewed its practices. On the other hand, issues of enabling strategy have been also explored through the examination of interactive visual methods in strategic planning process. Additionally, Eppler and Platts (2009) noted that managers rely heavily on visual representations for understanding and generating strategy. Still on the use of supporting tools, Jarratt and Stiles (2010) determined that analysis tools such as SWOT may be used in a routinized, reflective or engaged manner. From the perspective of what goes inside episodes of strategy-making, Rouleau and Balogun (2011) argued that changes in strategic planning may evoke selling, resistance and reconciliation discourses. Similarly, Aggerholm et al. (2012) identified that strategy text and talk are liable to be interpreted in multiple ways over time, thus leading to ambiguity.

While previous studies have highlighted the ideological aspects embedded in discourses of strategic planning (Hodge and Coronado 2006; Oakes et al. 1998), it seems to take place a need of future studies that could go further in unravelling the implications for organizational strategy-making. For instance, to better understand how conventional practices of strategic planning may legitimate and naturalize short-term profit-orientation or instrumentalism in how people are treated (often seen as resources rather than subjects). Likewise, literature suggests that more focus need to be put on the ways in which such practices can be resisted locally or more widely (Vaara and Whittington 2012). As such, resistance has so far received little attention in strategy research (Ezzamel and Willmott 2008; Laine and Vaara 2007; McCabe 2010) however, it is only through the analysis of how people deal with practices imposed upon them that we can understand their full implications (Vaara and Whittington 2012).

The next sub-section deals with the exploration of the academic literature associated with studies that have examined the construct of strategic planning in the context of the higher education sector.

### **2.3.1. Strategic Planning and its counterpart in higher education**

Universities have particular characteristics that must be taken into account when examining their process of strategic management. Universities are prone to ambiguous and potentially divergent strategic orientations arising from the diverse professional interests, responsibilities and affiliations of their academic workforce (Cohen and March 1974; Hardy 1991; Jarzabkowski and Sillince 2007). Knowledge-based academic work is not easily organized by

formalization of hierarchy and power structure (Mintzberg 1979; Podsakoffs et al. 1986). As such, universities are typically portrayed as organized anarchies (Cohen et al. 1972) or loosely coupled systems (Weick 1976), in which the social structures of the university couple to the interests of different professional groups with relatively low central management (Mintzberg 1979). Hence, strategy-making by management Fiat cannot be assumed in the university context. In such a way, university strategic management should be done with a permanent eye on their specific organizational environment rather than by analysis of the applicability of yet another prescriptive model from yet another management school (Tavernier 2005).

A brief review of the literature on the topic of strategic management applied to the higher education sector illustrates the progress that has been made in recent decades and acknowledges changes in the university system (e.g. Hellstrom 2004; Henkel 2005; Jarvis 2000; Margolis 2004). Particular attention has been paid to issues that are closely related to managing universities globally, such as governance and university models (e.g. Aghion et al. 2010; Neave 1985; Dale and Robertson 2007; King 2009); quality and rankings of institutions and systems (Federkeil 2008; Harvey 2008; Hazelkorn 2008; 2007; Marginson 2008); role of research and knowledge management (Altbach 2009; Rego et al. 2009; Mohrman et al. 2008) as well as innovation and entrepreneurship (Shattock 2010; Etzkowitz and Zhou 2008).

Analyses dealing with the ever-increasing attention paid to university management are particularly interesting (see Bryman 2007; Buckland 2009; Martinez and Wolverton 2009); likewise, some studies have taken steps towards acknowledging the impact of culture and context in university management (e.g. Gioia and Thomas 1996; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002). Overall, the concept of 'market' has entered the vocabulary of university managers at all levels, together with the recognition that higher education may be subject to market forces, albeit moderated by the state. Therefore, universities have found themselves competing for governmental and industrial research funding as well as striving to increase revenue from state funding and student fees. Ranking, accreditation systems, quality, reputation and excellence have become key factors in institutional success.

Upon this context, it has become commonplace to observe that the world of higher education is undergoing radical changes, and that universities have to adapt to new challenges on every front. Consequently, how should or could universities change to remain special and successful in this competitive environment? It is not an easy matter, because the governance of higher education is complex and often opposed to modernization and outward-looking strategic change. In addition to that, the enormous change that has been occurring in higher education has greatly complicated management and leadership (Scott 2001). The growing demands of external

stakeholders for knowledge production, wealth and social relevance have placed excessive pressures on these to maintain vigilance and be strategically positioned to seize opportunities and avoid threats in an efficiently way.

Thereupon, with the massification of universities and the increased complexity of university-decision making, management process are much more complicated than previously. Performance indicators, personnel policies and strategy choices have to be integrated in new ways into management process and practices in each university (Salminen 2003). New needs in society, including rising demands for health and welfare as well as environmental concerns, also increased pressures on the universities to be 'relevant'. The relationship between state-owned universities and their owners has also been evolving, partly under the influence of the New Public Management movement, away from patronage towards performance contracting (Beerkens 2004; de Boer et al. 2002). Thus, important changes in the relationship between universities and their owners are taking place in some countries. This has led to initial upheaval, as they struggle with the need to develop strategies, take financial and budgetary control of their own affairs, and manage human resources and external relations in new ways. Weber and Duderstadt (2004) pointed to a change in the way higher education is perceived, that redefines it from being a public good to being a private benefit.

Very many writers discussed increasing competition among universities, in both teaching and research, as a comparatively new trend, driven by the fact that resource allocation to universities becomes more driven by performance and by the reducing willingness of both the state and private customers to pay (Etzkowitz et al. 2000; Skilbeck 2001; Williams 1996). On the other hand, some authors are clearly pro-market, demanding that higher education institutions focus their management needs in a more entrepreneurial manner. For instance Etzkowitz et al. (2000) and Clark (2003; 1998) used the phrase 'the entrepreneurial university' and a book by Sporn (1999) entitled *Adaptive University Structures* stressed the importance of an institution adaptability to its environment, which can be enhanced by entrepreneurialism, a differentiated internal organizational structure and a professional institutional management process.

Higher education's courtship with strategic planning was originally focused on facilities and space planning during an era of rapid expansion, especially in the context of the United States. The publication of Keller's book on Academic Strategy (1983) marks a pivot for a shift that occurred around that time, as colleges and universities took a closer look at strategic planning. The 1980s conception of planning emphasized its use as a rational tool for orderly, systematic advancement of the academic enterprise. Guided by an ennobling mission, institutional leaders could march through a series of prescribed steps and actualize their vision. Linear approaches

flourished, featuring a cognitive procession of functions: identifying and prioritizing key stakeholders, environmental scanning, situational analysis such as SWOT, specification of core competencies and distinctive competencies, goal setting, objective setting, action step setting, and evaluative feedback loops. There is much to be said for these rational models, and they continue to propagate fresh sprouts, notably the Baldrige Educational Criteria for Performance Excellence<sup>5</sup> and the Balanced Scorecard by Kaplan and Norton (1996).

From the 1980s onwards, the visibility and volume of strategic planning in the academy continued to increase. By the 1990s, accreditors were touting strategic planning as a sine qua non of organizational effectiveness, and new themes have emerged along strategic planning maturity. One is a rational-deductive approach to strategic planning being tempered with a cultural-environmental-political perspective. In this line Bryson (1995) described that most new management innovations have tried to improve government decision making and operations by imposing a formal rationality on systems that were not rational, at least in the conventional meaning of the word. Numerous writers (see for example Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Denman 2005); have attributed strategic planning's immediacy within higher education to developments in the new public management approach to state services; greater autonomy and self-regulation being afforded to higher education institutions (Askling and Christensen 2000) and the rapidly changing demands of the knowledge economy (Denman 2005).

Other authors also highlighted the need for higher education institutions to respond through embracing greater management capacity. For instance Amaral et al. (2003) advocate the creation of more flexible and effective administration whilst Austin (2002) demands a more proactive approach from higher education institutions in designing organizational policies and procedures to achieve institutional aims. More specifically, van Vught (2009) pinpoints higher education's biggest challenges arising at institutional governance and managerial levels. Bleiklie and Kogan (2007) correlate this emerging landscape of higher education with transformational shifts in how the HEIs are becoming more centrally administered and locally managed, whereby institutional leaders, vice-chancellors, pro-vice chancellors, presidents and vice presidents are now more closely parallel the role of chief executive officers.

Reviewing these developments within the literature, there appears to be a growing consensus that strategic planning is an integral part of modern Higher education management (Bayenet et al. 2000; Davies 2004; Thys-Clement and Wilkin 1998). Some authors have looked at the

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<sup>5</sup>The Baldrige Program oversees the US Presidential award for organizational performance excellence while offering criteria, assessments, tools, training and a community for those dedicated to helping organizations improve: [http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/publications/bus\\_about.cfm](http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/publications/bus_about.cfm)

unique characteristics of strategic management in higher education sector specifically addressing strategic planning models, advantages, benefits, limitations and case studies (Conway et al. 1994; Pidcock 2001; Rowley and Sherman 2001). In recent years, it is possible to find studies that have analyzed the use of strategic planning in HEIs and have tried to correlate the current efforts of the university with the emergent environmental changes. Such researches examples are Dyson (2004) who has carried out a study on strategic development and SWOT analysis at Warwick University, by the means of its relation with scenario planning and resource based planning.

Also Gill and Lashine (2003) have developed some techniques and criteria to improve educational institutions quality. Some studies were more specific, such as looking into the role of the academic head of the department in the university strategic plan (Kola and Selesho 2012); the use of the strategic plans and mobility in institutional global rankings (Hou et al. 2012) or strategic planning and its relation with autonomy and political contexts (Bin Sirat 2010). Lillis (2006) has carried out a study to investigate the planning and evaluation programs implemented in a higher education institute in Ireland over an eight-year period timeframe. This study was concerned with both the effectiveness of management programs and the organizational learning that resulted from engaging in strategic planning and self-evaluation programs.

The literature review did not identify a generally accepted or standardized methodology for determining the effectiveness of strategic planning or for capturing organizational learning in a higher education context (ibid, 2006). Her main findings were that aligning resources, organizational structures and budget plans to meet strategic objectives were problematic. These difficulties may relate to the constraints of the operating environment or inexperience with the process. It may also be fundamental mismatch between the higher education environment and the assumption made by the rational strategic planning model that an organization can and should be shaped to meet the goals of its strategic plan. The study highlighted the importance of the language used when writing plans, using the rational strategic planning model. This requires clear, unambiguous and measurable targets to be set which caused some difficulties.

Lillis's results coincides with Sallinen et al. (1994) findings in a study of Finish universities, noting that plans did not provide a basis for changing and restructuring activities. Stressing on this point, an important issue when measuring effectiveness is whether a strategic plan in higher education should focus on new initiatives/new work beyond the norm or whether it should also incorporate ongoing work. The study demonstrated that the institutional strategic planning had considerably more impact on non-academic areas than in the academic departments, leading to place the question whether the planning was less effective in academic areas and whether the

academic heartland needs a rational strategic planning process to be able to plan strategically or if there are more suitable long term planning model for higher education.

Taylor et al. (2007) indicated that the models for strategic planning are generally valid, but that their implementation is often flawed. Also several issues have been analysed within studies on strategic planning: leadership style, culture, organizational structure, resource allocation, decision-making aligned to strategy, just to cite a few. Problems generally cited include lack of leadership, failure to communicate, insufficient participation and shared governance, lack of resources, resistance to change, and inadequate understanding of the process itself (Baldrige 1983; Birnbaum 1988; Taylor and Miroiu 2002). Of course, the growing complexities of resource allocation have been an issue strongly discussed. For instance, Shulock and Harrison (1998) argued that no institutional initiative can succeed without necessary resources. In order to address goals and objectives and implement strategies, it is important to obtain and retain institutional support by allocating necessary resources. In Europe, higher education is almost entirely subsidized by the State (Winter-Ebmer and Wirz 2002); however, more governments state that they can no longer allot a higher percentage of their public budgets to higher education (Dincă 2002).

Specifically regarding the planning methodologies, the literature is quite exhaustive and sufficient to guide intelligent efforts. Planning implementation, rather than the model being implemented, is at the core of failed attempts (Taylor et al. 2007). In their study regarding the status of strategic planning in European higher education institutions, Taylor et al. (2007) suggested that it seems appropriate to state that strategic planning is not foreign to European higher education institutions, although not uniformly adopted and used across countries. They have found general evidence of planning efforts, with some degree of variability. In addition to, they identified that in contrast to the factors that differentiate European higher education systems, several commonalities surround those systems were detected: (1) the inadequate funding of public higher education through the protective cloak of the existing welfare state, (2) the inability to adequately manage emerging massification, and (3) the lack of experience and expertise to confront the current and projected demographic decline in students.

Furthermore, questions of performance have been focused on whether the planning process has produced results and accomplishments, in which the responses from the ten analysed countries varied according to their current advanced planning level. According Taylor et al. (2007), many efforts identified in Europe were not truly strategic in nature; they were more in line with what Rowley and Sherman (2001) referred to as short-term or problem-solving planning. For instance, in Spain, the study indicated that the planning experiences, which have being carried

out with more participation, have had positive consequences but, in other hand, the experiences based on the old system with reports made by consulting firms were seemed as rather useless. Nevertheless, few studies have dealt with this topic in the Spanish context.

For instance, a recently published research on the university strategic management and the efficacy of the managerial tools in the context of the Spanish higher education institutions (Llinàs-Audet et al. 2011) identified that strategic planning as a managerial tool was widely used by the Spanish universities. The study pointed out that the institutions shared common aspects related to methodological and processual aspects used to draw their policies and strategies. The study also identified some problematic issues encountered when implementing the planning process, such as problems of participation and integration of the university community in the corporate strategy process, communication problems and inefficient integration mechanisms of different actors, particularly middle management, resulting in a limited engagement within the strategic consensus.

Consequently, strategic planning is not uniformly applauded. Some authors have questioned whether it is a vital process, a core function, or the latest fashion in the technique boutique. For instance, Birnbaum (2001) have focused on higher education's adoption of management "fads," among them strategic planning. He used the term "management fads" to refer to innovations in higher education management that are followed with exaggerated zeal for a brief period of time only to be abandoned subsequently without any real attempt to evaluate their effectiveness. Birnbaum (2000a) stated that there are few published examples in the academic sector of attempts to assess the institutional consequences of a management fad through data that provide evidence either of organizational outcomes or of the satisfaction of users. Sevier (2003) also pointed out that there are probably few phrases that cause a greater group groan on most campuses than 'strategic planning'. The fact is, most colleges and universities look at strategic planning as a path to pain, rather than a path to plenty, concluding that strategic planning remains a powerful tool for advancing a college's or university's vision.

Moreover, there are sufficient differences between the private and public sectors. In the private sector the strategic planning process starts by identifying the company's mission statement, which assumes it has the freedom to define its own purpose (Lillis 2006). By contrast in most cases the mission of public sector organizations including HEIs are predetermined, typically by legislative frameworks. This begs the question that if major changes in overall direction are not permitted, is strategic planning really necessary or relevant for the HE sector? Private sector strategic planning models assume top-down executive control of the direction of the organization (Wilkinson and Monkhouse 1994). On this line, Rowley and Sherman (2001)

argue strongly that this is not appropriate in a HE context and contend that a participatory approach, based on consensus building, is required to counteract a possible 'Power of Veto' situation occurring in academic departments. Similarly, Bayenet et al. (2000) noted that without a modicum of support from academic departments it would be difficult if not impossible, to put strategic plans into practice.

Strongly collegial cultures and opposing cultures on the academic and central management/administrative side, often stemming from fundamentally different value systems and knowledge bases, can lead to barriers on introducing quality systems and strategic plans. As well as the lack of objective and universally accepted performance measures in HE is at odds with the measurable targets required in the objectives of a strategic plan (Davies 2004). The driving force for change in HE is often meeting criteria imposed by a national quality assurance system (Brennan and Shah 2000). Correspondingly, Davies (2004) notes that many HEIs would not have moved towards a strategic or quality culture without an external stimulus of some kind. The private sector does not have the equivalent of a peer review mechanism that is a key driving force for change in the higher education sector.

Furthermore, studies of strategizing in universities from a strategy as practice approach has mainly focused on top management level (Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Jarzabkowski 2003; 2008) and have dealt with the interplay between the organizational context, people within it and patterns of actions and routines that both produce and are a product of such actions. For instance, Jarzabkowski (2003) has explored the formal strategic practices in three universities, demonstrating that formal strategic practices can promote change if they mediate contradictions between constituents. Additionally, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) in analysing strategy meetings in different universities noted that strategy meeting practices such as bracketing of issues, voting and stage managing, stabilize or destabilize strategy.

In turn, Jarzabkowski (2008) by exploring the shaping of strategy as a sequential process also in different universities found out that strongly institutionalized contexts require shaping of strategy simultaneously in the action and the institutional realms. Particularly in the context of Business School, Sillince et al. (2012) analysed how strategy is shaped through rhetoric, noting that rhetorical constructions of ambiguity (protective, invitation and adaptive) follow a processual pattern that shapes emergent strategic action. On another perspective, Spee and Jarzabkowski (2011) examined strategic planning of one university as a communicative process, identifying that the recursive interplay between planning text and talk, enables agreement and the minimization of competing interpretations.



As observed within the literature, strategic planning in higher education sector occurs in a complex, dynamic, real-world environment, not readily amenable to controlled studies, or even to quasi-experimental designs. It is difficult to parse out the measurable effects of strategic planning from the influences of such other important factors as institutional leadership, demographic change, fluctuations in state and federal funding, politics, the actions of competing organizations, social and cultural forces, and the like. As such, the development of different forms of management and strategic direction has been closely connected with the structure of universities, especially public. According to Buckland (2009), universities are often characterized by having a structured of “cell” in which the strategy is developed and through which middle managers, groups or individuals can design, innovate, implement and experience the success or strategic failure without consistency with other strategic units or with the institution itself.

These features can have a very important influence on how to use specific tools for the development and implementation of the strategy and the problems and perceived results from its applications. Consequently, universities should be understood in the context of their own histories and contexts, which requires institutions to acquire the models and strategic management systems that recognize the problems, contexts and processes that help on building up strategic change. Thus, the activity of developing strategies and their implementation must be understood within the broader institutional context, framed by the diversity of interests that characterizes the collective action (Townley 2008).

Appendix 2 illustrates the main contributions of studies that have analysed the practice of strategy planning and strategizing, including the referential work of SAP scholars. Furthermore, potential gaps are overall presented.

### **2.3.2. The problematic of strategy implementation**

Strategy development and implementation issues have been so far a critical point in organizational and management studies. In practice, a great concern in strategy relates to strategy implementation. This holds for this dissertation study as well. It is thus obvious that strategy implementation is a key challenge for today’s organizations. There are many (i.e. soft, hard and mixed) factors that influence the success of strategy implementation, ranging from the people who communicate or implement the strategy to the systems or mechanisms in place for coordination and control. How can we better understand these issues and their importance for successful strategy implementation? Some research studies have tried to provide some answers.

According to Alexander (1985), strategy implementation is simply the process of carrying out a firm's strategy that is usually formulated by others. According to Nutt (1986), implementation is a procedure directed by a manager to install planned change in an organization. Although many authors have written about challenges in strategy implementation (see, for example, Bourgeois, B.1984; Hrebiniak 2006; Hrebiniak and Joyce 1984; Alexander 1991), it has not been the most studied object of interest in the field of strategy (for a comprehensive review of studies on strategy implementation, see Noble (1999)).

There is no universally accepted definition of "strategy implementation". Some authors have defined strategy implementation using a process perspective, taking it as a sequence of carefully planned consecutive steps (Wernham 1985; Hrebiniak 2006; Harrington 2006; Lehner 2004). For example, according to Lehner (2004) strategy implementation may be viewed as a process inducing various forms of organizational learning, because both environmental threats and strategic responses are a prime trigger for organizational learning processes. Harrington (2006) also defines strategy implementation as an iterative process of implementing strategies, policies, programs and action plans that allows a firm to utilize its resources to take advantage of opportunities in the competitive environment.

However there are other authors that treat strategy implementation as a series of more or less concerted (but often parallel) actions and examine these actions from a behaviour perspective (Schaap 2006; De Kluyver and Pearce 2011). Schaap (2006) argues that implementation is operationally defined as those senior-level leadership behaviours and activities that will transform a working plan into a concrete reality. Similarly, De Kluyver and Pearce (2011) define implementation as a hands-on operation and action-oriented human behavioural activity that calls for executive leadership and key managerial skills.

Additionally, there are some authors that have integrated process and behaviours in one hybrid perspective (e.g. Wheelen and Hunger 1992; Govindarajan 1988; Singh 1998). For instance, Govindarajan (1988) argued that implementation is viewed as an action-oriented process that requires administration and control. In the same vein, Singh (1998) defined strategy execution as the step-by-step implementation of the various activities that make up a formulated decision-making strategy, and strategy execution also can be treated as a cognitive process. Amidst the relative uniformity of the definitions found in the literature, it is interesting to note that several definitions stress the role of top management such as Schaap (2006) and other researchers cited there. Only a few definitions stress the external environment such as the case of Lehner (2004) and Harrington (2006), and it is very unusual to find a definition that mentions the (non-managerial) employees and their crucial role in turning strategic plans into results.

Studies dealing with strategy implementation normally follow a stream of research that highlights the importance of individual factors for strategy implementation and there are those that emphasize the “big picture” of how such factors interrelate and form a strategic implementation environment. They do so in two distinct ways: either through the simple categorization of various factors into groups or categories (such as the studies of (Skivington and Daft 1991; Noble and Mokwa 1999; Beer and Eisenstat 2000; Okumus 2001), or by relating them in a (often graphic) framework (Noble 1999; Higgins 2005; Brenes et al. 2008). In the first stream, it can be found recurring individual factors that influence strategy implementation: the strategy formulation process, the strategy executors (managers, employees), the organizational structure, the communication activities, the level of commitment for the strategy, the consensus regarding the strategy, the relationships among different units/departments and different strategy levels, the employed implementation tactics, and the administrative system in place. The second stream of research analyzes multiple factors together within a single (arguably comprehensive) framework or a model.

Several studies have mentioned the fact that the kind of strategy that is developed (Alexander 1985; Allio 2005) and the actual process of strategy formulation, namely, how a strategy is developed (Kim and Mauborgne 1993; Singh 1998) will influence the effect of implementation. Several studies treat institutional relationships among different units/ departments and different strategy levels as a significant factor that affects the outcome of strategy implementation (e.g. Walker and Ruekert 1987; Gupta 1987; Slater and Olson 2001; Chimhanzi 2004; Chimhanzi and Morgan 2005). For instance, Chimhanzi (2004) suggested that implementation effectiveness was affected negatively by conflict and positively by communication and specifically, interpersonal, not written. In turn, these interdepartmental dynamics were affected by senior management support, joint reward systems, and informal integration.

As regarding the executors, some studies have addressed the “who” of strategy implementation. Executors are comprised of top management, middle management, lower management and non-management. Effectiveness of strategy implementation is, at least in part, affected by the quality of people involved in the process (Govindarajan 1989). Several researchers have emphasized the effect of top management on strategy implementation (e.g. Hrebiniak and Snow 1982; Smith and Kofron 1996; Schmidt and Brauer 2006; Schaap 2006). Most of these authors have pointed out the important figurehead role of top management in the process of strategy implementation although still leave important gaps on exploring the role of the top management in implementing strategy. Schmidt and Brauer (2006), for example, take the board as one of the key subjects of strategy implementation and discuss how to assess board effectiveness in

guiding strategy execution. Smith and Kofron (1996) believe that top managers play a critical role in the implementation – not just the formulation – of strategy.

As relate to the role of middle managers in strategy implementation, some studies emphasizes the match of strategy and middle manager's leadership style (e.g. Gupta and Govindarajan 1984; Guth and MacMillan 1986; Govindarajan 1989; Judge and Stahl 1995; Heracleous 2000). This viewpoint assumes that personality is the primary determinant of strategy implementation actions. Other studies' perspective considers the effect of context on behaviour (Waldersee and Sheather 1996). Other studies analyzed the impact of relationships between top management and middle management on strategy implementation (Floyd and Wooldridge 2000; 1997; Wooldridge and Floyd 1990).

Few authors have studied the impact of lower management and non-management on strategy implementation. Grönroos (1985) believes that an organization must first persuade its employees about the importance of the strategy before turning to customers. Alexander (1985) suggests that there are many problems which over half of the corporations experienced frequently, such as the involved employees have insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs, lower-level employees are inadequately trained, and departmental managers provide inadequate leadership and direction. Nutt (1986) suggests that managerial tactics and leadership style can play a crucial role in overcoming the lower-level "obstructionism" that is prevalent (to some degree) in many implementation efforts. Strategic decisions are nevertheless formulated by senior-level managers of the firm and then administratively imposed on lower-level management and non-management employees with little consideration of the resulting functional-level perceptions (Nutt 1989). Thus, the lack of shared knowledge with lower-level management and non-management employees creates a barrier to successful strategy implementation (Noble 1999).

Foreman and Argenti (2005) rightly noted that although an entire discipline is devoted to the study of organizational strategy, including strategy implementation; little attention has been given to the links between communication and strategy. At least, numerous researchers have already emphasized the importance of communication for the process of strategy implementation (e.g. Alexander 1985; Rapert and Wren 1998; Peng and Litteljohn 2001; Heide et al. 2002; Rapert et al. 2002; Schaap 2006). Research in this area is emphasized by an older finding by Alexander from 1985: based on interviews with 21 presidents and 25 governmental agency heads. Alexander (1985) pointed out that communication was mentioned more frequently than any other single item promoting successful strategy implementation. Furthermore, Rapert et al. (2002) stated that communication and shared understandings play an

important role in the implementation process. In particular, when vertical communication is frequent, strategic consensus (shared understanding about strategic priorities) is enhanced and an organization's performance improves. They have explored vertical communication linkages as a means by which strategic consensus and performance can be enhanced.

As respect to tactics, different authors such as Nutt (1989; 1986); Bourgeois and Brodwin (1984); Lehner (2004); Sashittal and Wilemon (1996); Akan et al. (2006) have explored the effects of implementation tactics on strategy implementation. These studies showed approaches where strategy implementation tactics were not viewed as generic recipes for implementation success, but rather as practices that were dependent on the kind of strategy that was implemented. On the other hand, many authors have focused on the role of consensus for strategy implementation (e.g. Floyd and Wooldridge 1992; Dess and Priem 1995; Rapert et al. 1996; Noble 1999; Dooley et al. 2000). The consensus about a company's strategy may differ across levels: if members of the organization are not aware of the same information, or if information passes through different layers in an organization, a lower level of consensus may result. This lack of shared understanding may create obstacles to successful strategy implementation (Noble 1999).

Shared understanding without commitment may result in "counter effort" and negatively affect performance (Wooldridge and Floyd 1989). Some authors have considered shared understanding as a commitment. For instance Guth and Macmillan (1986) and Boyer and Mcdermott (1999) all think that the shared understanding of middle management and those at the operational level to the top management team's strategic goals is of critical importance to effective implementation (Rapert et al. 2002). Thus, strategy implementation efforts may fail if the strategy does not enjoy support and commitment by the majority of employees and middle management. This may be the case if they were not consulted during the strategy development phase (Heracleous 2000).

Factors relating to the organizational structure are the second most important implementation barrier according to the findings of Heide et al. (2002). Additionally, Drazin and Howard (1984) have noted that a proper strategy-structure alignment as a necessary precursor to the successful implementation of new business strategies. They pointed out that changes in the competitive environment require adjustments to the organizational structure. Further on, studies have suggested that different strategy types have different requirements regarding an adequate organizational structure (e.g. White 1986; Olson et al. 2005). Moreover, Govindarajan (1988) suggested that few researchers have focused on the design of differentiated administrative systems (design of organizational structure -decentralization -, design of control systems -

budget evaluative style- and selection of managers - locus of control-) that can facilitate the implementation of a variety of strategic business unit strategies pursued by diversified corporations.

The literature indicates that there are many other issues that potentially affect strategy implementation. These factors, however, are less mentioned or not analyzed in-depth in the literature, as many of them are also much harder to control or modify. These factors refer to issues of culture (Heracleous 2000; Heide et al. 2002; Schaap 2006), firm size (Harrington 2006), the external environment (Alexander 1985), or the general market environment, the implementation stages and material resources (Wernham 1985; Alexander 1985), internal guidelines (Govindarajan and Fisher 1990); the power structure (Hrebiniak 2006), a company's market orientation (Homburg et al. 2004) and rewards or incentives (Schaap 2006).

As respect to the perspective of implementation effectiveness and its linkage with managerial perceptions of strategy process, Collier et al. (2004) have identified that managers who report higher level of involvement in strategy tend to perceive the strategy process as one that incorporates a stronger vision, more rationality and greater adaptativeness. As such, those who report more involvement tend to see the process a less top-down and also less influenced by political and cultural interests and constrained by external factors. On the other hand, the negative associations are contrary to arguments suggesting that involvement increases politics, cultural inertia and constraints in the strategy process.

According to the authors, this means that involvement not only triggers a more desirable set of impressions but that it also triggers a more desirable set of behaviours, thus involvement is pointed out as an important antecedent of healthy perceptions of strategy and it likely changes behaviours. In this manner, to the extent managers perceive the process in positive terms; they are likely to behave in ways that are consistent with effective strategy development and implementation. Thus, rather than engaging more managers in a formal strategic planning exercise, increasing involvement should be seen as a way to define and implement initiatives that develop competitive advantages (Floyd and Lane 2000).

The concern of strategy implementation represents primarily a classical approach to strategy (Whittington 1996), but the issue of implementing decisions that have been made by others has been an interest of research also related to a more micro perspective (Balogun et al. 2003). Looking at the studies within the SAP perspective, the issue of strategy implementation can be found in the central theme of strategizing, widely explored in this perspective. Studies using this approach have examined different issues affecting “putting strategy into practice” in different

organizational settings. Such factors are found related to the role of formal practices (Whittington and Cailluet 2008; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Jarzabkowski 2003); the role of sensemaking (Stensaker and Falkenberg 2007; Rouleau 2005); the role of materiality (Giraudeau 2008; Whittington et al. 2006); the discursive aspects of strategy (Laine and Vaara 2007; Mantere and Vaara 2008; Samra-Fredericks 2005; Seidl 2007); the role and identity of the participants to the strategizing process (Balogun and Johnson 2005; Mantere 2008); tools and techniques used in strategizing (Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2006; Molloy and Whittington 2005) or issues of power (Ezzamel and Willmott 2008).

Concerning research methods used to explore strategy implementation, frequently used methods were questionnaire and/or interviews, conceptual analysis, case analysis, field investigation and other methods (such as hypothetical scenario, literature review, a laboratory setting, intervention method comprised of a set of meetings, archival and records analysis). Questionnaire is a method that is frequently used by researchers in this domain followed by case studies. Within the SAP perspective, qualitative methods are more dominant (observation, shadowing, interviews, content analysis, action research, etc.).

Moreover, the main contribution of the studies concerning strategy implementation is the identification of the importance and difficulty of strategy implementation, addressing interpretations of actors. In this vein, Smircich and Stubbart (1985) suggested that strategy implementation problematic, among other problems of strategic management, stem from the field's inattention to the fundamentally social nature of the strategy formation and organization processes. Thus, from an interpretative perspective, the task of strategic management is "organization making", that is, to create and maintain systems of shared meaning that facilitate organized action (Smircich and Stubbart 1985).

### **2.3.3. The issue of strategy implementation in universities**

As noted, during the last decades, strategic planning had been regarded as a necessity for higher education institutions to meet a situation characterized by changing environment and increased competition. In the European context, both authorities and higher education institutions in many countries see strategic planning as a useful tool to handle shifts in the environment and growth in market competition. In like manner, when the need to reform higher education institutions has been on the agenda, strategic planning has been regarded as a useful tool (Powers 2000). Even though strategic planning is a widely accepted tool, the history of strategic planning in higher education institutions is a mixed experience and there are a number of criticism as to its

usefulness for universities as reviewed previously (Chance and Williams 2009; Edge 2004; West 2008). Generally, as a consequence of characteristics of higher education institutions, plans are often conventional and vague, on the one hand directions and procedures for implementation are recurrently absent and on the other, fragmentation and diffusion of power in higher education make it difficult to effect change (Larsen and Langfeldt 2005).

Problems with strategy implementation in universities are suggested to be closely linked with the way strategic development is carried out. In this vein, Gregory (2008) argued on two views which strategy development in higher education can be differentiated. On the one hand, there is the view of strategy as “consistent pattern of action”, and on the other, there is the view of strategy as a tool of management control. From the former view, strategic development is long established in universities but from the latter view it is a fairly recent phenomenon reflecting a shift from collegiality to managerialism in higher education.

The long established view of strategic development in universities is reflected in (Mintzberg and Rose 2003). In slow to change environments such flexible arrangements allow for the rationalization of skills and maximum autonomy but, as the rate of environmental change has increased, there has been a shift towards more management control through strategic planning. On this vein, Meyer (2002) stated that this shift arises from the need boundary setting: as higher education comes to take on a rainbow of meanings, university leaders need to define and redefine what kind of activities should be “inside” or “outside” the organization’s boundary. Central administrators now engage in decision-making about the university’s aspiration level in terms of selectivity and visibility, its core competencies (selective excellence), its long-term mission, and short-term goals as they identify key competitors and allies’ (p.540).

Clearly such a marked change has not gone without challenge, ‘...strategic action requires a degree of central steering and organizational unity for which the university, with its tradition of weak central governance and collegial (consensual) form of decision-making has typically been ill equipped’ (Meyer 2002, p.540). However, as academic institutions become more business like in their operations, so the tools and techniques of this world are duly assimilated by university managers, particularly regarding the distribution of resources: ‘departments are requested to define strategic targets, which may be modified in negotiations with central administration. Eventually they receive money needed to achieve the negotiated targets. Renewed funding, however, is contingent on the degree to which the departments actually “delivered” on its target performance’ (ibid, p.541).



The general processes of strategic planning and budgeting manifested at the operational level into rigid workload allocation schemes that significantly impinge on the day-to-day working lives and professional freedom of academics. Indeed, Yokoyama (2006) starkly contrasted this shift as being one from collegiality (characterized by academic value, trust, informality and minimal hierarchy) to managerialism (characterized by formal hierarchy, lack of trust and strategic management). Gregory (2008) stated that this shift, from a system perspective, from collegiality to managerialism may be seen as another aspect of strategic planning development failure attributed to a lack of understanding that strategic development processes operate at different systems levels.

Further, this shift represents the disconnection between different systems parts (managerial seeking to control the parts rather than granting maximum autonomy because they cannot be trusted to act in the interests of the whole). As Gregory (2008) put forward, in the academic environment an example of this aspect might be the existence of a strategic plan seen as a physical evidence that the subject group had decided on its strategic plan to which it could be held accountable and that could be used for the purpose of management control; but this is to give the document a dubious ontological status. As such, in exploring strategy development process in the context of higher education, if done from a purely methodological perspective is, as argued by Seddon (2008) to use a popular phrase “tool headed”.

Additionally, it represents a failure to approach the process systemically by neglecting the essentially historical and social embeddedness of the system involving consideration of purpose both in terms of the people involved and the wider context. As such, further research into the development of strategic planning practices in the higher education institutions might put more attention not only in factors influencing failures and success, but also further exploration should be put on more reflection on practice. Within the strategic development process in universities, alignment is another relevant issue when exploring the concept of strategy implementation effectiveness (Sullivan and Richardson 2011). The importance of aligning strategic planning and assessment to achieve institutional effectiveness is increasingly recognized by higher education leaders (Hollowell et al. 2006).

In particular, there is growing evidence that today’s higher education organizations can benefit from a strategic planning model that integrates an organization’s mission and vision-based strategic planning initiatives with practice and outcomes assessment at the unit level (Middaugh 2010). Such a model includes ongoing environmental scanning and scenario planning, clearly framed strategic outcomes aligned with individual and team performance outcomes, the creation of a culture of continuous outcomes assessment, dialogue, reflection, and an adaptability to

change (e.g. Aloï 2005; Hollowell et al. 2006; Morrill 2010). Administrative and educational support units have become increasingly engaged in the development of annual goals and objectives at the unit level. However, these efforts are not always aligned with institutional strategic planning goals and objectives (Sullivan and Wilds 2001). Middaugh (2010) noted that approaching assessment of administrative effectiveness is considerably more difficult than ensuring the effectiveness of academic units.

Therefore, effective strategic planning involves the creation of a culture of strategic planning and continuous assessment through the use of an integrated model that links strategic planning and outcomes assessment, and outcomes associated with strategic planning efforts are most likely to be achieved when they are viewed as central to the work of the unit rather than as a disassociated task. Thus, according to Sullivan and Richardson (2011) leaders in higher education can keep strategic plans vital through promoting and valuing individual contributions, connecting performance evaluations to specific strategic plan goals, and keeping shared unit and institutional strategic plans relevant and actionable.

Appendix 3 summarizes some general contribution of referential academic papers on strategy implementation issues, framing potential gaps of interest.

#### **2.4. Narrative approach to strategy as theoretical lens**

Since the publication of Barry and Elmes (1997) article on the narrative aspects of strategic discourses, it has been generally accepted that strategy, both organization strategies and theories of strategy, consists of stories told by key people, generally leaders, to other people such as shareholders, members of the organization and other stakeholders. This work highlighted the double nature of strategy – narrative production and process of narration- by which various stories about strategic choices are connected, tested, reinforces or weakened. Why are stories and narratives so interesting? The basic function of a story is to organize a series of events and actors into a common, acceptable and comprehensive temporal framework.

By reorganizing events in a temporal framework, stories preserve and build the continuity of the actions. Restructuring a group of relationships creates retrospective senses, hence enabling further action. This faculty of generating sense has led researchers to become interested in stories told within organizations. Research on organizational culture and identity considers both large stories – myths, texts and discourses – and smaller ones such as stories, storytelling,

gossips and narratives (Gabriel 2000; Boje 1991; 1995; Boyce 1996) as important in analyzing and understanding organizational life.

Stories and storytelling have now pervaded management, strategy and marketing research areas (Salmon 2007). Good stories are hence considered an effective factor in implementing strategic ideas. Strategy formulation involves a narrative production of an integrative story that enables leaders to reorganize past events according to a plausible and desirable logic. What is at stake is the capacity of stories to construct a persuasive and stimulating message to facilitate memorization and training or to convince stakeholders of the relevance of a strategy (De la Ville and Mounoud 2003). However, is the intrinsic quality of a good story able to dissolve the integrative difficulties inherent in the strategic exercise? Moreover, can the integrative strategic narrative be considered effective without including interpretation of people to whom it is addressed?

According to De la Ville and Mounoud (2010) in order to escape this over-simplistic view of storytelling management, we need to account more accurately for the narrative perspectives brought into strategy research. Consequently, for social researchers, the interest in narratives is based on the way people organize knowledge in their daily life. It is suggested that people organize their experience in the form of scripts about goal-based events that include people, places and events, and these scripts are recounted in the form of stories. It seems fairly evident that narrative is a universal form in which people construct, represent and share experiences (Bruner 1990).

Going back to the field of strategy as practice research, one focus of analysis is the detailed scrutiny of practitioner's activities. Thus, moving attention away from macro-process towards various aspects of the minutiae of strategy making has changed the discourse used by researchers to explain how strategy is conceived, explained and communicated (Whittington 2007). Although social practice theory, which we have reviewed before, tends to emphasize the tacit and informal dimensions of practices and praxis, strategy as practice research has focused much more on explicit practices, especially on operating procedures and standards (Jarzabkowski 2004; 2005), norms of appropriate strategic behaviour set by industries recipes (Spender 1989) or legitimizing discourses (Barry and Elmes 1997).

In this manner, one of the SAP approach achievement has been a change in the method of observing a phenomenon's processes, and not the basic categories of thought. However, so far SAP research has mainly focused on the visible part of the iceberg: people, events and explicit tools, the actual practice itself has not been sufficiently investigated (De la Ville and Mounoud

2010). Henceforward, one of the challenges is to overcome the prevalent individualistic focus on micro-level managerial activities and roles, which leaves a mass of larger social issues melting into the under-theorized, all-encompassing category of context (Tsoukas 1994; Willmott 1997).

Chia and Holt (2006) argued that the dominant “building” mode of strategy making, in which actors are distinct entities deliberately engaging in purposeful strategic activities, is actually derived from a more basic “dwelling” mode in which strategy making emerges non-deliberately through everyday practical “coping”. Practical “coping” is rooted in social practices. Social practices are identity-forming and strategy setting activities. They provide individuals with resources to interpret and improvise their role; they shape the scope and the extent of their exploratory activities and initiatives to cope with the ongoing flow of organizational development (Chia and Holt 2006).

In this vein, De la Ville and Mounoud (2010) put forward that SAP research is still mainly impregnated with the conceptual categories in the dominant “building” mode. They contend for the recognition and integration of the “dwelling” mode into strategy formation, as well as the combination of the “building” and the “dwelling” modes in strategy-making, which are the key challenges for research analysis. In order to include in the picture the hidden creativity embedded in mundane practical “coping”, closer scrutiny and better accuracy in methodology need to be achieved.

As follows, De la Ville and Mounoud (2010) propose a narrative approach to strategy as practice, which enables strategy research to engage more deeply in the “practice turn” and to develop a certain research sensibility to the unspoken, the inarticulate and even the often unconscious aspects of strategy-making. This conceptual framework of “strategy-making from texts and narratives”, which is based upon the dynamics of reading (dwelling) and writing (building) “texts”, offers a perspective in which all organizational actors participate in strategy formation when dealing with texts produced by others as well as in reading these texts and thus engaging in the bricolage of strategy.

#### **2.4.1. Strategy formation as producing and reading texts**

Strategy-making, when considered as directing the future and leading organizational members to comply with this direction, results partly in the production of texts. Nevertheless, not all texts can be qualified as “strategic”, nor is strategy formation confined to the processes of creating or monitoring the effects of “strategic” texts. Strategic texts constitute forms of mediation, in and

through which organizational actors reflectively understand their situations, give meaning to their actions, and anticipate their futures. According to De la Ville and Mounoud (2010), produced strategic texts thus have a double relation with the context (the preceding texts with which they interact) and the situation (the mundane organizational activities and practices to which they relate and help organize).

Therefore, to be described as “strategic” the text must bring together appropriate standards, rules and criteria of management and to various genres relevant to strategy, such as management reports, business plans, development plans, and etc. Processes of institutionalization accompany and support the production of strategic texts while differentiating them from other textual productions. Likewise, strategic texts are embedded in intertextual relations, with pre-existent strategic texts that are themselves governed by the instituted kinds of organizational productions and by discursive orders based not only on strategic management as a discipline (Hardy 2004).

Strategy formation proceeds from the application of strategic apprenticeship, which goes beyond the order of discourse and conversation to integrate a body of knowledge into explicit activity and tacit tactics. Furthermore, the ordinary practices of managers and the texts that underlie them, through the resistance that they express, continually nourish the inventiveness of the organizational actions and form an ongoing, emerging and vital part of the strategic activity. The notion of “intertextuality” allows the appreciation of “writing” as a permanently creative flux integrating previous standards and conventions in order to produce texts, which are likely to be readable, understandable and recognizable by an audience.

This “intertextuality” notion was described by Kristeva (1980, p.69) as a reaction to the tendency to analyze texts as discrete and closed units, whose meaningfulness lay in their internal structure. She contends that texts become meaningful if they are considered as a fragment relating to former texts. This suggests a drastic shift in the method of analyzing reading and writing by focusing the effort on studying the process of structuration through which the text comes into being. By questioning the romantic roots that lead to the invention of the notion of “authorship”, this perspective lays special emphasis on the fact that writers are compelled to use pre-existing concepts and conventions to communicate with an audience. Consequently, the text awaits and calls for reading (Ricoeur 1991).

Ricoeur (1991) distinguished two ways of understanding reading: to explain and to interpret. To explain is to bring out the structure (i.e. the internal relation of dependence, which constitutes the static of the text). To interpret is to follow the path of thought opened up by the text and to start heading towards the orientation of the text. According to Ricoeur (1991) to read is, in any

hypothesis, to conjoin a new discourse to the discourse of the text. Thus strategic texts are characterized by their plurivocality: their significance is unresolved and each text, because of the distance caused by its written form, is open to alternative readings and constructions depending on the situations of the readers. Interpreting strategic texts, organizational actors propose their relations with the world. This process of appropriation is complex, dense, emergent and dynamic (De la Ville and Mounoud 2010).

Therefore, the creativity of reading is shared by de Certeau (1984), who argued for a greater emphasis on the activity of reading opposed to the excessive importance placed on writing in contemporary society. He strived to show that reading is not a passive activity; it modifies its object, reinvents beyond the intention of the text, and builds a different “world”, which belongs to the reader in place of the author. De Certeau links “strategies” with institutions and structures of power, while “tactics” are utilized by individuals to create a space for themselves in environments defined by strategists. As such, for de Certeau, consumption supposes the acceptance of an offer of products. But consumers are active; they take pleasure in consuming and consider themselves free and creative in doing so.

Accordingly, the relationship between reading and writing is of comparable nature: texts, just like the goods offered on the market, are produced by manufactures who offer them to consumers – the readers – who decide upon their significance and use them in their own ways. de Certeau’s analysis of consumption is orientated towards the ordinary practices of consumers, who are defined as “user of goods imposed upon them by producers”. Indeed, in offering products to consumers, producers assume a position of domination, against which consumers resist by developing inventive attitudes and practices. By illustrating consumption and reading, de Certeau reveals the two sides of consumption. On the one hand, consuming entails a form of acceptance of imposed offer goods. On the other, consumers are neither passive nor docile; they experience freedom, creativity and pleasure – just as readers do.

In such a way, strategy making can be understood as a permanent creative process including not only what strategists produce/write, such as texts, budgets, plans, matrices, charts and strategies, but also the ways in which organizational members consume/read these productions. This proposed conceptual framework leads to questioning of how organizational actors read, use and transform strategic texts in their daily activities. Thus, adopting this view provides a new way of looking at organizational practice, because it enables to accept strategic discourses as a production and an offer of a (cultural) good: a text. In this manner, focusing on daily practice allows grasping all the contradictions and tensions of daily activity. Individuals are able to play with the rules and to use the artifacts of everyday practice for their own ends. Actors are also

full of intent in their use of these practices and the intent of the actor may not comply with the objective purpose of a particular practice. Hence, the properties of a practice are open to interpretation according to the use to which they are put (Jarzabkowski 2004).

Consequently, the analysis of strategy formation must not be centred only on the conversations or the interactions described as “strategic”. Strategy making should be considered as the combination of the production of texts and their creative consumption in daily activities. Consumption can be understood as the dominated production of second-order narratives. The descending order of the dominant discourse of strategy and the ascending order of the resisting narrative, two realms of strategy-making and strategic texts are their point of intersection and articulation. This point of intersection shows the complexity of strategy formation, where texts and narratives are met, the concept of transferring, translating and transforming knowledge (Carlile 2004) across organizational boundaries as well as the role of conversation in achieving changes (Ford and Ford 1995) is strongly relevant. Together with, the context dominates and informs the strategic text because it provides the rules for it to form itself. In turn, the strategic text, fuelled by ordinary accounts of organization member’s practices, is subject to creative readings and resistant consumption. Through this double role of mediation, the strategic text gathers meaning and becomes effective (De la Ville and Mounoud 2010).

#### **2.4.2. The roles of narrative in the practice of strategy and the central role of strategy text**

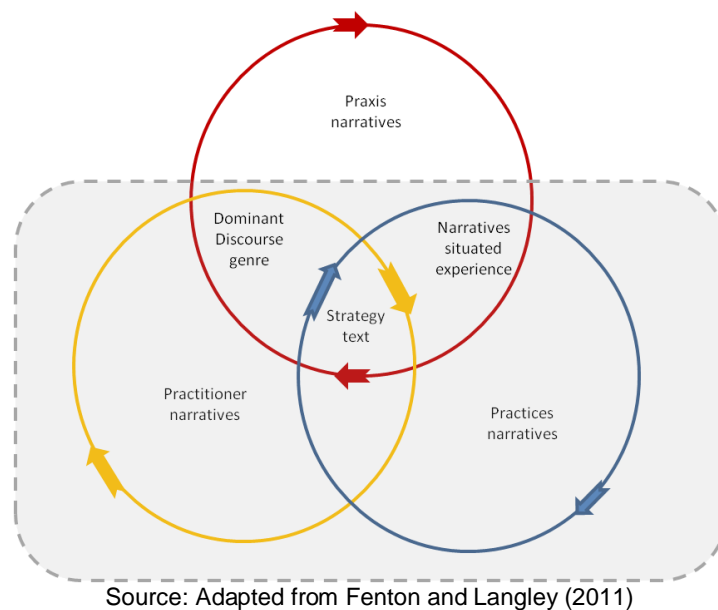
It has become clear that much of the actual doing of strategy in organizations takes place in the form of talk, text and conversation, thus linking the idea of strategy as practice with a body of literature that looks at such interaction through a discursive lens including a focus on storytelling and narratives (Czarniawska 1998; 1997; Barry and Elmes 1997). Indeed, narrative approaches have inspired a number of scholars working in the area of strategy as practice (e.g. Laine and Vaara 2007; Samra-Fredericks 2003b; Rouleau 2005; De la Ville and Mounoud 2010) and narrative researchers have reciprocally contributed, sometimes in not fully recognized ways, to understanding the practice of strategy (e.g. Boje 1991; O'Connor 2002; Brown 2006).

Barry and Elmes (1997), in particular, argued strongly for the potential of a narrative approach to strategy. They defined narrative as ‘thematic sequenced accounts that convey meaning from implied author to implied reader’ (1997, p. 431) and proposed that the narrative metaphor could be relevant to ‘both the telling’ of strategy (i.e. the use of narrative in processes of strategizing) ‘and the told’ (i.e., the constitution of strategy as a form of fiction that creates a story about the future). They proposed a research agenda that considers how strategists engage in story making,

how they draw on narratives from mainstream thought, how power and politics are reflected in strategy narratives and how divergent narratives are reconciled.

Specifically, Fenton and Langley (2011) argued that narrative can be found in the micro-stories told by managers and others as they interact and go about their daily work, in the macro-level institutionalized practices that people draw on for strategy-making, in the accounts they give of their own and others' work as strategy practitioners, and in the artifacts produced by strategizing activity. In their study, Fenton and Langley (2011) proposed a research agenda for an integrated narrative approach to strategy as practice, in which the notions of *praxis*, *practices*, *practitioners* and *text* are presented as key elements of the strategy as practice framework that elaborates on how concepts of narrative may be used to illuminate each of these elements (see figure 3). They put forward that narrative concepts may allow the construction of a more complex and richly layered approach to understanding the practice of strategy in which praxis, practices, practitioners and text interact. Along these line, the interest of my study focuses particularly in the exploration of the integration of the role of the text in this dynamic.

**Figure 3. Integrating strategy text within the 3P elements**



The notion of strategy *praxis* refers to what practitioners actually do in their particular everyday activities as they engage with strategy or strategic issues (Whittington 2006). Part of what they do involves telling stories, or mobilizing narrative in various forms. In other words, narrative can be a form of praxis. Boje's (1991) study of storytelling in an office supply firm and Jameson (2001) study of the use of narrative in management meetings are exemplars of existing studies that bring to the fore a narrative view of strategy praxis as shown in the top circle in



Figure 3. Obvious issues of interest include how and why individual storytelling becomes influential in developing wider stories about firm strategy, how managers collectively and interactively build on or undermine others' narratives to orient emerging plots about strategy, and how and why rhetorical elements of various kinds used to construct strategy are or are not perceived as legitimate. A research agenda proposed by Fenton and Langley (2011) on this item (praxis) needs to examine how in vivo storytelling contributes to the construction of shared understandings about strategy, while taking into account the fragmented, partial, multi-level and continually 'becoming' nature of such storytelling.

*Practices* therefore differ from strategy praxis that refers to the particular and context-specific. Some inquiries relate to this item are for instance the exploration of how are these grand narratives mobilized in strategy praxis? And how do multiple streams of macro-level stories coalesce or conflict (O'Connor 2002)? Thus, the research agenda proposed here needs to examine how, why and with what effects different macro-level narratives are translated or drawn on in particular ways in particular contexts (Fenton and Langley 2011).

A wide-ranging group of strategy *practitioners* may be involved in some way in the practice of strategy and may influence how it occurs (Whittington 2006). Who are these people and how do they come to understand themselves and their roles as strategists? In this fashion, further analysis focusing on practitioners suggests a need for narrative studies that attend not only to how storytelling constitutes strategy but also to how it constitutes strategy practitioners themselves, providing them with greater or lesser resources to influence subsequent interactions (Taylor 2006). Thus, needs are relate to examine how macro-level strategy narratives, micro-level storytelling and individual practice narratives constitute the subject positions and identities of strategy practitioners, influencing their modes of engagement in strategy praxis (Fenton and Langley 2011).

As respect to the specific role of *text*, strategy praxis often gives rise to concrete written texts in the form of strategic or business plans. Shaw et al. (1998) and Barry and Elmes (1997) argued that such texts can be viewed as embedding a form of future-oriented narrative – a story in which the organization is a key actor (generally situated as the 'hero') facing a challenge that is resolved through the proposed strategy. This material manifestation of strategy has therefore been added to the strategy as practice framework (Whittington, 2006) located in the centre of Figure 3. A focus on texts immediately moves researchers' attention to their discursive and rhetorical forms.

Accordingly, previous studies have examined whether and to what degree strategy texts are indeed formulated as narratives and how this aspect influences their persuasiveness for different audiences. For example, Shaw et al. (1998) contrasted strategic plans presented in the form of 'lists' or 'bullet points' and those presented as stories, arguing that the narrative form is more powerful in conveying meaning. Additionally, Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) and Martens et al. (2007) further studied the characteristics of successful business plans, examining factors such as resonance with expectations, alignment with cultural norms or grand narratives, credibility with third parties, the presentation of unambiguous firm identities and the use of familiar elements to contextually ground unfamiliar ones – criteria close to those of 'narrative probability' and 'narrative fidelity' put forward by Fisher (1987). The study of the rhetorical and narrative structure of strategy texts can clearly be valuable in itself to understand their persuasive effects.

However, analyses that restrict their attention to the texts themselves are limited in their capacity to develop an understanding of strategy as a social practice. Richer forms of analysis require consideration not only of texts, but also of the context for their writing and consumption. Strategic plans present themselves as reified expressions of an organization's strategic intent that have a kind of permanence and transportability over space and time, unlike the more ephemeral types of interactions of strategy praxis described earlier and from which they are derived (McPhee 2004; Anderson 2004; Geisler 2001). Yet the intent expressed in the narrative can only be realized through the collaboration of many individual and organizational stakeholders.

Thus, writers of strategic plans can be seen as engaged in a micro-political process of 'translation' (Latour 1987) of the interests of internal and external stakeholders in such a way as to hold them together in a unified whole. Depending on who participates as a legitimate practitioner or 'author' of strategy, the production of a text building from strategic conversations (called 'textualization' by Robichaud 1999) may become a complex process of negotiation in which emerging narratives must be massaged or 'wordsmithed' to enable cohesion (e.g. Doheny-Farina 1986; Anderson 2004; Spee and Jarzabkowski 2009).

Correspondingly, the actual content of strategy texts will be influenced by the micro-level translation process itself. For example, several studies have suggested that difficulties in translation may be resolved by a form of 'strategic ambiguity' (Eisenberg 1984) in which written texts remain open to alternative interpretations, allowing a variety of stakeholders to accept them (Abdallah and Langley 2013; Contractor and Ehrlich 1993; Tracy and Ashcraft 2001). At the same time, once strategy texts are unleashed into a wider forum, they become objects to be consumed (De Certeau 1984; De la Ville and Mounoud 2010). As a consequence,

researchers need to examine not only the ways in which the narratives within them are produced and constructed, but also how they are taken up, understood and subsequently used.

For while strategy texts may express strategic intent in some form, to some extent they escape the control of their authors and take on a life or ‘agency’ of their own (Cooren 2004). For example, a strategic plan may offer organizational members legitimacy for pursuing some things but not others (Langley 1988). When plans are tied to quantified goals and management incentives as many believe they must be, they may constitute more binding commitments that can have the status of a contract (Allaire and Firsirotu 1990). Fundamentally, the greater the ambiguity expressed in strategic plans, the greater the potential variety in modes of consumption.

In this vein, Fenton and Langley (2011) argued that the narratives embedded in strategy texts as well as the ways in which they are produced and consumed constitute an important research agenda item for the development of a narrative-based perspective on strategy as practice. Specifically, they proposed the exploration of the narrative form and content of strategy texts to appreciate how narrative elements contribute to their persuasiveness and legitimacy; also to investigate how interactions among multiple practitioners and stakeholders around strategy texts influence the way they are written (e.g. in terms of the ambiguity, complexity and coherence of narratives); as well as the analysis of how and why narratives embedded in strategy texts are made sense of and consumed by organization members, potentially influencing the organization’s trajectory.

Therefore, the elements of *praxis*, *practice* and *practitioners* can be seen to be mediated through the *strategy text* and for this reason; it is positioned at the centre of Figure 3 (Fenton and Langley 2011). Strategy texts are produced by strategy praxis, draw on practices embedded in both the history of the organization and in the institutional environment, and translate the intentions of their author-practitioners. At the same time, strategy texts may be consumed in unexpected ways by the same and other practitioners in future praxis while contributing to the potential formalization and institutionalization of their embedded narratives (practices).

## **2.5. Positioning this research**

Lewin’s aphorism (1951) ‘nothing is as practical as a good theory’ brings in the focus attention on the theoretical basis chosen for this dissertation study. A ‘good’ theory allows advancing knowledge without having to reinvent the wheel. From SAP perspective, the question of linking

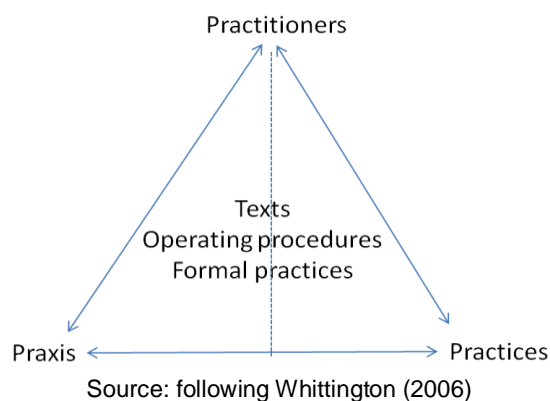
grand social theories into the strategy-making research (both at micro and macro levels) has been one of the central topics of discussion. These discussions have been closely related to offering a means to make sense of the very process, activities and practices that constitutes strategy and strategizing.

These means can also serve practitioners. Notwithstanding, there is no one theory of practice that can provide a basis for all relevant research questions at various levels of analysis, which range from reflections on strategy as body of knowledge and praxis to studies of the idiosyncrasies of specific strategic and organizational processes in different institutional cultural contexts. Consequently, strategy as practice research can be informed by alternative conceptions of practice and strategy, and this various approaches have been offered and applied, such as Gidden’s structuration theory (1984), activity theory (Vygotsky 1978; Leontiev 1978; Bourdieusian perspective, Wittgenstein “language games” approach; Foucauldian view, or narrative or discursive approaches (De Certeau; Ricoeur).

In my case, the discourse and narrative perspectives inspired taking a narrative approach to strategy as practice, which I found to be much appropriated for this kind of research. Appendix 4 summarizes studies with a narrative-discursive related approach (from theoretical and empirical perspectives) that I found relevant to my study and which were particular taken into account when designing the study.

In this study, the main interest focuses on the interaction of strategy text, with strategy practices, praxis and practitioners, which has been the basic assumption inspiring the design of this study.

**Figure 4. Reciprocal relationship in strategy as practice**



According to Fenton and Langley (2011), this reciprocal relationship is incompletely captured by the tree categories of Whittington (2006) 3P framework, given the continued empirical prevalence of textual artifacts such as strategic plans in strategizing activities (Ocasio and

Joseph 2008) as well as the recognition of the distinctive role of text in communicative theories of organization (McPhee 2004; Cooren 2004; Kuhn 2008). Thus “text” has been added as another element (Fenton and Langley 2011) as seen in Figure 4, which integrates the relevance of strategy texts into the 3Ps framework.

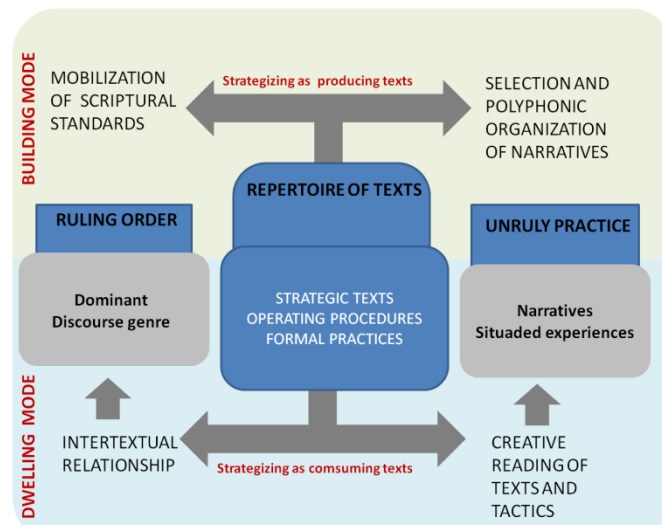
The narrative perspective gives way to the analysis of the duality between the production and consumption across different levels of analysis:

- Ruling order: the institutional environment (producing dominant discourse and consuming social practices);
- Strategic texts and formal practices: producing strategy texts and formal practices and consuming dominant discourses;
- Unruly practice: consuming strategic texts and formal practices: consumer`s stories and producing social practice.

Under the label “formal practices”, it can be included tools, techniques, norms and routines used in everyday activity to do things. Such practices fit Jarzabkowski (2004, p. 545) definition of a specific subset of practices, “those management tools and techniques present in macro-institutional and competitive contexts, arising from co-production within different communities of practice. The consumption of dominant discourse, strategic texts and formal practices can be tracked within the management fashion framework (e.g. Corbett-Etchevers and Mounoud 2011; Abrahamson 1996; Sturdy 2004).

In this manner, in the interplay present in the consumption/production of strategy, strategy is seen as production (writing) and consumption (reading) of texts, in two different modes (see figure 5): *building* (On the one hand the mobilization of standards authorize the inscription of the text in the strategic genre and on the other, it takes place the selection and polyphonic organization of narratives to draw up strategic texts) and the *dwelling* mode (it takes place the intertextual relationship which positions the text with regard to previous strategic texts and the creative reading of strategic texts and tactics for resisting their domination).

**Figure 5. Production and Consumption of Strategy from texts and narratives**

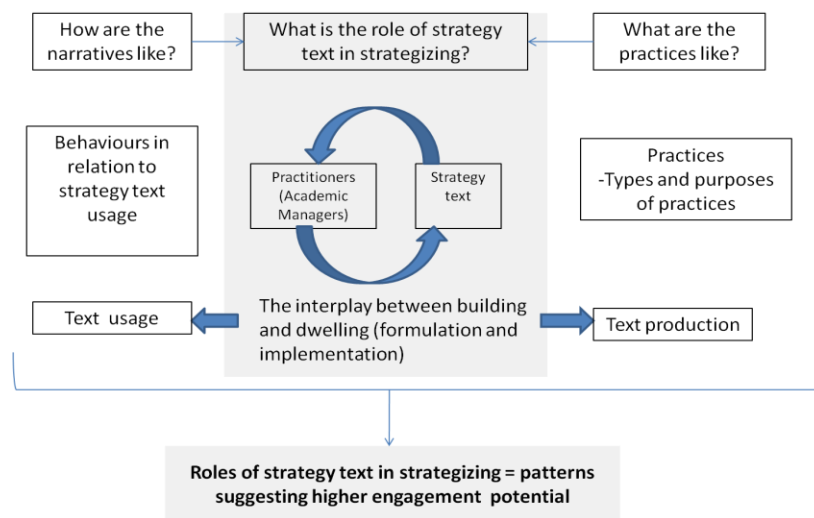


Source: Adapted from De la Ville and Mounoud (2010)

Inspired by these ideas, I start to think about whether these practices (of reading and writing) as taken part in the interplay of strategy-making modes lead to a strategy text being more effective in terms of strategy engagement. Taking into account that text must be consumed to have impact in organizations (De Certeau 1984), thus, how this happen and it is facilitated in different universities? What kind of impact different text consumption produces? Does the interplay between the unruly practices and ruling order differ within the universities and how do they occur? Are the practices of reading and writing differently enhanced and constrained/ motivated and or sanctioned? Is the interaction between reading and writing taking place more in formal or informal correlations? Do the reading and writing practices engage power differently?

Thus, the narrative and discursive approach to strategy as practice has guided the questions of this study, as discussed along this chapter. The essence of this narrative approach is the interaction between the practitioners, praxis, practices and text in doing strategy. In this manner, within this approach, researchers need to examine not only the ways in which the narratives within this interaction are produced and constructed, but also how they are taken up, understood and subsequently used in the strategizing activity. As such, from the interplay of the 3P elements (Whittington 2006) with the strategy text, embedded within a narrative perspective, one can build an illustration of the strategy text in practice, to be used as a framework for the research design and analysis.

**Figure 6. Framework supporting the research design and analysis**



Source: Own elaboration

On highlighting the most relevant potential gaps in order to further position this research study according to the overall revised literature, in the subsequent table, it is illustrated the main referential works within the SAP research, which specifically supported the study problem and the further discussion of results.

**Table 2. Overall illustration of main referential works from SAP field guiding the study**

	Referential paper	Particular contribution
<b>FINDINGS ABOUT PRACTICES</b>	<p><i>Issues of methodology and conceptualization:</i></p> <p>1. Balogun et al. 2003; Johnson et al. 2007 2. Seidl 2007 3. Jarzabkowski 2004 4. Fenton and Langley 2011</p>	<p>1. Reflection on methodological challenges and exploration of novel methodologies.</p> <p>2. Systemic-discursive approaches (differentiation between different strategy discourses).</p> <p>3. Explored social theory framework, developing the concept of management practices-in-use into a research agenda.</p> <p>4. Argues that organizational communication research, and in particular a perspective that focuses on narrative, can contribute in important ways to understanding the practices of strategy.</p>
	<p><i>Strategizing in universities:</i></p> <p>1. Jarzabkowski 2003 2. Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008</p>	<p>1. Exploration of formal strategic practices, suggesting that it can promote change if they mediate contradictions between constituents.</p> <p>2. Explored how strategy meetings are involved in either stabilizing existing strategic orientations or proposing variations that cumulatively generate change in strategic orientations.</p>
	<p><i>Strategizing in different contexts:</i></p> <p>1. Jarzabkowski and Fenton 2006 2. Hendry et al. 2010 3. Spee and Jarzabkowski 2009</p>	<p>1. Explored strategizing and organizing practices, noting that pluralistic environments require dialogic strategic planning practices, as small issues are prone to rapid escalation.</p> <p>2. Explored board level strategizing practices, noting that combinations of procedural and interactive practices can lead to minimalist, transformational, continuous or oversight involvement by boards.</p> <p>3. Explored strategy tools, conceptualizing it as boundary objects that may enable or constrain interaction about strategy across intra-organizational boundaries.</p>

	<b>Referential paper</b>	<b>Particular contribution</b>
<b>FINDINGS ABOUT PRACTICE</b>	<p><i>Strategy documents:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Giraudeau 2008</li> <li>2. Ocasio and Joseph, 2008</li> <li>3. Vaara et al. 2010</li> <li>4. Kornberger and Clegg, 2011</li> <li>5. Abdallah and Langley 2013</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explored strategic planning documents, arguing that draft of strategic plans can promote experimentation and openness in strategy work</li> <li>2. Explored strategic planning overtime in General Electric and noted that it continually renewed its practices.</li> <li>3. Explored discursive practices in strategic plans, noting that strategic plans have important power effects based on discursive practices such as self-authorization, forced consensus and discursive innovation.</li> <li>4. Explored the power effects of strategic plan, noting that strategy as text is “performative” in redefining and disciplining the organization.</li> <li>5. Explored the role of ambiguity of strategy plans, noting that while ambiguous strategy discourse enables strategic development and change, it may contain seeds of its own dissolution contributing to cyclical patterns of strategy development and orientation.</li> </ol>
	<p><i>Strategizing in different context:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maitlis and Lawrence 2003</li> <li>2. Aggerholm et al. 2012</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explored failures in strategizing, noting that a lack of shared discourse, and a focus on weaknesses rather than strengths, can lead to strategizing failure.</li> <li>2. Explored series of strategy conversations, noting that strategy text and talk are liable to be interpreted in multiple ways over time thus leading to ambiguity.</li> </ol>
	<p><i>Strategizing in universities:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jarzabkowski 2008</li> <li>2. Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011</li> <li>3. Sillince et al. 2011</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explored the shaping of the strategy as a sequential process, noting that strongly institutionalized contexts require shaping of strategy simultaneously in the action of institutional realms.</li> <li>2. Explored strategic planning as a communicative process, noting that the recursive interplay between planning text and talk enables agreement and the minimization of competing interpretations.</li> <li>3. Explored the shaping of strategy through rhetoric in a Business School, noting that rhetorical constructions of ambiguity (protective, invitation and adaptive) follow a processual pattern that shapes emergent strategic action.</li> </ol>
	<p><i>Strategy documents:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explored the role of strategic planning and integration, noting that given varying interests, integration rises from active negotiations and compromises between the actors in strategic planning.</li> </ol>
<b>FINDINGS ABOUT PRACTITIONERS</b>	<p><i>Strategizing in different context:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hoon 2007</li> <li>2. Suominen and Mantere 2010</li> <li>3. McCabe 2010</li> <li>4. Mantere and Vaara 2008</li> <li>5. Mantere 2008</li> <li>6. Laine and Vaara 2007</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explored formal committees and informal conversations, noting that conversations between senior and middle managers help middle managers to act as strategists; in particular to orientate towards senior managers signals.</li> <li>2. Explored middle managers in strategizing, noting that middle managers “consume” strategies, instrumentally as well as playfully and intimately.</li> <li>3. Explored power in strategizing, noting that power is exercised in ambiguous and contradictory ways, both supporting managers initiatives and creating possibilities for resistance.</li> <li>4. Explored discursive practices and strategy participation, identifying that “mystifying”, “disciplining” and “technologizing” discourses inhibit participation; and that “self-actualization”, “dialogization” and “concretizing” discourses facilitate it.</li> <li>5. Explored middle managers as strategists, noting that middle managers involvement in strategy relies on top-level granting of legitimacy, resources, trust and judgement.</li> <li>6. Explored the discursive construction of subjectivity, noting that strategy discourse is central to struggles over control and resistance between top, middle managers and other organizational members.</li> </ol>
	<p><i>Strategizing in universities:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explored how a top management team put strategy into practice in a UK university, noting that to understand how strategy is practised, and analysis needs to focus on how patterns of action are associated with the characteristics of both team and the wider organization.</li> </ol>

Source: Own elaboration



## 2.6. Summary

A look at the literature of strategic management research illustrated an *assortment of approaches concerning strategy*. Although, studies taking a process approach have stepped forward in exploring different aspects of more social concerns implicated in doing strategy, yet not providing a sufficient understanding of strategizing. It seems that positivist-inspired approaches have overruled the field, where the *social nature of strategy process* has got less attention. As a consequence, there has been a need to dig into more micro-level studies of practice of strategizing, with special interest being shown to practices and practitioners. However more recently, further calls have been placed in order to develop a refinement understanding of strategic agency as taking place in a web of practices. This means, going deeper into how activities are taking place not only at micro-levels, but also in how are they embedded in broader societal and or macro-institutional contexts. Issues of resistance and strategy engagement as well as the variety and diversity of discursive practices within the strategizing activities are particularly under focus.

Concerning *strategic planning research*, much of the literature on planning processes have emphasized strategy formulation, focusing on the top management level and being conducted with more quantitative approaches. A practice perspective applied to strategic planning as a formal practice has undiscovered the implicit power relations in planning activities and the role of different practitioners taken part in these activities as well as broadening the concept of the relationship between planning and performance, taking the discussion up to different outcomes of strategizing, not only concerned with economic relations, but also with the social variables embedded in this relationship. As such, an important focus here is to put attention upon how strategy planning practices can be resisted locally or more widely, exploring how people deal with practices imposed upon them and what kind of impacts and outcomes it can produce for the organizations.

As to *strategy planning in the context of the higher education*, strategizing studies have also been mainly focused on top management, yet some practice perspective studies have dealt with the communicative or persuasive purpose of strategy texts, so far the issue of implementation and engagement of different actors in consuming and using these texts still can offer several challenges, specifically upon the exploration of the connectedness and disconnectedness of academics from and within strategic planning process, and what does it mean for the impact of the plan in the organization as concerning with effectiveness and outcomes and the roles of different academic managers in the building and dwelling modes of strategy making.

The *strategy implementation* issue has been so far a hot topic in the strategy research field; however such concern represents studies with a more classical approach to strategy, taking a more linear perspective. Practice approach studies on the other hand, are equally concerned with implementation factor, but it is dealt from different perspectives, taking into account distinct variables influencing “putting strategy into practice” and how decisions made by others are assumed and executed. In this manner, aspects such as exploring the role of different actors (managerial and non-managerial) in putting strategy into practice further need investigation, as well as exploration of engagement and involvement issues in strategy, connecting it to constraints and enhancements of strategy process.

A narrative-discursive approach to strategy as practice as theoretical lens was recognized useful in studying the interactions of strategy text in practice, which is the relationship between practitioners, practices and the text in the production and implementation of strategy in different universities. To study this relationship, the concept of integrating narratives in the perspective of producing and consuming strategy is taken into account as a framework for analyzing the role of the strategy text in strategizing.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### Chapter Structure

This chapter introduces the framework elements of the research design, which includes the research paradigm and approach, the strategy of inquiry as well as detailed procedures of data collection, analysis and reporting. This study used a constructivist approach as knowledge claim (the idea is to rely on the participant's view of the situation being studied and to interpret meanings others have about the world), a qualitative strategy of inquiry, and interviews and documents analysis as the research method within a multiple case-based research. A multiple case is carried out within qualitative inquiry regarding the role of strategy text in strategizing and academic-managers engagement with the institutional strategy in different types of Spanish universities.

#### 3.1. Research Paradigm

The initial step in the research design involved choosing the research paradigm that would be most suitable. Paradigms determine both what problems are worthy of exploration and also what methods are available to attack them. Research contributes to theory building. Theories are networks of propositions about events, to which the research can establish and connect, to provide a prediction of events. Theory development is essentially a process of describing phenomena at increasingly higher levels of abstraction (Zikmund 2003).

With this starting point, theory building can be approached in the context of two paradigms: Deductive and Inductive. As respect to this study, the inductive research method was chosen. Inductive theory methods establish propositions to explain facts. While both approaches contribute to theory development, the inductive research methods are more subjective, idiographic, insider in nature and qualitative (Parkhe 1993), being the most suitable one for this research.

#### 3.2. Research Approach

This research was based on a constructivist position were “the goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participant's views of the situation being studied” (Creswell 2003, p.8). Moreover, in this constructivist position, “the researcher's intent, then, is to make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world. In this line, rather than starting with a theory (as in post positivism) inquires generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning (ibid. p.9). Taking into account that this study is within the strategy as practice research stream, the choice of the constructivist approach can also be justified by the need of

constructivist research programme advancement in strategy research, which implies the development of alienating perspectives.

Although constructivist's epistemologies differ in their premises, they share a scepticism against anything that is just taken for granted, self-evident and unquestioned (Hacking 1999). At the same time, more recent perspectives in these epistemologies share an in-depth understanding of the importance of taken-for-granted, self-evident, unquestioned references, concepts and practices for robust managerial action and scientific research, given the fundamental uncertainty and ambiguity in these contexts (Gomez and Jones 2000). This advancement in the perspective of a constructivist research programme implies a research focus on the creation and construction activities of the actors studied (Joas 1992; Knorr-Cetina 2002), also on the creative and constructive nature of research, which is in line with earlier methodological perspectives (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and a focus on the ambiguity of taken-for-granted references, which at the same time are essential for action under uncertainty, and always potentially problematic (Thevenot 2006). As such, in this view, which supports the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self-evident (Latour 2005) one central criterion for evaluation "good" research and "good" management is the ability to create new perspectives on what we take for granted (Weick 1989).

Within the strategy literature, the realist paradigm has dominated, but it has acknowledged that constructivism has potential in increasing understanding of strategy (Mir and Watson 2000). Fundamentally, this study takes a constructivist, interpretativist approach, with the aim of understanding human action (Schwandt 2003) and in order to understand this, "the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute that action (ibid. p.191). Nevertheless, in pursuance of the understanding of the meaning of the action, one has to interpret what the actors are doing. The perspective of meaningful actions of individuals is shared also by objectivist hermeneutics that acknowledge the existence of objective reality, and by constructivist grounded theory, which acknowledges realities of enduring worlds and tries to show how they are socially created through action, intention, and routine (Charmaz 2000).

### **3.3. Research Methods and Data**

Regarding the research strategy, this study used a qualitative design (Creswell 2003). Although the term qualitative research is surrounded by a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions (Denzin and Lincoln 2000), it can be defined as multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (ibid). Following an interpretative approach, a sense of phenomena is engendered by studying meaning that people give to them, by interpreting people's experience (ibid). Creswell (2003) draws illustrations for

five qualitative strategies: ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research, and narrative research.

This study used the case study approach to qualitative research. Regarding case studies, Feagin et al. (1991) pointed out that it is a multi-perspective analysis, known as a triangulated research strategy. Triangulation can occur with data, investigators, theories, and even methodologies. Similarly, Yin (1994) puts forward that the need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the process. In case studies, this could be done by using multiple sources of data. According to Creswell (2003, p.15) “the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustainable period of time”.

This study also used the grounded theory approach for the analysis of the data, specifically regarding the processes of codifying and categorizing the data. Regarding grounded theory, Creswell (2003, p. 14) stated that this approach is one “in which the researcher attempts to derive a general abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study”. Therefore, the case study strategy of inquiry was used for the whole study design as the basic strategy, and the grounded theory strategy of inquiry for data analysis. As such, in this epistemological assumption that the researcher interacts with those being researched, thus the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Alvesson 2003). Furthermore, interviews and documents (official documents and research notes) are not treated as texts, but as reflections of realities of those being studied (Schwandt 2003).

In this manner, it is through the inductive process of building abstractions, concepts and theories that the research is carried out. In qualitative research, understanding is gained through words or pictures, rather than numbers or diagrams (Creswell 1994; Miles and Huberman 1994). According to Langley (1999), theory building consists of the process of induction, deduction and inspiration. To this process, induction brings in data-driven generalization whereas deduction provides theory-driven testing of hypothesis. Creativity and insight, deriving from data, experience, existing theories or common sense, adds the process of inspiration to the sensemaking process. Accordingly, this process is comparable to discipline imagination (Weick 1989).

About the research methods, this study has used some of the qualitative methods presented by Creswell (2003) such as: interviews, open-ended questions and document data. Moreover,

Creswell (2003) pointed out that qualitative research “is exploratory and is useful when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine” (p. 22). Correspondingly, a multiple-case design was used to conduct exploratory research. Yin (2003, p.46-47) stated on multiple-case designs: the evidence is more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as more robust”. In addition to, when cases are carefully selected, the cases may provide literal replication (i.e. project similar results) or theoretical replication (i.e. predict contrasting results but for predictable reasons). Yin (2003) argues that a case study is the preferred research method when contextual factors are believed to be highly relevant to the subject of study.

A case study has a distinct advantage as a research strategy in situations when “a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control” (ibid, p.9). Case studies vary according to purpose and scope. In terms of purpose, Yin distinguishes between exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies. In terms of scope, he distinguishes between single versus multiple case study designs on the one hand, and on the other, embedded versus holistic case studies. In this study, the purpose is exploratory, and the scope implies a multiple case design.

In terms of research questions, ‘how’ and ‘why’ type questions are appropriate. As respect to propositions, important theoretical issues are raised and attention is drawn to specific aspects of the case. In an exploratory case study, a purpose statement is substituted for propositions. In terms of unit(s) of analysis, the boundaries are determined, i.e. who is included and what is the time frame? Three principles of data collection govern case study research: using multiple data sources, creating a case study database, and establishing a chain of evidence. In terms of using multiple data sources, triangulation enables “converging lines of inquiry” (Yin 2003, p.98), i.e. several sources of information pointing to the same conclusion or finding.

Case study method was chosen as the general means of investigating the engagement of academic managers in strategy practices and the role of strategy text in strategizing, in part because a “how” type question was being asked of contemporary events in different types of institutions as they unfolded without the researcher having any control of the outcome. Specifically, this investigation was an exploratory case study of strategy text in practice. Particularly, this study examines the strategy text usage in different types of universities as well as different elements that foster the academic manager’s engagement in strategy practices. Three universities have been selected for the application of this study, as previously mentioned in the research setting at the introduction chapter of this dissertation.

In terms of research question, a “How” type question guided the case study:

*“How strategy texts are used when engaging academic managers in strategizing practices?”*

As respect to propositions, none were developed because of the exploratory purpose of the case design. Instead, the following purpose statement was elaborated in the basis of the research problem under investigation:

*The purpose of the case study design is to investigate the role of the strategy text in strategizing, exploring how variations in practices of academic manager’s engagement in strategy practices and in strategy text usage can explain enhanced outcomes in strategy implementation in the university setting.*

This purpose statement, together with the research questions, guided the research both during data collection (in relation to interview questions choice), and data analysis (in relation to attention paid to certain types of events and statements during the codification and categorization processes). Both were helpful in determining what was inside and outside the scope of the case study design. Furthermore, both purpose of the study and the study research questions were used to elaborate the discussion of the findings in format of propositions.

In terms of units of analysis, strategy texts and narratives of academic managers, both in top and middle levels, were used as main units of analysis in order to explore the elements, practices and behaviour’s in relation to text usage and engagement in strategy practices.

In terms of the logic linking data and propositions, no steps were taken due to the exploratory nature of the case study (i.e. no hypothesis were formulated).

Finally, in terms of interpretation criteria, this study used the grounded theory for analyzing the data, which procedures are explained in the subsection 3.5 (data analysis).

Following Yin (1994), a case study protocol was developed to implement the research design (see Appendix 5). The case study questions were based on the research questions and helped to ensure methodological trustworthiness by demonstrating congruence between the research question and the case study design.

To ensure rigorous data collection and help in *how* to question interviewees, interview guides (see Appendix 6A and 6B) were prepared, in addition to the case study protocol. The case study questions supported the exploration of the research question while ensuring a natural rather than

rigid flow of open-ended questions in all interviews. Thus, the case study questions allowed for semi-structured interviews (see subsection 3.3.2) and helped ensure analytic generalization by providing comparable data that allowed for the development of theory.

### 3.3.1. Criteria for Design Quality Evaluation

According to Yin (2003, p.19) there are two steps in developing a high quality case study, which in a first step involves articulating theory about what is being studied in order “to help operationalized case study designs and make them more explicit”. Secondly, it needs to maximize some conditions related to the design quality, which are the construct validity, internal and external validity, and reliability. Regarding the criteria for judging the quality of research designs, Yin (2003, p.34) developed a matrix in which he explained specific tactics and the related phase of the study in which to apply them, as shown in the following adapted table.

**Table 3. Case Study tactics for design tests**

<b>Tests</b>	<b>Case Tactics</b>	<b>Phase of the research in which tactic occurs</b>
<b>Construct validity</b>	Use of multiple sources of evidence Establish chain of evidence	Data collection and Data composition
<b>Internal validity</b>	Do pattern-matching Do explanation-building	Data Analysis
<b>External validity</b>	Use replication logic in multiple case studies	Research Design
<b>Reliability</b>	Use case study protocol	Data collection

Source: adapted from Yin (2003).

Applying these tactics in this study, the construct validity was addressed by collecting data through multiple sources (even though that for the purpose of this research I mainly focused on exploring the interviewee’s narratives and document analysis, together with research notes). Thus in addition to using triangulation, the construct validity was taking into account by establishing and using a data analysis process guide that contained: the phases of the analysis process, the objective, the methods of data display and analysis, as well as tactics for finding meaning, and the output of the activity. The analysis process includes a description of the method and approach followed when trying to find meaning within the data that means during the codifying and categorizing the data, in the process of conceptualizing it.



Respect to internal validity, it was addressed by the use of pattern matching technique for analysis. On the other hand, external validity was addressed by the use of multiple cases for replication logic to generalize findings to a theory. Finally, reliability was addressed by the development of a case study protocol, which has maintained a database for tracking the study.

As mentioned previously, the interview guides were instrumental in providing data for analytic generalization. Yin (2003) uses the concept of analytic generalization for generalizing from case study to theory. Analytic generalization is – as opposed to statistical generalization – the method for generalizing the results of a case study. By comparison, Mason (2002) argues that “generalization is sometimes thought about in two distinct ways: empirical generalization and theoretical generalization” (p.195).

According to Klein and Myers (1999), generalization is not only possible in qualitative case study research but also desirable. In fact, the principle of abstraction and generalization is described as one of seven principles for interpretive field research (Klein and Myers 1999). Based on a rich case description, “the researcher can generalize to concepts, to a theory, to specific implications, or to rich insight” (Lee and Baskerville 2003, p. 236). In this vein, Klein and Myers noted:

“It is important that theoretical abstractions and generalizations should be carefully related to the field study details as they were experienced and/or collected by the researcher. This is so readers can follow how the researcher arrived at his or her theoretical insights” (1999, p.75).

Furthermore, methodological trustworthiness was (in addition to using a case study protocol and interview guides) ensured by demonstrating the appropriateness of the data collection and analysis method to the research question, and by showing that the data collection and analysis were thorough, careful, honest, and accurate (Mason 2002, p.188). Sections 3.3 and 3.4 respectively describe in detail the case study data collection and the data analysis process.

### **3.3.2. Cases Selection Criteria**

#### *3.3.2.1. Data Collection*

As mentioned in the subsection regarding the research sites, the cases selection criteria were based on the report of a larger research project that was carried out by the UNESCO Chair (CUDU) during the period of 2008-2010, as previously stated at the introduction chapter of this dissertation. Thereupon, the universities were chosen in the basis of their relevance in the

Spanish higher education system, either because they acquainted a long relationship with strategic management tools or due to their innovative and competitive profile in expanding their “product” through a concrete mission and strategy. In all the cases, they have an official “strategy text” in their website and it had been implemented and communicated in the institution. In and of itself, there had been efforts to implement the strategy in these institutions, which make them interesting sites to investigate the strategy text in practice together with the practices, elements and behaviours of academic manager’s engagement in strategy making.

As mentioned before, case study research typically employs multiple data collection methods (Yin, 1994; Creswell 2006). Consequently, data for this study were collected through interviews with individuals (academic managers) in three research case sites, as well as documentation from the Web sites of the institutions, internal documentation related to the institutional strategy, and notes from case observation and visits. These data provided for the convergence of multiple sources of evidence in a process of triangulation (Yin, 2003; Eisenhardt 1989). It is important to note that the data collection involved retrospective information also, particularly relate to retrospective individual accounts and the longitudinal evolution of the strategy text production in each institution. This aspect is relevant when the question is how to examine practice that has relevance for strategic outcomes in terms of strategy engagement. As Westley (1990) pointed out, focusing on retrospective accounts of individuals is a way of studying what is considered strategic.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I focused on three institutions where the study was carried out. To determine the individuals to be interviewed in each case, the researcher held an informal meeting with a contact person in each institution (in two cases this meeting was held in person and in one it took place over the phone). The researcher and the contact person of each institution, discussed the individuals to be included in the interviewees list, trying to involve a minimum number of academic managers in top positions and middle managers in different units, in both cases implicated individuals who have had a long carrier in their respectively institutions. Also, it was discussed with the contact person the potential documentation that was available to be analyzed, and in some cases when the documents were not publicly available for consultation in the web site of the institution, the researcher was then facilitated with copies of institutional documentation, either directly from the contact person or from other indicated contact.

After this initial contact, the list of potential interviewees was then prepared, as well as the documentation that was to be analyzed. In the end there were a total of 42 interviews across the three cases. The interviews were recorded on audiotape and transcribed verbatim (see Appendix

8 for transcription guide). Three interviews with members of top team from Case 1 (Technological University) and Case 3 (Research University) were not audio recorded. Two of them were carried out during the initial contact period and were more driven and designed as an open conversation, from which notes were taken. Another top team from Case 1 preferred not to be audio-recorded. Additionally two interviews with middle managers from case 1 and case 3 were also not recorded, in the first case, it has been organized as an open conversation and in the latter case the interviewee expressed the wish of not being recorded.

Interview transcripts averaged double line spacing, Arial font 10, and resulting around 900 pages of text. The number of interviewees per case is quite homogeneous; however, some differences are due to the size of the institution, organizational context and structure as well as the representativeness of the academic manager in context. Therefore the main data for this qualitative study consists of interviews and documents, which elaboration and description are discussed in the following subsections, together with a brief description of data collection in each of the three case studies.

### **3.3.3. The Cases**

#### *3.3.3.1. Case 1 (Technological University)*

The interviews were done in different moments; firstly, an interview designed as an open conversation was carried out with the contact person, responsible for the planning office. Furthermore, the group of middle managers were interviewed, followed by top managers. The interviews were all held in person with a previously arranged schedule. There were a total of 17 interviews. The interviews for Case 1 were held during a period that comprehends 2009-2012. From the total, three of the interviews were not recorded (see table 4 for the number and distribution of interviewees profile per case).

#### *3.3.3.2. Case 2 (The Regional University)*

Case 2 was carried out also in different phases. The first stage involved a visit observation of one week, followed a second visit of one day, then followed a third visit of one week, when most of the interviews were conducted. These phases were carried out during 2010-2012. The interviews were all held in person with a previously arranged schedule. There were a total of 9 interviews. The interviews for Case 2 were held in May 2012 and all of them were recorded and transcribed recorded (see table 4 for the number and distribution of interviewees profile per case).

### 3.3.3.3. Case 3 (*The Research University*)

Case 3 was the last one to be conducted, and as case 1, I held a meeting with the contact person, one member of the top management team, in which the case study background was explored. Further upon the interviews with the group of middle managers were carried out, followed by the interviews with the top manager members. The document analysis and the interviews period comprehend the time frame 2011-2012. There were a total of 16 interviews, excepting two interviews, all of them were recorded and transcribed (see table 4 for the number and distribution of interviewees profile per case).

### 3.3.4. Interviews

The interviews applied in the three case studies varying from open-ended to more structured, which are a characteristic method in qualitative research, with the aim of eliciting the thoughts and experiences of the respondents (e.g. Creswell 1994; Seidman 1998). A semi-structured interview can be defined as an interview whose purpose is to obtain description of the life of the world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale 1996).

This study also followed the procedure suggested by (Rubin and Rubin 2005, p.6-7) for elaborated case studies, which the purpose of interviews conducted is “to find out what happened, why and what it means broadly, the hope is to be able to generalize to broader processes, to discover causes, and to explain and understand a phenomenon”. To structure the interviews (outlines), it has been focused on suggestion by Yin (2003); Rubin and Rubin (2005) and Kvale (1996). In the interview guide approach, topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance, in outline form (Patton 2001). Notes were taken during the interviews to capture observations and insights (e.g. realizing that the interviewee was only paying me lip service because he felt obliged to, or either was unsatisfied with the institution and just want to burst it out). As such, when analysing the interviews, the notes taken that containing these types of observations were acknowledged, given the fact that “opinions and experiences” could have embedded influences.

Two interview guides (Kvale 1996) were prepared – one for each level of management (top and middle). The decision to prepare two interview guides rather than just one was based on the expectation that the different levels of management, i.e. the pro-vice chancellors, planning director, head of schools, departments, services and deans, who held different roles in putting the strategy text into practice (when producing and using it), would be able to offer different

insights by focusing on different aspects of the strategy text role, strategy practices and outcomes in different units. Thus, questions were asked surrounded the academic managers participation in the strategy process, their vision of the strategy of the university, their perceptions of the main elements needed for successful strategy implementation and alignment, their assessment regarding the use and role of the strategy text in their day to day activities. During the interviews, the interviewees were asked to comment on their experiences relate to practices, behaviours and elements of strategy production and implementation.

By virtue of their roles and responsibilities (position) within the university, they would be inclined perhaps to focus on different aspects and elements. By focusing on these contrasting aspects and perspectives emphasized by the respondents, I expected to gain a comprehensive overview of strategy text role, engagement behaviours and experiences related to different strategy practices. The interview with the top management focused on the strategic importance and expected value of the strategy text, both for the institution as a whole and for each of the different internal units. The top managers were also asked to evaluate the strategy text usefulness, the institutional strategy implementation process, practices of text production and implementation promoting a major involvement of middle management, as well as their overall role.

The interviews with the middle managers focused on the perceived value of the institutional strategy as well as the role of the strategy text for their units. They were also asked to evaluate the strategy practices and their role within it. Particularly, the overall challenges confronting each unit during the period of strategy implementation were probed to better understand the context in which the strategy development was taking place. The interviews with middle managers were more attentive to details and focused on both the role of the strategy text in implementation within their units and their perception of behaviours and elements involved in the implementation of the strategy. They were asked to give individual accounts of the units strategy process and strategy text usage, including who and what influenced the pace and outcome. Additionally, they were encouraged to evaluate the processes and the strategy text role and their impact on day-to-day management. The interview guides are found in Appendix 6A y 6B.

The duration of the interviews range from 50 minutes to one hour and 40 minutes and were recorded with prior authorization from the interviewee. As stated before, an interview guide (Appendix 6A y 6B) was developed to guide the interview process. Table 4 shows the distribution of the interviews within the case studies, specifying interviewee's profile. Although the number of interviewees per case study was tentatively defined previous to the interviews,

which were initially accorded with the contact person, during the interviews period the theoretical sampling method proposed by Glasser and Strauss (1967, p.45) was used, “theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data to collect next and where to find then, in order to develop his theory as it emerges”.

In some cases the original list of interviews accorded within the cases was increased by adding other potential interviewee of interest for the study, or decrease when no new information was added (Guest et al. 2006), or also because the potential interviewee was not available for some reason.

**Table 4. Interviews per case and interviewees position**

Type of institution	Position in the institution	Number of Interviews
<b>Technological University</b>	Top managers	5
	Dean	1
	Head of Department	2
	Head of Centre	8
	Head of Service	1
<b>Research University</b>	Top managers	4
	Dean	4
	Head of Department	7
	Head of Centre	1
<b>Regional University</b>	Top managers <sup>6</sup>	3
	Dean	1
	Head of Department	4
	Head of Centre	1
		(tot. 42)

Source: Own elaboration

### 3.3.5. Documents

Collecting and examining documentation is often a basic element in qualitative studies (e.g. Bryman 2006). According to Bryman (1989), one function of analyzing documentation is that it provides a different level of analysis from other methods such as the gap between official policy and practice. Documents are in nature written texts; they endure and give historical insight (Hodder 2000). In the case of this study, the document data consisted of internal and public data available in each case. These documents were texts concerning information related to the official strategy of the university (both at corporate and unit levels). Additionally, also external related information of each university was also used in order to amplify the university contexts

<sup>6</sup> The case study applied to the regional university had different phases, including three observation visits. As such, during the first two visits, informal meetings have taken place with representatives of the top management team, which were not included in the list of the formal interviewees described in the table.

and overall impact. In table 5 it can be observed the list of the documents being consulted in each case study.

**Table 5. Document data gathering in each research site**

<b>Research site</b>	<b>Type of document</b>	<b>Document Source</b>
<b>Case 1 (Technological University)</b>	Funding plan of Catalan universities (policy level)	University Web site
	Institutional strategy text (evolution of the latest texts – 4 documents)	University Web site
	Units official strategy texts	Provided by the interviewees
	Unit's internal strategy texts (action plans, government plans, lines of action, etc).	Provided by the interviewees
	Press articles	University web site (press release and other journals sources)
<b>Case 2 (Regional University)</b>	Institutional strategy texts (strategic plans, lines of government and quality, marketing, and other related plans)	University Web site
	Internal documents related to strategy implementation to units (charts, agreements, power point presentations).	Provided by top member representative
	Internal documents of units (action plans, strategic plans)	Provided by the interviewees
	Press articles	University web site (press release and other journals sources)
<b>Case 3 (Research University)</b>	Contextual documentation from the university foundations and organizational structures (books, power point presentations)	Provided by a top management representative
	Institutional strategy texts (government plans and the institutional strategy document)	Provided by a top management representative
	Internal documents of units (strategic plans, actions plans, electoral programs, etc)	Provided by the interviewees
	Other related strategy texts (statutes and norms, institutional assessment, strategic programs, reports, etc.)	University Web site
	Press articles	University web site (press release and other journals sources)

Source: Own elaboration

### 3.4. Data Analysis

“...writing and analysis comprise a movement between the tangible and intangible, between the cerebral and sensual, between the visible and invisible. Interpretation moves from evidence to ideas and theory, then back again. There can be no set formulae, only broad guidelines, sensitive to specific cases” (Okely 1994, p.32).

Considering this well spotted observation from Okely, it has to be noted that since I am a beginning qualitative researcher, in order to follow and build up my own analysis process, careful attention has been paid to the process of coding and categorizing; hence I drew myself within the qualitative driven analysis literature, with particular emphasis on how to code and interpret data (Saldaña 2009; Silverman 2006).

With a few exceptions as mentioned earlier, all voice recordings were transcribed (Davidson 2009; Mclellan et al. 2003; Poland and Pederson 1998) with subsequent coding and qualitative data analysis in mind (Peters and Wester 2007; Silverman 2006; Saldaña 2009), process described further in this section. Hence, all transcriptions and non-transcribed voice recordings and document data, were subsequently analyzed with the aid of the ATLAS.ti software (version 7.0) for qualitative data analysis (<http://www.atlasti.com/index.html>). The decision of selecting the Atlas.ti was based on comments of colleagues as well as the outputs of the literature on qualitative data analysis software that pointed to Atlas-ti as a sounding choice for grounded theory data analysis, particularly for theory building (e.g. Kelle and Laurie 1995; Prein et al. 1995). For instance, Weitzman and Miles (1995) said that “Atlas.ti. is a powerful, well-designed tool user friendly program for coding and interpreting text. But more than that, it provides an usually wide range of powerful tools for theory building, such as network editor that allows you to graphically create, manipulate and examine the logical relations (hierarchical or not) among your codes” (p.217).

The procedure of analyzing the data is a process of de-contextualization and recontextualization (Tesch 1990). The process typically starts with a large amount of information, which is reduced to patterns, categories or themes. Through a particular schema the data is interpreted and analyzed. In the phase of de-contextualization, the researcher becomes absorbed in the fine-grained aspects of the data, the findings of which are, by re-contextualization, brought to a higher level, where a larger picture emerges (Tesch 1990; Rubin and Rubin 2005).

The following subsections explore the steps in this iterative process of coding and interpreting the data (reducing to patterns, categories and themes/concepts) in order to draw a larger picture. Along with, one of the main issues of studies performed using case-base qualitative research is determining prior to start how much data to collect, which includes the development of the case protocol and an outline for the cases reports. As such, the analysis process, the with-in and cross-case analysis, and the procedures and criteria of data analysis are followed addressed. Additionally, a specific explanation of the coding methods applied throughout the analysis process is discussed, employing some specific illustrations.



### 3.4.1. The Analysis Process

*“You have just finished typing the field notes from your final observation of the study and you proceed to file them. There, facing you, is all the material you have diligently collected. An empty feeling comes over you as you ask, ‘Now what do I do?’”* (Bogdan and Biklen 2007, p. 172-3).

This sentence highlights a feeling which I strongly share, as probably most of qualitative researchers throughout their career path. This kind of concern regarding “what to do” with all the collected data, has troubled me through the whole of this study research design preparation and implementation. Accordingly, great effort was put in order to make visible and comprehensive the analytical path followed in the task of answering my research questions.

Thus, in this study the process of analyzing the data consisted of various phases that were guided by the aim of describing the whole through taking apart smaller pieces and analyzing these small pieces separately (coding). Hence, a “code” in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. According to Saldaña (2009) the portion of data to be coded during “first cycle” coding processes can range in magnitude from a single word to a full sentence to an entire page of text to a stream, or moving images. On the other hand, in “second cycle” coding processes, the portions coded can be the exact same units, longer passages of text, and even a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far.

First cycle methods are those processes that happen during the initial coding of data, which can be divided in subcategories. Second cycle methods are a bit more challenging because they require such analytic skills as classifying, prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing, abstracting, conceptualizing, and theory building (Saldaña 2009, p. 45). Therefore, throughout the coding processes I have applied different methods, following the guidelines provided by Saldaña (2009).

In taking a foundational approach to coding and with the aim of enhancing the organization and the texture of the data, grammatical and elemental methods were employed during the first cycle. Also, affective methods were exploited in order to investigate participant’s emotions, perceptions and other subjective qualities of human experiences. Furthermore, during the second cycle, pattern, focused and theoretical coding methods were used. Notwithstanding, both first and second cycles are very iterative processes.

On carrying out this iterative process, I started with an overview of the data in each case site, through the general organization-level analyses that increased the preliminary understanding of the data, especially concerning contextual elements related to strategizing process in these different typologies of universities. As such, through a sample, was dived into the detailed information provided by the data, with the aim of finding ways of reducing the data according to the aims of this study. Identifying elements, practices and behaviours of strategy text production and implementation and the role of the strategy text within it was followed by separate paths of interpretation for both of them (within-case analysis). Furthermore, the findings concerning these different elements were brought together and convergences and divergences at the level of the three typologies of institutions were analyzed (cross-case analysis).

The unit of analysis in the analytical process is at first the individual account (academic managers' narratives); and as the analytical exercise proceeds to the level of institution, the unit of analysis also changes to that level. It is done when categorizing the individual accounts into a "meaningful group" and noting patterns. As such, qualitative data analysis is "a continuous, iterative enterprise" where the challenge lies in the documentation of the process (Miles and Huberman 1984). The demand for careful documentation of the process stems from the fact that "unlike the analysis of quantitative data, there are few generally agreed rules of thumb for the analysis of qualitative material" (Bryman 1989, p.166).

In order to overcome this problematic, I tried to highlight the various stages of the analysis process by a careful description of each stage carried out throughout the qualitative case-based research. The visualization of the different steps conducted can be observed in Table 06, which brings forward the phases of the analytical process, correlating it with the research questions of the general study.

**Table 06. Connection of research questions to the stages of the analytical process conducted in each case**

	Stage of analysis	Purpose	Methods of data display and analysis	Task results
<b>General procedure for RQ1: What is the role of strategy text in strategizing?</b>	Initial steps (pre-coding).	Initial exploration and understanding of the data.	With-in case analysis: Application of elemental methods of coding: initial or open coding; In Vivo and descriptive coding.	Comprehension of the context in each case setting and gaining assurance in order to advance the further steps in the analysis process (document analysis of strategy text as official discourse and interviews transcripts).

	Stage of analysis	Purpose	Methods of data display and analysis	Task results
<b>General procedure for RQ1: What is the role of strategy text in strategizing?</b>	Think through the data ( <i>first cycle coding</i> ).	Data reduction (creation of a coding scheme: main codes and sub-codes).	Breaking in the data by pinpointing parts of the data with relevant content.  Application of elemental methods of coding: structural, descriptive and open coding and grammatical methods: simultaneous.	Collection of quotations that cast bound activities, elements, behaviours, attitudes, practices, etc. (set apart for a deeper analysis).
	Systematic coding ( <i>first cycle coding</i> ).	Further reduction of data (verifying the coding scheme).	Revision of collection of quotations and recoding. Application of elemental methods of coding: structural, descriptive and open coding, and also grammatical methods: simultaneous and magnitude.	The whole data coded and reduced, code scheme revised and organized for categorization.
<b>Steps for answering RQ1.1: What are the relevant elements, practices and behaviours associated with strategy text usage?</b>	<p>(<i>First cycle coding</i>):</p> <p>Identification of types and purposes of strategy practices (negative and positive perspectives)</p> <p>Identification of academic managers experiences of enabling or constraining engagement in strategy practices.</p> <p>Identification of behaviours associated with strategy text functions and uses</p> <p>Categorization of practices, experiences and engagement behaviours.</p>	<p>(<i>Going from “codes” to “categories”</i>).</p> <p>Data Display.</p> <p>Drafting conclusions (writing analytical memos).</p>	<p>Identifying elements, practices, attitudes, activities and behaviours in strategy text production and usages (data-driven content analysis).</p> <p>Application of grammatical (magnitude, simultaneous), elemental (Structural, descriptive) and affective (values and evaluation) methods of coding.</p> <p>Organizing the codes in meaningful groups (families) and categorizing them.</p>	<p>Draw a list of practices, experiences and behaviours (strategy text functions and uses)</p> <p>Categorization of practices according to their purpose associated with academic manager’s experience.</p> <p>Categorization of behaviours according to strategy text functions and uses being attributed.</p>

	<b>Stage of analysis</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Methods of data display and analysis</b>	<b>Task results</b>
<b>Steps for answering RQ 1.2: How those elements, practices and behaviours interact among them to promote strategy text usefulness in academic manager engagement in strategizing?</b>	<i>(Second cycle coding):</i>	<i>(Going from “categories” to “themes/concepts)</i>	Content analysis (discovering themes/ concepts).	Themes/concepts in elements, practices and behaviours promoting engagement and alignment.
	Identification of interplays of elements, practices, behaviours, in promoting engagement and participation in strategy process.	Categorizing (central and core-categories). Identifying themes/concepts.	Notting patterns and categorizing them.	Categorization of patterns.
	Categorization of the patterns	Data reduction. Data display.	Discussing the emerged themes/concepts with previous literature.	Patterns of strategy practices.
	Connecting findings with the theory	Drawing of conclusions (writing memos, linking it to emerged categories and themes).	Application of second cycle methods of coding: pattern, focused and theoretical.	Patterns of academic managers behaviours Patterns of strategy functions
<b>Steps for answering RQ 1.3: How the strategy text is used by academic managers?</b>	<i>(Second cycle coding):</i>	<i>Going from codes and categories to “theory”</i>	Matrix display: elaboration of matrix of elements and practices of writing and reading strategy text and engagement behaviours.	Description of how different elements and practices of strategy text writing and usage are related to different strategy engagement behaviours
	Reconnecting patterns of practices, enabling and constraining experiences, with patterns of behaviours in strategy engagement.	Data display. Drawing of conclusions (writing memos, linking it to emerged categories and themes).		
<b>Steps for answering RQ.2: How can variations in practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy text usage explain better academic manager’s engagement and superior strategizing outcomes?</b>	<i>(Second cycle coding):</i>	<i>Going from codes and categories to “theory”</i>	<i>Cross-case analysis.</i>	Description of similarities and differences concerning: Practices, strategizing behaviours and strategy text usage
	Analyzing modes of strategy text usage, elements and practices and managers engagement behaviours in different institutions.	Data reduction. Data display.	Application of second cycle methods of coding: pattern, focused and theoretical.	Roles of strategy texts
		Drawing of conclusions (writing memos, linking it to emerged categories and themes).	Building matrices. Counting. Noting patterns, seeing plausibility.	
			Clustering strategy text usage and academic manager’s engagement in strategy.	

Source: Own elaboration

In the column concerning the purpose of the analysis stage, I used the analytical components of *data reduction*, *data display* and *drawing conclusion*, based on Miles and Huberman (1984) form of “analysis”. In this manner, the methods to carry out these components are displayed in

the fourth column of the table (application of coding methods). *Data reduction* reflects the tasks of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data. On the other hand, *data display* relates to an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action. The “task results column” summarizes the outcomes of each stage of the analysis. The following subsections address in more detail the procedures and methods of each stage of analysis, which includes the description of the coding methods being applied in each analytical process (first and second coding cycle and post-coding and writing conclusions) and examples of coding, categorizing and interpretation.

### **3.4.2. With-in Case analysis**

There is no standard format for with-in case analysis and the process is typically accomplished through a detailed description for each case that provides the basis for generating insights (Eisenhardt 1989). As stated in the table of the analytical process (table 6), I first got acquainted with document data (official strategy text related documentation) in order to understand the situations of the three institutions regarding their strategy process. These initial steps helped on the design of the interview guides with top and middle managers. Thus focusing on the document data, the strategy process story evolution in each organization was narrated into view and furthermore, focusing on the interview of the academic managers, I started to explore their experiences and perceptions regarding this process.

In this manner, as mentioned before, interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. All the document data were then upload into the HU (Hermeneutic unit) Atlas.ti file. In respecting to the initial process of analysing all this raw data, Tesch (1990) advises to proceed by selecting a unit of the data, for example one document on the top of the file and going through it, asking yourself questions to find out what the data is about. And the task of finding out what the data is about involves interpretation, which is a central element in qualitative analysis process, as highlighted in the table 6 (display data, data reduction and data conclusion), in all these methods, interpretation is a key point. Thus, in this analytical process of looking up for insights (coding and categorizing) there are not patently obvious rules and procedures of interpretation, indeed, interpretation takes place at various levels during the research process (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000) on the search of answering the research questions.

A researcher with qualitative design might be overwhelmed with the amount of data when starting the analysis (Patton 2001). In dealing with this problematic, I tried to select samples and carry out some open coding in order to look for a relevant procedure for coding the entire data.

During the with-in case analysis, content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) has been conducted in order to select relevant parts of the data and start a coding scheme. As such, I read thoroughly the whole interview and made notes about those parts that seemed relevant for the study, I took notes when the interviewee characterized practices (as enabling or constraining strategy implementation), as well as the strategy text usage in his/her activities. Furthermore, following these reflective process, I went through the total set of interviews with-in each case, in order to hit upon and mark (code) those parts where the interviewee highlighted practices, elements, behaviours of strategy production and implementation, as well as strategy text usage or told about his experiences and perceptions of them.

Essentially, the choice of different coding methods was driven by the necessities of my research questions, as well as by the grounded theory approach to the analysis. Nevertheless, even though this dissertation does not follow the exact guidelines of the grounded theory methodology in a “purest perspective”, I would argue, that the research process has some similarities giving the fact that while thinking through the data I made comparisons and asked questions (Strauss and Corbin 1998) such as reflecting upon the perception of the interviewees regarding how does the interviewee describe his role in strategy production and implementation or how does he/she reflected the strategy text usage in his/her activities. In carrying out these reflections, the open coding function in ATLAS.ti assisted me in making the first interpretation of the adequacy of the data; also it is a recommended procedure for a qualitative researcher to get a sense of the whole and to be systematic with the analysis (cf. Creswell 1994, p.155).

Therefore, with the help of the Atlas.ti software program, based on the notes highlighted I searched for relevant issues and subsequently they were coded (Peters and Wester 2007). This initial exploration of the data by applying open coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998) can be considered one step within the first cycle coding. Open coding is also called initial coding by other authors (Saldaña 2009). Thus, throughout the different steps of the analytical process conducted in this study I have applied different coding methods during the task of interpreting and giving meaning to the invisible parts, as mentioned previously. Hence, during the first cycle **elemental methods** were used: *structural coding* (question-based code that results in the identification of large segments of texts on broad topics). In this case, the participant’s responses and the interviewer’s questions are included in the coded segment. An example of this coding is followed described.

*Driven research question: What are the relevant elements, practices and behaviours associated with strategy text elaboration and implementation?*

Structural code: ASPECTS HINDERING STRATEGY TEXT IMPLEMENTATION<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>I: Do you think the strategic axis being proposed by the university function as a guide to facilitate decision-making?

HEAD-SCH-TEC-M6: ...The university gives me some strategic axes,...within the school I probably try to improve the indicators, which I consider important because the university has suggested it to me, then, or because I think those proposed actions may increase a group of indicators, in my case I relate a lot the university indicators within the school. However, there is one point I do think it is problematic, in general, I think many different people in the university still don't have enough confidence in these indicators ... Everybody's trying to do it. So of course any school will tell you: I try to reach my indicators, then you look at the schools, almost all of them reaches up to 100%, yet there are things which are hard to increase..., but everyone tries to get 100% due to the budget issue, now, I sometimes perceive that this might be a kind of imposition, because many people aren't convinced that those indicators are important....

<sup>1</sup>I: This is due to the fact that it takes place a negotiation that put higher emphasis more at the numbers rather than at the processes?

HEAD-SCH-TEC-M6: ...I think the problem is even deeper than that, there is one point, and I am not here blaming the top management team... well, ...the thing is that I see that it is really difficult to do things with the type of collective that we have,... on mission and vision concepts..., I do believe that these concepts haven't reached up to bottom levels, is a type of mission that has been imposed and most people aren't aware of it...

Along the structural coding process I have run the coding frequency report in order to identify which ideas and themes were mentioned more times by the participants and which rarely occurred. Thus, other participant's similarly coded interviews segments were collected together and then further coded or sub-coded to extract data related to the specific question being analyzed. Using the code ASPECTS HINDERING STRATEGY TEXT IMPLEMENTATION, the particular group and their frequency in descending order across participants in the case is followed exemplified:

**Table 7. Example of frequency counts on structural coding**

Category	Aspects	Frequency
<b>Engagement</b>	DIFICULTIES OF ACHIVING INVOLVEMENT	23
<b>handicaps</b>	Unproductive Governance model	4
	Poor motivation mechanisms	3
	Lack of interest and resistance	2
	Lack of people training	2
	Difficulties on the involvement of different staff profiles	2
	Poor visibility of the strategy on a day-to-day basis	2
	Ideological barriers in advancing initiatives	2
	Lack of commitment to the institution	1
	Disbelief in indicators of strategy performance	1
	Different traditions and objectives across the institution	1
	Cell structure division	1
	Lack of information and distrust on corporate bodies operating and performance	1
	Individualisms	1

Category	Aspects	Frequency
<b>Information</b>	COMMUNICATION FLOW CONDITIONINGS	12
<b>Exchange</b>	Poor communication	5
<b>handicaps</b>	Few integrated spaces for debate	2
	Lack of verbalization of strategic priorities	2
	Impaired use of formal discussion spaces	1
	Scanty institutional memory	1
	Institutional size blurs communication flows	1
<b>Managerial</b>	DECISION-MAKING CONDITIONINGS	12
<b>handicaps</b>	Lack of a comprehensive and integrated vision	3
	Low prioritization of units specificity needs	3
	Centralization of decision-making process	1
	Inconsistency between the institutional size and its pursuit of excellence	1
	Scanty shared responsibilities	1
	“Fits all” policy	1
	Power influences (power plays)	1
	Low prioritization of core business	1
<b>Structural</b>	STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS	12
<b>handicaps</b>	Bureaucracy	4
	Scanty autonomy and economic constraints	3
	Changes to the management team	2
	Slow processes and resource scarcity	1
	Problems in the alignment between the administrative and academic responsibilities	1
	Deficient management and control systems	1
<b>Political</b>	CONDITIONING OF THE SYSTEM	5
<b>handicaps</b>	Lack of support from the political system at governmental levels	2
	Political decisions associated to opportunisms	1
	Failures in the policy frameworks	1
	Instability of the legislative framework	1

Source: Own elaboration

Overall, at first sight the above data would insinuate that the category of *Engagement Handicaps* (i.e. unproductive governance model, poor motivation mechanisms) were the most mentioned concerns relate to strategy and strategy text constrains across the academic managers within the case, while *Political handicaps* were the less frequent mentioned. Furthermore, these matrixes were compared across other cases and further analyzed.

In the case of *descriptive coding* (it summarizes in a word or short phrase the basic topic of a passage, the topic is what is talked or written about, not abbreviations of the content). In the following example, it describes the codes related to the concepts managers were talking in one case study regarding their perspectives associated to management positions roles and functions:



HEAD-SCH-RES-M7: The university management is often interpreted in this way: a transition task, where you can try to do your best, yet knowing that it is only a short term position<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of service

HEAD-DEPT-RES-M3: ...In my case even existed, before becoming head of department, a clear will to reject all types of participation in the management of the university. Assuming management positions is conceived among many of our colleagues, essentially as a waste of time...<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Wasted time

HEAD-DEPT-RES-M8: I must to confess that before coming to this university, maybe due to the situation of my former university, I used to think that management was a burden, I had to bear it because it is something that you have to do it<sup>3</sup>, what I like is teaching or research, but in our work, from time to time we have also to do management...

<sup>3</sup> Pack to carry

The application of descriptive codes in the initial phase helped on categorizing the data at a basic level, to further explore it at the level of frequencies, categories labelling, as well as it also allowed to acquire a broader holistic grasp of the study data organization.

In respect to *In Vivo coding* (it refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, the terms used by the participants themselves). After the first reading of the texts, it was one of the first coding techniques applied, and it was further complemented with the other elemental methods being exemplified in this section. One example of this coding is an extract from an interviewee talking about her perspective on the finality of informal spaces within formal meeting practices:

DEANF-RES-1: Informally, the joint meetings or the council of government are both valuable for socialization, because you arrive 15 minutes before, and the socialization is done outside the meetings. It has a purpose, which is before and after the meetings<sup>1</sup>. It is also more hallway conversations<sup>2</sup>, which you cannot do much<sup>3</sup>, however you put yourself in accordance with the TM<sup>4</sup> and say: ok, we will do it later<sup>5</sup>. But there must be someone that pushes it forward or not<sup>6</sup>...

<sup>1</sup>Ex ante/Ex post socialization

<sup>2</sup>Hallway conversations

<sup>3</sup>It cannot be done too much

<sup>4</sup>Reach agreements

<sup>5</sup>We will work it out

<sup>6</sup>Someone that pushes it forward

Regarding the application of *process coding* (it uses gerunds “ing” words) exclusively to connote action in the data, simple observable activity – talking, going to meetings, listening, – and more general conceptual action – struggling, negotiating, adapting, debating. For instance, it has been use to codify the perceptions of the academic managers regarding their functions and roles in the university strategy process:

HEAD-DEPT-REG-M2: ...And when there is something that involves a more strategic view; it is when the department head comes in. Basically, I participate when there are doubts <sup>1</sup> , conflicts... <sup>2</sup> .	<sup>1</sup> Solving Doubts <sup>2</sup> Resolving conflicts
HEAD-DPT-REG-M1...through the governing council of the department, in the councils of government, I explain how ideas are <sup>1</sup> ...	<sup>1</sup> Explaining ideas
VCRECT-REG-F1: ... Direct contact with them <sup>1</sup> , to talk, to explain, to explain again <sup>2</sup> ,...to win over someone within the department <sup>3</sup> , someone closer, so he/she can understand you better, and then this person might further do the work within the department <sup>4</sup> ...	<sup>1</sup> Promoting direct contacts <sup>2</sup> Explaining ideas <sup>3</sup> Convincing people <sup>4</sup> Building agreements (Translation)

Essentially, the *process codes* from the example above led to the following outcomes which were listed for further reference and analysis about the academic manager's functions:

- *Advocacy of shared global vision* (EXPLAINING IDEAS, CONVINCING PEOPLE, BUILDING AGREEMENTS, PROMOTING DIRECT CONTACTS).
- *Conflict management* (SOLVING DOUBTS, RESOLVING CONFLICTS).

In addition to, **grammatical methods** were used during the first cycle coding. Specifically two types were applied: *magnitude coding*, which consists of words or abbreviations that suggest intensity or frequency, as well as it can be applied to indicate the presence or absence of something within a category (present, absent, unclear, yes, no, maybe). Moreover, it can also be used to suggest evaluative content (positive, negative, neutral or mixed). The examples bellow show some extracts from different academic managers within one case, where *Descriptive* codes indicate the subject they are addressing (types of practices), and the numeric ratings which have been added afterwards, make reference of my interpretation regarding the assessment about the practice effectiveness in strategy development.

The numbers are associated with the following ratings:

- 3 = Highly effective
- 2 = Satisfactory effective
- 1 = Low effective

HEAD-DPT-RES-M1: Yes, the joint meeting <sup>1</sup> is informative and I guess for the vice-chancellor it serves to see if the middle managers are in agreement with what the top management is doing and if there is low acceptance by the directors and deans, maybe they change something or present it differently in order to calm	<sup>1</sup> Joint meeting: 3
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things down ... I think these meetings work well, don't know if it would work out in other universities, but here it does.

DEANF1-RES: ...we have a monthly meeting with the director of the campus activities and all the deans and heads of different departments<sup>2</sup>. There is the level of coordination and also sectoral meetings. The lines are, but they are academic interlocutors and here there is something that weakens. I am responsible for the functional level but not organic...It's complicated because formally I do have one way to go forward, yet informally I have another. Surely, the informal way will give me better results, but I cannot make it visible because it isn't formal.

<sup>2</sup> Monographic meetings: 2

DEAN-F4-RES: We meet once a month at a table<sup>3</sup>, with the vice-chancellor, all the pro-vice chancellors, the general manager and the assistant managers; it is a large table, but a table. So it is true that all related to the university generic lines, once a month we have access to this information and it is shared, and we can further express your views upon it. It generates opinion; I was able to give my opinion on certain issues, both to say it was fantastic, as for stating objections. And consensus is built in this table.

<sup>3</sup> Joint meeting: 3

HEAD-DEPT-RES-M5: What happens is that in recent years I may complain that the joint meeting<sup>4</sup> has become something too formal and not too much open to discussion...

<sup>4</sup> Joint meeting: 1

Furthermore, the *magnitude codes* associated with the assessment of the practices purposes and effectiveness are placed in a matrix for at-a-glance analysis and interpretation, as followed exemplified:

**Table 8. Frequency of magnitude codes (practice purposes and effectiveness)**

Practices	HEAD-DPT-RES-M1	DEANF1-RES	DEAN-F4-RES	HEAD-DEPT-RES-M5
<b>Joint meetings</b>	3		3	1
<b>Monographic meetings</b>		2		

Source: Own elaboration

The following example of the application of this type of code expresses the utility of the strategy text in day to day basis. The evaluative function has been associated to the following assessment:

POS = POSITIVE

NEG = NEGATIVE

MIX = MIXED

HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M2: This is a document, which is very handy, very much alive. It is a reference...<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> POS

HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M1: Yes, we are obliged to formalize a strategic plan ... we were given a number of items, and we were told to set some targets...well, it was a fairly complete document, but, economically uninspiring...<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> NEG

HEAD-SCH-TEC-M5: ...yes, we have a few strategic lines that are verbalized in different committees, I'm in one of them, but it seems that it is more in line to meet the program being set by the funding contract with the Government rather than the willingness to influence real changes...<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> NEG

HEAD-SCH-TEC-M4: ...nor it is a political showcase nor it is an useful instrument, it is in somewhat in the middle...But I think it will be more useful as more economic ties it has...I think people would take it more seriously<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> MIX

As respecting the employment of *simultaneous coding* it consists of in the application of two or more different codes to a single qualitative data, or the overlapped occurrence of two or more codes applied to sequential units of the qualitative data. It is often used when the data's content, segment suggests multiple meanings that necessitates and justify more than one code.

HEAD-SCH-TEC-M4: It is implemented, however I don't think it is well known, if you talk to a lecture staff, which doesn't hold a management position<sup>1a</sup>, he/she will probably not know the detail, even a general overview<sup>1b</sup>...

<sup>1a</sup> Increased visibility when in management position  
<sup>1b</sup> Scanty known

DEAN-TEC-M9: ...as an academic unit, there are policies that comes from the university, which we obviously must follow and meet, and often it yields an important workload, thus the forecast of our own local strategy is very limited, restricted by all these conditions that are marked by the university, that is, the goals that we would set as school, sometimes are hard to reach, due to these imposed constraints...<sup>1a y 1b</sup>

<sup>1a</sup> Local Strategy constrained by institutional policies  
<sup>1b</sup> Work overload restricts an overall vision consistency

Additionally, **affective coding methods** were also adopted. For instance: *values coding* that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives. It is appropriated for exploring intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies. For instance phrases such as "it is important", "I think", and "it is needed"... may alert the researcher about what may be valued from the perspective of the participant. The following excerpts exemplify the participant's beliefs and values regarding the actual problematic of the university governance model and its influence in the university strategy process:

HEAD-REG-M4: I think the university management should be conducted from the inside<sup>1</sup>, because professionalize it sounds a bit like privatization and so on, I think what should be done is to motivate people from within, there are periods when you have to devote yourself to management tasks<sup>2</sup>...

<sup>1</sup> Against the university professional management  
<sup>2</sup> Working out academics motivation

VCRCT-REG-M6: ...political autonomy is a bit vague words if you do not have financial autonomy, thus, if you don't have economic autonomy, you have nothing... only statements of principle and nothing else<sup>3</sup>...the resources are very limited and now are even less,

<sup>3</sup> Unrealistic expectations

therefore it is very difficult to implement policies, aggravated further by the changing policies<sup>4</sup>...

<sup>4</sup>Unstabilities in policies

VCRECT-REG-M5: not sure about the management team<sup>5</sup>, but for example ... the discourse about the possibility of school directors and head of departments being chosen, I think that would improve the current governance model<sup>6</sup>, concerning the problematic of involvement, for instance now the management team may find problems in implementing certain initiatives due to resistances of certain departments, because after all, he/she has been elected by the members of the department, so he/she doesn't respond to you (vice-chancellor) but to their voters....

<sup>5</sup>Unclear about changes at the top level

<sup>6</sup> Changes in appointments of middle level would bring improvements

With the exploration of the above data example, it came out the following interconnected systems of values and beliefs on the governance assessment and potential changes for improvements, which were further exploited:

**Values:**

- Against the university professionalization of management
- Unclear about governance model changes at the top level
- Changes in appointments of middle level bring improvements
- Unrealistic expectations: incoherence of autonomies

**Beliefs:**

- Need of Higher stability in policies
- Need of Maintaining academics motivation in dedicating themselves to management tasks

Other example of code technique applied was the *Evaluation coding*, which focuses on pattern observations or participant responses of attributes and details that assess quality. It can emerge from the evaluative perspective of the researcher or from the qualitative commentary provided by participants – e.g. boring; too long, used to be powerful, uninspiring, etc. In order to assess quality linked to the participant's comments, it is associated with *the magnitude codes* of + o – which are followed by the specific comment. For instance, the example provided below shows the interviewee's comments regarding their perception of the university strategy:

HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M1: We are in the process of evaluating faculty staffs, we are the most assess profile of civil servants<sup>1</sup>...this process assesses the teaching and research labours and establishes four categories: very good: A, good B, C regulate and bad D. Well ... then in colour [shows me the graphics], if a faculty staff is here, rated AA, AB, BA, or BB are green (very good or good), professors who are in this band are C (yellow - regular), and the ones that are red, they are the bad ones, DD in both teaching and research. Well [shows me a graphic where the colours-very good to bad departments- are distributed]... In my department 75% of teachers are in green: AA and

<sup>1</sup> – Performance evaluation of university professor: “too much”

<sup>2</sup> – Evaluation without action: “what for?”

AB. But hey, this is our university [shows me graphics of all the departments of the university], then 24 of the 38 departments where there is a lot of red, and much yellow<sup>2</sup>....So, is this strategy?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> – Strategy: “ineffective”

HEAD-SCH-TEC-M5: In its beginnings the university strategy was characterized as of subsistence, where there were old schools, each of it with its own traditions...and I was lucky to come to [this school], which was formed with a very different philosophy....the people who organized it, have done it by following the model of foreign universities<sup>4</sup>. So it has allowed me to see different models in this same university.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> – University model: “seems dissatisfactory”

<sup>5</sup> + Different models: “positive experiences”

HEAD-SCH-TEC-M4: I think there has been a change in this University, and things are being planned with more criteria<sup>6</sup>, there are documents, which unfortunately many people don't know them<sup>7</sup>, but I think we can be self-satisfied in having things very, very organized<sup>8</sup>. In this university, I think that everything that is done is done for a reason...you see that there is a reason behind a strategic plan. Which I think few years ago things weren't organized like that, or at least I hadn't seen it...<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> + Planning evolution: “it is done with more criteria”

<sup>7</sup> – Strategy texts: “scanty visibility”

<sup>8</sup> + Planning: “well organized”

<sup>9</sup> + Planning: “maybe it used to be less organized”

Therefore, the data above were clustered in two groups of positive and negative comments on the university strategy perceptions, which furthermore may help organize the flow of the evolution of the process over time, in order to look across depth details allowing further and supplementary comparisons:

#### **Positive Comments:**

- University model: different realities within it, with positive outcomes.
- University strategy evolution: planning is done with more criteria.
- Planning organization: well systematized.
- Planning organization: “Used to be least”.

#### **Negative Comments:**

- Assessment policies: “too much”.
- Strategy directions: “ineffective”.
- Assessment without clear actions: “useless”.
- Strategy text: “not visible”.

Along the process of the first cycle coding, by using and combining these different codes techniques previously mentioned, I came out with several code categories and a list of different codes for each of the three case studies. For instance, to exemplify the amount of the coding data resulting after carrying out a first cycle codification analysis, the outcome for case 1 (Technological University) is followed exemplified:

**Table 9. Number of code categories and subcategories and derived subgroups resulted after first cycle coding (within case analysis – Technological University)**

STRATEGY TEXT			MIDDLE MANAGERS NARRATIVES			TOP MANAGERS NARRATIVES		
6 main categories	13 sub-categories	65 sub-groups derived from sub-categories	10 main categories	44 sub-categories	249 subgroups derived from sub-categories	9 main categories	44 sub-categories	88 sub-groups derived from sub-categories

Source: Own elaboration

As such, the total outcome for the first code cycle within case 1 resulted in 25 categories, 101 sub-categories and 402 subgroups within the sub-categories. It was still too much data, and it needed a reorganization in order to develop the main themes and to be able to visible build an answer to the research questions, and further compared the case result within the cross-case analysis.

Accordingly, the application of second cycle coding methods was conducted, with the aim of reorganizing the amount of obtained coded data through the first cycle coding. As Morse (1994) noted, there is the need of fitting categories with one another in order to develop a coherent synthesis of the data corpus. In this task, some of the data was recorded, and codes were merged together due to the fact that some of them were conceptually similar, infrequent codes across texts and participants were reviewed in the framework of their utility within the coding scheme and their relevance in relation to the research questions being investigated. Hence some codes were either merged or withdrawn. The codes then were reorganized and reconfigured aiming at evolving into a smaller and more selected list of broader categories, concepts and themes according to the objective under investigation in this study.

In this reorganization and reconfiguration process during the **second cycle coding** such methods were employed: *pattern coding* (way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes or constructs); *focused coding* (it follows initial/open coding, searcher for the most frequent or significant initial codes to develop the most salient categories); *theoretical coding* (integrates and synthesizes the categories derived from coding and analysis), it specifies the possible relationship between categories and moves the analytic story in a theoretical direction. Examples of how this second coding cycle was carried out are followed described.

In the case of the *pattern coding* they help to pull together a lot of data into a more meaningful unit of analysis. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the application of *pattern coding* is useful for the development of major themes from the data, helpful in searching for rules, causes and explanations in the data, examining networks and patterns relationships, or assisting in the

establishment of theoretical constructs and processes. In the following example of the application of this coding technique during the within case analysis of case 1 (technological university) I use the list of codes from the middle managers narratives about their visions and perception of strategy text. Initially during the first cycle analysis, the outcome was as follows (1 main category, 8 subcategories and 38 derived subgroups):

Main category: VISIONS ON STRATEGY TEXT:

Sub-categories and derived subgroups:

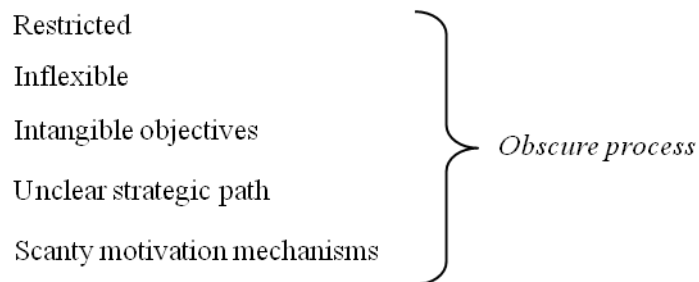
- **Assessment of the strategy process evolution in the university**
  - *Less freedom and flexibility*
  - *Objectives difficult to control*
  - *It has lost the overview of where the university is going*
  - *Lack of motivation mechanisms*
  - *Need for greater clarity and simplification of the strategic axis*
- **Perspectives on the strategy text elaboration process**
  - *Strategic plan standard methodology*
  - *Alignment is built by the convergence of common interests*
  - *Coincidentally alignment*
  - *Inclusion of mandatory indicators and unit own driven indicators*
  - *Disruptions in the continuity of the texts: management team ownership*
  - *Different groups provide insights into the development of the work plan*
  - *Intertextuality: fed from previous experiences*
- **Motivation for elaborating the text**
  - *Bottom-up initiative*
  - *Vision of the director*
- **Actors involved in the elaboration**
  - *Management team with the participation of teaching staff*
  - *Technical committees: preparation of topics*
  - *Standing committees: changes and revisions of topics*
  - *Political body: Themes and topics approvals and validations*
- **Fields of text incidence**
  - *Research*
  - *Teaching issues*
- **Formats of strategy texts**
  - *Overall strategic guidance*
  - *Work plan monitoring of electoral program*



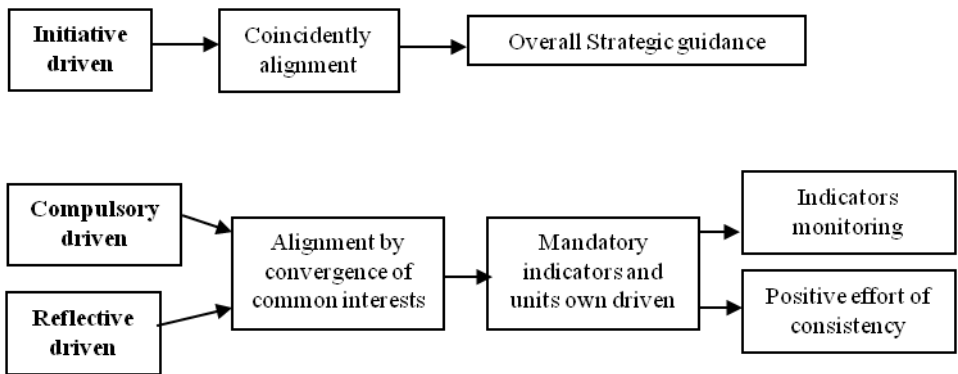
- **Functions of strategy texts**
  - *A restricted lighthouse*
  - *An exercise of strategic reflection*
  - *A quality tool*
  - *Facilitates organization*
  - *Work plan*
  - *Budget distribution tool*
  - *Positive effort of consistency*
  - *Political document, yet useful*
- **Strategy text usage appraisal**
  - *An obligation, not necessity*
  - *Reassurance of what is already being done, not a strategic thinking*
  - *A shared reference*
  - *Feeling of increased bureaucracy*
  - *For the hardworking units the plan works by itself*
  - *Its relevance lies in the exercise of strategic thinking*
  - *Scanty visibility and practicality in the day to day basis*
  - *Document is dead without the association of resources*

In the task of reconfiguring this set of categories and subcategories related to the middle managers narratives about their visions concerning different aspects of the strategy texts, I went back to the research questions of the study and focused myself in the specific issue having to do with how strategy text was used and how its usefulness were being reckoned. In this manner, similar codes were assembled together to analyse their commonality and to create a pattern code. In this brainstorming task, I went throughout the subcategories and created the following patterns:

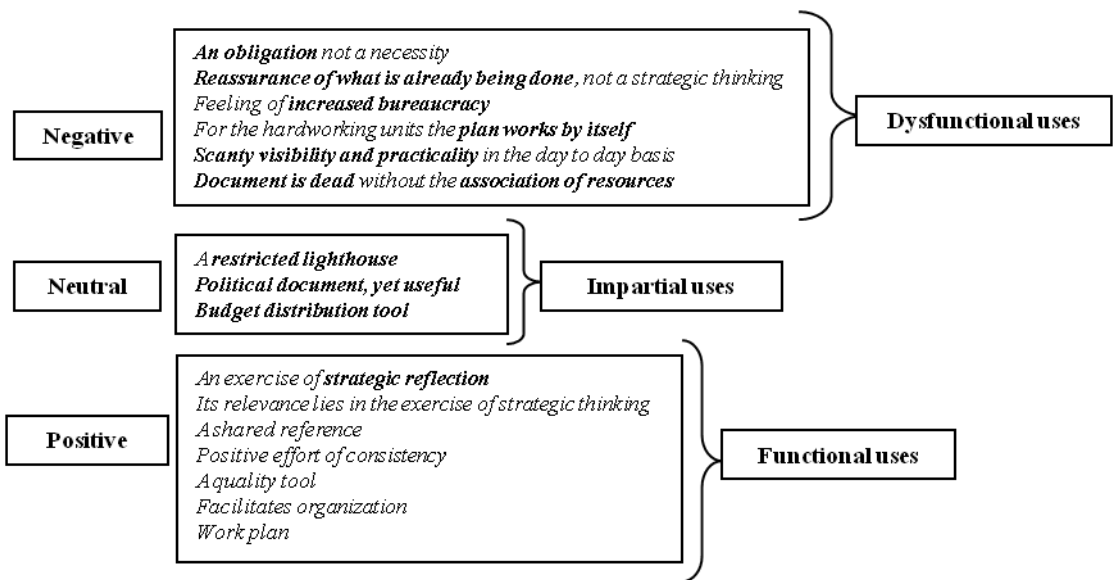
**Strategy process perception:**



**Motivations to elaborate the text, formulation process and outcomes:**



**Strategy text functions and usage:**



The evolution of the strategy process at the university has been perceived has an **obscure process**, where the strategy text elaboration process were mostly carried out in the framework of the **compulsory driven** motivations in which **converges the institutional and units interests**, resulting in **indicators monitoring follow-ups**. However, perceptions about the strategy text uses have been associated with positive, negative and neutral experiences. On the one hand, in the framework of the **compulsory driven** motivation, it resulted in strategy text **dysfunctional uses**. On the other hand, when the process is perceived as being positive, considered not only as an obligation, but as a positive strategic thinking exercise (reflective **driven**), the convergence of common interests results in the positive effort of consistency, which is associated with the **functional and impartial uses** of the strategy texts. The **initiative driven** motivations were related to some academic and service units that due to the vision of their director, they carried out the elaboration of their own documents, where the content

alignment was achieved coincidentally, in isolate form. In this case it is also associated with the **functional use**.

As exemplified above the application of the pattern coding technique helped in reorganizing and simplifying the initial list of codes and also supported the elaboration of two main categories derived from them: motivation to elaborate the text (*initiative, compulsory and reflective driven*) and texts usages (dysfunctional, impartial and functional uses).

Other code method used during the second cycle analysis was the *focused coding*, it enables to review the codes applied during the initial coding period and focusing on developing more pronounced categories, according to their comparability and transferability across participants. In order to describe the interpretation path followed here, I will use again one example of the first cycle analysis. In this case I will go back to the structural coding in order to review and focus upon them and define their connections, taking into account the frequency count being done previously. As such, their clustering is as follows:

Category: Engagement handicaps in strategy implementation

- DIFICULTIES OF ACHIVING INVOLVEMENT

Category: Information Exchange handicaps in strategy implementation

- COMMUNICATION FLOW CONDITIONINGS

Category: Managerial handicaps in strategy implementation

- DECISIONMAKING CONDITIONINGS

Category: Structural handicaps in strategy implementation

- STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS

Category: Political handicaps in strategy implementation

- CONDITIONING OF THE SYSTEM

In clustering and focusing on the above categories, the criterion was to rethink of their connection (what aspects are more connected to each other in constraining the strategy implementation?) as well as what the relevance was given by the participants resulted from the frequency count. Thus, using the main categories from above, the new outline might be refocused as follows:

Category: SOURCES OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION CONSTRAINTS

A) Engagement handicaps

- Communication flow conditionings

- Structural conditionings

#### B) Managerial handicaps

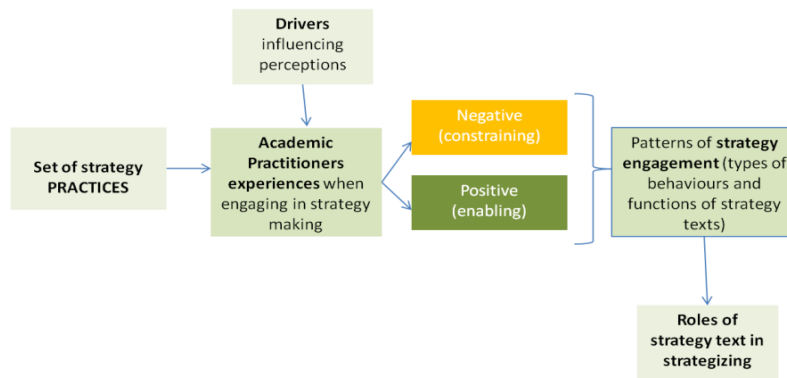
- Decision-making conditionings
- Political system conditionings

This new outline describes that the *political*, *structural* and *information exchange* categories can be subsumed under **managerial handicaps** and **engagement handicaps** respectively. Then, two main categories fall under the elements that are perceived as highly constraining the strategy implementation: on the one hand, engagement problems can be derived from problems in exchange the information, which means that deficient communication flow could be one reason that justifies the exchange information handicaps that consequently may lead to problems in effective engagement.

However, conditions of the structure (bureaucracy, size of the institutions, slow processes, and defective connection between administrative and academic areas) are other aspects that can constrain the motivation to engage in strategy implementation. The other category is the Managerial handicaps, that have subsumed directly problems related to managerial tasks, as difficulties found in decision making process, but also undirected problems that does not have to do with the institution itself, but with problems associated with the political systems (scanty autonomy in prioritizing issues that need a political support, problems in the stability of the legislative framework...). Both issues when connected could constitute constraints for the effective strategy implementation. On the cross-case comparison, once I compare the data from other managers, I may see if this category does indeed can be kept in this line of argumentation, and if it may be transferable.

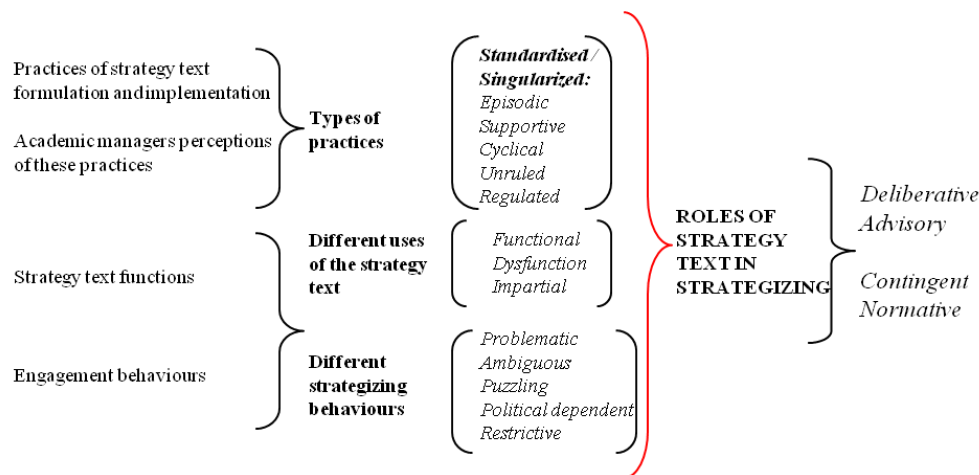
In respect to the use of *theoretical coding*, this is a very relevant part in writing up the conclusion of the within-case analysis, as it allows the integration and synthesises of the main categories derived from coding and analysis. It also supports the tasks of specifying the possible relationship between categories, moving the analytic story in a theoretical direction. For instance, during the first and second cycle codes, the investigated issues under study were delved into the data by asking questions like: Does the interviewee reflect about his/her vision of positive and negative aspects of strategy implementation? Does the interviewee reflect about practices and related experiences? What are these reflected practices like? Do these practices illustrate enabling or constraining experiences? Does the interviewee reflect on his/her participatory role in strategy implementation and production? Does the interviewee reflect in his/her strategy text usage? Does the interviewee describe the purposeful of this usage? Figure 7 illustrated the different stages and spotlights of the conducted analysis:

**Figure 7. The spotlight in the analysis**



Source: Own elaboration

When applying the second code technique, aiming at synthesized the categories emerged throughout the analytical process, I have concentrated in the central categories that are related to the analysis spotlights previously mentioned. Thus, using an example of the central categories of the case 1, they are outlined as follows:

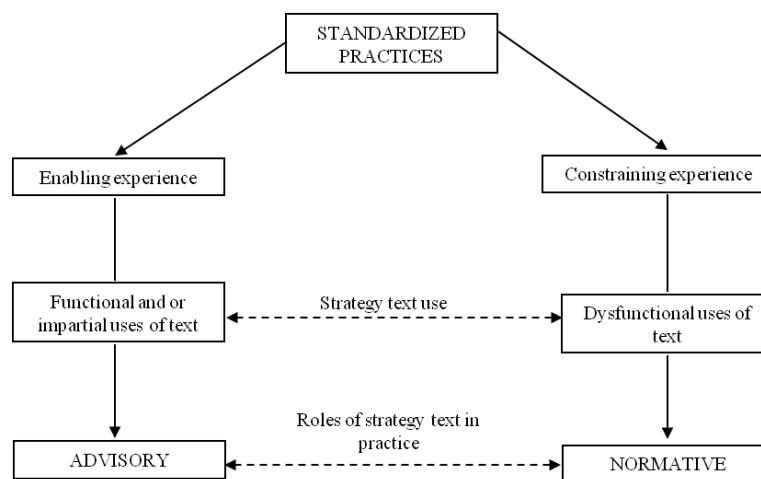


Source: Own elaboration

The core category is: ROLES OF STRATEGY TEXT. This core category emerged from the central categories of TYPES OF PRACTICES, STRATEGY TEXT DIFFERENT USES, and TYPES OF STRATEGIZING BEHAVIOURS. For instance, the academic managers when participating in strategizing describe their perception concerning the practices, which are enclosed in two categories: a set of *standardized practices*, with clear institutionalized rules and framed under particular periods of times, and a set of *singularized practices*, in which rules are more implicit, and do not follow a specific norm or standards and can be either framed under a specific time period or not. Academic managers perceptions when experiencing the different set

of practices, suggested that standardized practices were more associated with less flexibility, not contemplating the strategic concerns of the individualities within the university, or very confined to economic objective. On the other hand, the singularized practices were associated with different models of strategizing within the same university, where there were parallel initiatives for continuous improvement, with more flexibility in establishing agreements and objectives. However, there were mixed experiences for both set of practices.

The positive approaches to the different set of practices led to configuring ENABLING purposes of practices, and on the other hand, negative approaches led to configuring CONSTRAINING purposes of practices. When academic managers described their use of strategic text in the framework of the set of practices in their institutions in a positive or neutral way, it has been associated with *functional uses* or *impartial uses*, on the contrary when it was described in a negative way; it has been associated with *dysfunctional uses*. Connecting the relationships between the practice perceptions and the behaviours when using the text, it has led to the configuration of the different roles of strategy text in strategizing practices at the same university. When the experiences of the practices were enabling and the strategy text was associated with functional and or impartial uses the role of strategy text was framed as being of advisory and deliberative character. Besides, when the experiences of practice were observed as constraining and the strategy text was associated with dysfunctional uses, the role of strategy text was framed as being normative and contingent. The following scheme-in-progress illustrates one example of a central category (STANDARDIZED PRACTICES) and its process relationships:



Source: Own elaboration

Furthermore, in the cross-case analysis this *theoretical coding* of the main categories emerged in each case may help on identifying possible replication, in order to be able to generalize case-context findings.

### **3.4.3 Cross-Case Analysis**

A Cross-case comparison of the three case studies was performed in order to determine whether there was consistency among the results of the individual cases, but also, it was crucial on answering the RQ2: “How can variations in practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy text usage explain better academic manager’s engagement and superior strategizing outcomes?”, allowing the identification of the roles of the strategy text in strategizing in different typologies of Spanish universities.

In this way, pattern-matches technique was used as the primary mode of analysis to examine patterns occurring across the cases. Pattern matching provide the ability to examine the patterns of outcomes of different variables to determine whether patterns existed across the cases that could be used to establish analytic generalizations, that involves generalizing a particular set of results to a broader theory (Yin 2003). Identical results occurring over multiple cases show literal replication, and cases that produce contrasting results for predictable reasons establish theoretical replication (Yin 2003). Also methods of second cycle coding were further used.

### **3.4.4. Analysis of strategy texts as official discourse**

As regarding the analysis of official strategy text in each organization, firstly I analysed the official strategy processes by means of document analysis (see table 5 for document list and type). This analysis was done in a first step with the aim of getting acquainted with the strategy development history of each analysed institution, and also to help on designing the interviews guides. Furthermore, during the analysis process, with the notions of previous literature in strategic planning process and discourse theory, I analysed the documentation concerning the three types of universities.

A document analysis enables the researcher to get hold of the language and concepts of those who are studied and provides a way to measure organizational variables (Creswell 1994). In this manner, as a correspondence to the interviews, the official documents also provided an opportunity to analyse the “official discourse” and description of the strategy process of each university. As follows, the analysis was theory-driven content analysis, where I explored the documents with notions of previous literature in mind.

The variables used when content-coding the official strategy texts were related to identify how the strategy process of the university was reflected in the formalised official strategy text. And it involved searching for the *kind of production process* (Was it top down or bottom-up? ¿Who

was involved and took part? Was the methodology described?); *The way the texts were structured* (main elements, contents, most frequently keywords, typical strategic planning document?); *language* (were the documents passive or active in their voice approach? were they personal, impersonal? Were they formal, informal, narratives like?); *planning formality* (did the documents provide written procedures? What was the way the documents expressed the process regarding responsibilities, schedules, practices, other documents guiding it?).

When going through the strategy texts, several queries guided their exploration related to the previous mentioned variables. Those questions were like: what kind of practices did foresee the documents? Did these practices provide communication channels and anticipate forms of academic manager's engagement in strategy text usage? The methodological path taken was traditional or more innovative? Were they extensive documents, with overload technical concepts? Did the strategic areas content change significantly from one text to other within the same institution? Did the format and the content of the text change overtime? What are the main differences and similarities between the cases within and cross-cases? The results of this analysis are discussed in the followed chapter.

#### **3.4.5. Connecting findings with the Theory when answering research questions**

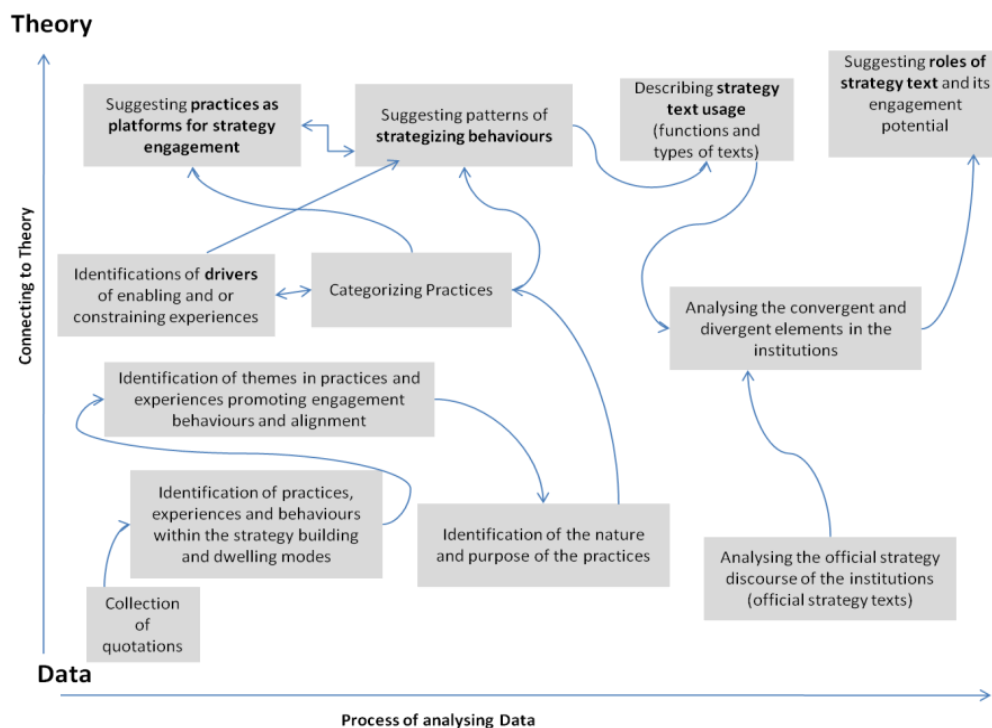
Strauss and Corbin (1998) advise researchers that, at regular intervals during the analysis process, they should step back and ask what is going on in the process. One source for theoretical sensitivity is the ability to recognize what is important in the data and to give it meaning, is the literature of the subject, which the researcher can use in developing theories (ibid). Lessons from previous literature can be learned after the emergence of categories, when the researcher might go back to the literature to see if the categories that have emerged in his/her study can be found in previous literature and to read what has been said about them.

In this study, this phase was guided by a discussion between issues found so far in the data and in previous literature, particularly during the second cycle coding. Literature was used to stimulate theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin 1998) and to provide concepts and relationships for the categories that had emerged in the data (theoretical coding). As such, while discussing the findings in the light of previous literature, I started to group types of strategy practices according to their enabling or constraining experiences reported by the academic managers, together with the engagement behaviours reflected when using the strategy texts, and their connection to the resulting roles associated with the texts.



This process reflected a way to form theories from categories, which is one way of finding how the categories are related to one another (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000) and how can they be fitted within the gap identified in the literature previously investigated. Ultimately figure 8 illustrates the phases of the construction during the analysis process. That is to say, it outlines how the story of the analysis unfolded, on the roadmap of producing answers for the research questions. It also expresses how the emphasis of theory and data varied during the process.

**Figure 8. Outline of the roadmap of generating answers to the research questions**



Source: Own elaboration

# CHAPTER 4

## FINDINGS

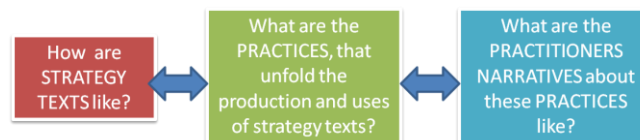
### Chapter Structure

In this chapter this study elaborates on the development of the three case studies, presents the analysis and findings from the cases using the within-case approach, continues with the cross-case analysis of the cases, and brings forward a summary of the findings.

#### 4.1. Development of the Cases

In the first part of the analysis, an individual case analysis was developed and after that, a cross-case analysis was performed, with the application of the first and second methods of coding. For the analysis, I will start describing the elements found to correspond to the first set of research questions related to “what is the role of strategy text in strategizing” in each university. In the first place, the strategy text official discourse was explored in order to identify *how these strategy texts are*. Further on, the individual case analysis tries to identify on the one hand *what are the strategy practices like* relate to the strategizing process taking place in each university and on the other, *what are the narratives about these practices like*, associated with academic managers perspective and behaviours in relation to how the strategy text is used.

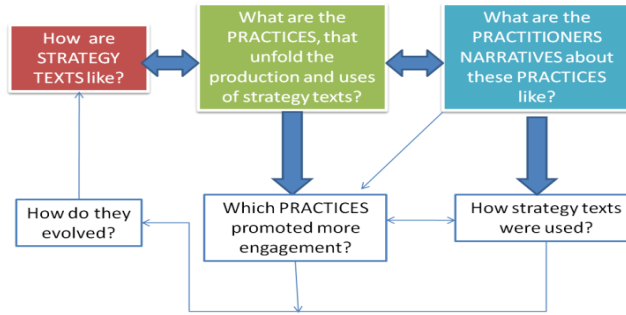
Figure 9. Outline of the first stage of the individual case analysis



Source: Own elaboration

In a second stage of the individual case analysis, in the categorization of practices and individual academic manager’s experiences, the analysis tries to identify which practices and experiences were acknowledged as promoting engagement, participation and alignment in the strategy process, describing what kind of practices set out a platform for strategy engagement more effectively, and describing how strategy text is used in the strategizing process.

**Figure 10. Outline of the second stage of the individual case analysis**

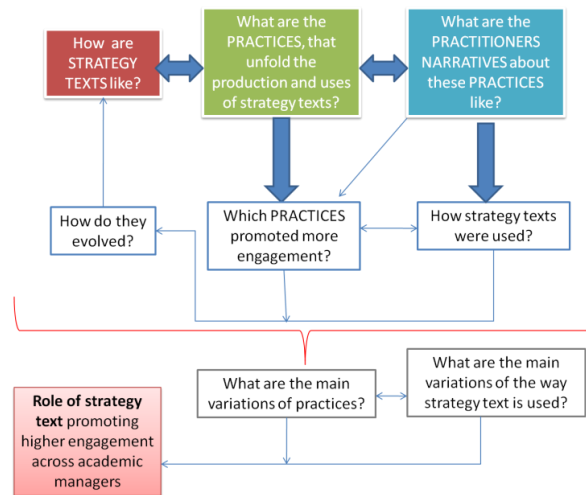


Source: Own elaboration

Furthermore, in the cross-case analysis, the elements identified in the individual cases, are analyzed, from a constant comparative perspective, in order to come up with convergent and divergent elements in the three institutions and it is related to answering the second research question “How can variations in practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy text usage explain better academic manager’s engagement and superior strategizing outcomes?”

This second-level of analysis leads to suggest roles of strategy text associated with the promotion of engagement effectiveness in different typologies of universities.

**Figure 11. Outline of the cross-case analysis**



Source: Own elaboration

When using quotes from any interviewee to support a finding, I referred to the document source (PD – primary document number in the denomination of Atlas.ti) associated with the interview transcript in which the quotation is extracted from. The same procedure is used to cite any other quote extracted from the documents analyzed (interviews transcripts, documents and notes). Thus, when referencing the quotes, I use the denomination P1; P2 and so on respectively

together with the participant ID in the case of the interviews, and the text ID in the case of the documents or notes. For the analysis of the integration of the three cases (Cross-case analysis) although the association of the codes were grouped into similar categories and this association pointed to new Networks, the PD identification remained the same.

In reporting and describing the findings, I have strongly used quotes from the documents analysed, as well as verbatim quotations from the interviews. Taking into account that in narrative analysis the spoken word and discourses are themselves the matter of enquire, thus the interview is a process of joint production of meaning. The excerpts from the transcripts or other documents are used differently both with the intention to provide illustration of themes emerging from the analysis, as well as to help on providing evidence for the interpretation, therefore the readers who saw some of the original data could make their own judgements about the fairness and accuracy of the analysis.

The number and the length of the used quotations varied within and across case. It is also important to highlight that the reporting of this analysis was very challenging language-wise, due to the fact that the actual analysis was conducted in Catalan and Spanish, but when I came to describe the main results, and in selecting the quotations, I have translated it into English during the writing up description of the findings. Although meanings and nuances were unavoidably lost in such translation, the richness of the material allowed me to deal with specific problems by constant comparing several examples.

#### **4.2. Within-Case Data Analysis**

As described in the previous chapter, there is no standard format for conducting within case analysis, being the process typically accomplished through a detailed description for each case that provides the basis for generating insights (Eisenhardt 1989). Each individual case analysis presents the following scheme:

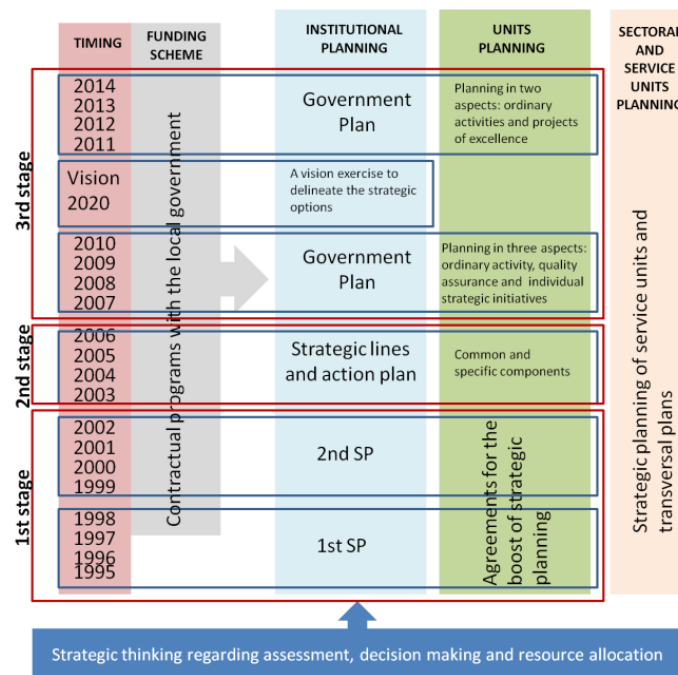
- 1) Description of the background overview of the university strategy making.
- 2) Analysis of the university official strategy texts and its embedded discourse.
- 3) Description of Strategic Practices and their enabling or constraining attributes.
- 4) Analysis of engagement behaviours associated with strategy texts uses.
- 5) Analysis of roles of strategy text in strategizing.

#### 4.2.1. Case 1: Technological University

##### 4.2.1.1. Background overview of the university strategy making

The initial conversation with the contact person led to the identification of a set of documents in order to track down the strategy process at place in the university and set the stage for drawing the background initiatives that have boosted the development of the strategy program at the university. The majority of these documents were available for access at the institution website. Some documents did not have open access, as were available through intranet, with password restrictions. When not available, the respectively documents were then facilitated by the contact person. The website directly mentioned the concepts of “strategic management” and “quality”, and contained an outline of the chronologic path followed by the university in strategy development, which was further adapted to the schematic version seen in Figure 12. The outline in figure 12 illustrates that the university developed five formal strategy texts since mid-1990s.

Figure 12. Overview of the chronologic path of strategy development (Case 1)



Source: Own elaboration

The university embarked on a process of strategy thinking in the beginning of the 1990s. This “thinking strategically” was aimed at taking actions in order to improve the quality of the university activities within its main strategic aspects: teaching, research and services. Three different perspectives were thought upon: materials resources, human resources and methodology aspects. This process took a while, and it was accomplished throughout discussions that have taken place around the draft of the document called “Assessment, decision making and resource allocation”, in which the university explicitly stated its policy decision to

set up mechanisms for internal assessment with the aim of improving the quality of its activities. As follows, in 1995 the University Senate has approved the institution first strategic plan document which, on the basis of the definition of the university mission and strategic lines, laid down the action plan for a four-year period (1995-1998) as seen in figure 12.

Additionally, the university quality framework was followed approved, which primarily focused on mechanisms that encouraged the participation of the university community in the introduction of these improvements at different levels of the university, which were being settled within the whole process, and consequently, it ended up with the formalization of the university first strategic plan. The university quality and strategic management framework was built on a threefold of assessment and planning in order to improve initiatives. Thereupon, the first strategic plan was conceived as a point of departure for planning in three levels: (1) institutional, (2) units and (3) sectoral and services, as draft in figure 12.

Planning at the institutional level was based on the establishment of the mission, the formulation of a “vision of future”, setting up improvement objectives and strategic lines. This general framework was used to develop all the university policies and sectoral plans in its various different areas: regulated teaching, research, transfer of technology and know-how, training, services, university extension, internal management and organization, etc. After the first two years of the onset of the planning at the institutional level, it begun the development and deployment of the strategy within the units, characterized by the planning agreements (Contract-program type) being signed by the units. These internal contract-programs meant that each of the University units proposed its own strategic plan, taking into account its actual situation. Since the approval of its first strategic plan in 1995, the institution produced four others strategic official documents, which have been named differently, as well as were being produced in different paths.

By the end of the first strategic plan period, the vice-chancellor was re-elected and renewed his mandate for four years more. This period corresponded to the second strategic plan, which has been elaborated by the same top management team for the period corresponding 1999-2002. This second period on the university planning story is characterized for keeping the same definition of the institutional mission and a broader development of its vision. It was during the implementation of this second strategic plan that the university strategy was spread out to the university units, by means of signing the internal contract-program with the totality of its internal academic units.

The culmination of the second strategic planning cycle coincides again, with the vice-chancellor elections and, by this time, a new top-management team was elected. The renewal of the management team also meant a renewal on the way the strategy text was formalized and in addition to; it implied some changes on the approach used until now to deploy the university strategy within the units. As follows, the new vice-chancellor conducted the elaboration of a new strategy text, but by this time, in terms of format, it was not presented as a strategy plan, but as an action plan embedded with the university general strategic lines for a four years period (2003-2006). Moreover, some changes were introduced in the mechanisms of planning negotiation with the internal units. The framework of planning within the units was now based on a twofold perspective: the development of a common component (assignment of economic resources to the units according to the accomplishment of a set of indicators provided by the university) and the development of specific component (based on an open call for the presentation by the units of specific proposals, with the aim of offering support to the units in the development of their own strategic lines).

Four years later, it is time again of vice-chancellor elections, and the vice-chancellor in charge lost his mandate, as the university community directed their vote to a new top management team. It started to draw out further changes within the current university planning framework. The format of the strategy text this time was presented as a government plan, also with a four years timeframe (2007-2010). Concerning the framework of units planning, it put forward three aspects called axis A, B and C. Axis A was compulsory and aiming at prompting share responsibility of the basic units with the university policy by means of the deployment of indicators of ordinary activity (teaching and research). On the other hand, Axis B corresponded to the introduction of mechanisms for quality assurance within the unit's strategic lines, with a voluntary character. As respect to axis C, it consisted of promoting annual calls, on a voluntary basis, for the presentation of proposals from the units regarding their own strategic actions. The objective here lied on enhancing the implementation of improvement actions, which were derived by the unit's internal analysis.

By the end of this period, the vice-chancellor presented again a campaign for his mandate renewal and won the elections for extending it four years more. As such, this period coincided with the worsening economic crises in the Spanish context, especially regarding the public university funding system. During this period, the top management team carried out a vision exercise, in order to set up trends and tendencies of the university strategic priorities, trying to connect it with the important changes and challenges taking place at the current environment (local and global). Furthermore, previous to the elaboration of the new strategy text corresponding to the renewal mandate (2011-2014), the top management team worked on a

document, which one of the top management interviewee mentioned as being the “plan B”. This plan B corresponded to work on a plan of economic viability, which meant adapting the new planning framework with the new economic restrictions budget policies being introduced during 2010-2011 and aligned with reducing the university long lasting economic deficit, which by 2011 has escalated up to nearly 100 million Euros.

Fundamentally, this exercises resulted in the elaboration of the new strategy text (Plan A), also elaborated in a format of government plan, which put forward the new framework for units planning, considering the adaptation of budget restrictions, set out by the “Plan B of economic viability”. The changes within the units planning framework were related to the division of the mechanisms in two aspects: (1) deployment of indicators of ordinary activities and, (2) development of projects of excellence. However, due to budget restrictions, the activities related to the second aspect are not due to be initiated until 2013. Therefore, the mechanisms were simplified and were restricted and adapted according to the economic and financial austerity being experienced by the university.

The university planning background overview allows for the division of the university strategy process in three main stages, as seen in figure 12, which corresponded to three different top management teams mandates. The first stage is associated with the start out of the strategic thinking process, which was followed by the development of two strategic plans and the consolidation of the university planning structure, regarding the consolidation of its information system and quality culture. As respect to the second stage, it represents a rupture in the way the strategy document was elaborated and presented, as well as in the way the strategy was negotiated and deployed within the units. The third stage resembles again a new change on the way planning was conducted, both at institutional and internal levels, this time being influenced, particularly on the last strategy text production and negotiation with the units, by the severe economic context.

As follows, the within case analysis explores the structure and content analysis of these different strategy texts produced over the three planning stages taking place at the university. Five documents are analysed: the second strategic plan, the strategic lines of the second stage and the last two government plans corresponding to the last stage, as well as the document concerning the formalization of the university vision 2020.

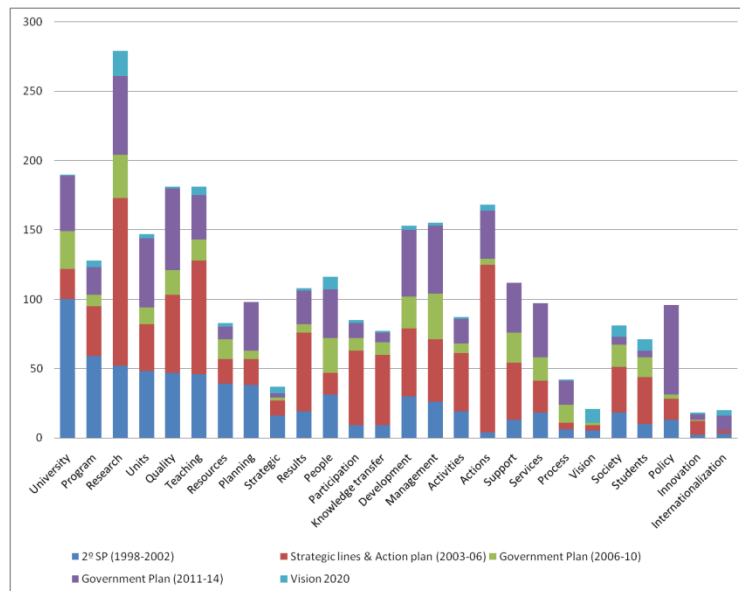


4.2.1.2. University official strategy texts and its embedded discourse

This section focuses on the question: *how are the strategy texts like and how it evolved?* With the focus on the texts content and components I am describing their characteristics and official embedded discourse. Therefore, the analysis started with the content exploration of the different University strategy texts looking at its contents, components, key frequent words and issues, structure and emphasising areas, types of elements and practices being foreseen, as well as implementation mechanisms or motivation incentives. Looking for the frequency count of words across the strategy texts (see Figure 13) it suggests that “research” has been one key aspect across the texts, appearing at the top list of the most cited issues. The emphasis variance on “teaching” and “people” has presented a slightly change between the texts, and the specific aspect of “teaching” was less frequent in both government plans (2006/2010 - 2001/2014).

Carrying out a comparison between the texts relate to the government plans (2006-10/2011-14), which coincides with two mandates of the same vice-chancellor, it is possible to observe that when focusing upon the “core” areas of the university strategy, the emphasis put on “research”, “people” and “quality” suggested a slightly change.

**Figure 13. Frequency count of keywords across strategy texts (Case 1)**



Source: Own elaboration

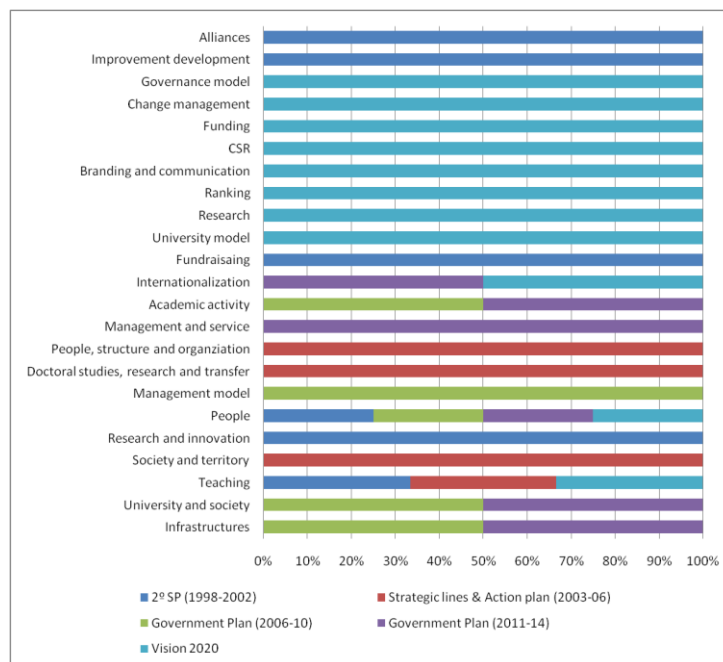
On the continuity of the second government plan, the top management team seems to have put more attention into “people” and “quality”. In the vision document, words such as “debate”, “reform”, “society” and “groups” (related to the research groups) were mostly mentioned when

constructing the discourse of which direction the university vision should be taken, which cannot be observed in the graphic. It is interesting to find out that aspect such as “resources”, “knowledge transfer”, “society”, “innovation”, and “internationalization” were much less mentioned issues across the texts.

Bearing this overview in mind, I have looked into each text to explore the areas of activities and core aspects being addressed in order to find some connection that justifies the variability of issues across the different texts. The first step was to codify the areas of activities or core issues under which the texts were structured. The outline of the core areas is illustrated in figure 14. Going through the texts it is possible to observe that the 2<sup>o</sup> SP was structured under six areas that addressed: 1) teaching; 2) research and innovation; 3) people; 4) fundraising, 5) improvement development and 6) alliances.

The word frequency emphasized the issues of research, teaching and quality, but also we could observe a relevant presence of the concept “resources” that was connected to issues of fundraising, alliances or improvement driven policies. The *Strategic line and Action plan* texts coincide with the previous text in areas such as: people, teaching and research, nonetheless some designation of areas changed, for instance different areas were merged together, as was the case of “doctoral studies, research and transfer”. One specific strategic area introduced was the “society and territory” and “people” was merged with structure and organization.

**Figure 14. Areas of activities and core issues across strategy texts (Case 1)**

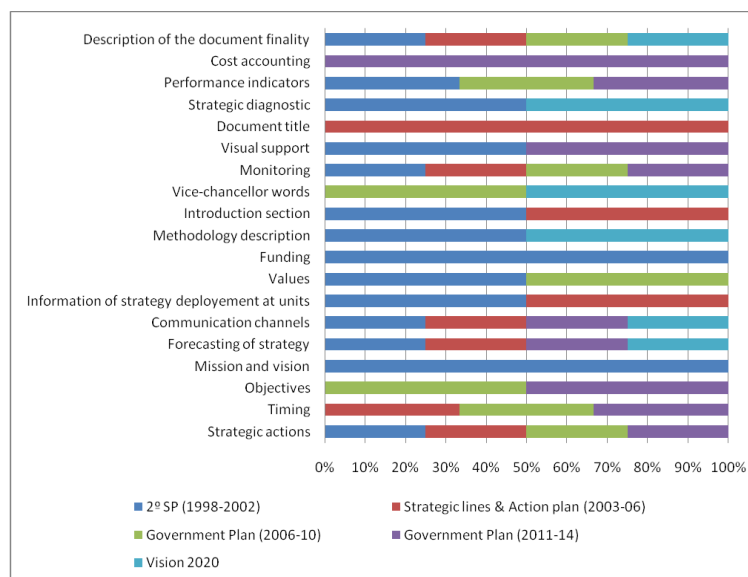


Source: Own elaboration

Both *Government Plans* were structured in similar ways, the strategic performance areas were mainly organized in infrastructure, people and academic activity. In both texts, research and teaching were addressed under the academic activity area. The two specific areas differently addressed by the government plan 2010 and the plan 2014 were the “management structure model” in the case of the first and the “internationalization issue” in the case of the latter. In the latter aspect, internationalization concurs with the *Vision 2020* document, which brings forth aspects that were not clearly recognised in the precedents documents as was the case of university model, university rankings, governance model, branding and communication or the corporate social responsibility in the university relationship with the territory and society. This overview suggests that most of the strategic areas across the University texts were mostly convergent.

When exploring the main components transversely shared within the texts, those which were clearly stated within the texts were clustered and codified, deriving in the overview outlined below:

**Figure 15. Main components across strategy texts (Case 1)**



Source: Own elaboration

As ascertained in Figure 15, it can be acknowledged that the texts were elaborated in different structures and formats; however the core components such as the presentation of strategic actions, delimitation of objectives, forecasting of strategic communication channels, and follow up mechanisms or the inclusion of performance indicators have mostly kept convergence across the texts. The 2ºSP presents a clear structure that follows the organization of a typical strategic

plan, with the delimitation of a mission and vision statements, strategic actions or follow up indicators. When looking into the main divergences found transversally, it can be observed that the methodology description of the process, explanation of actors implicated in the process, inclusion of a clear strategic diagnostic description or mechanism of cost accounting were not addressed homogeneous throughout the different institutional strategy texts.

When exploring the issue of actors embedded within the strategic actions being established, they were coded under two categories: 1) explicit responsible; and 2) Implicit responsible. The category of *implicit responsible* has to do with actions or activities foreseen within the texts that were not being associated with a directed responsible. For instance an excerpt of the Government Plan 2010 illustrates this category:

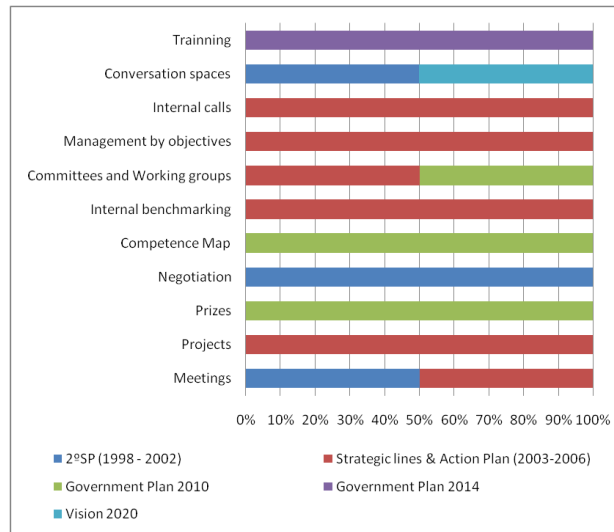
PD 3: GP 2010: Academic activity: To review and simplify the personalized academic custom, as well as the processes of teaching allocation and the system of academic recognition<sup>1</sup>. <sup>1</sup>Implicit responsible

On the other hand, the *explicit responsible* has to do with the direct association of a responsible with the action or activity being proposed. An exemplification of this category is outlined below:

PD 31: GP 2014: Actions planned and execution status:  
1. To detect the preferred areas for carrying out renewal actions.  
2. To prioritize areas that requires renewal in programs of *Ramon y Cajal* and *Juan de la Cierva*.  
...  
TABLE OF LIABILITY<sup>2</sup>  
Political leadership: Academic Staff Pro-vice chancellor  
Operational Management: Academic staff assistant manager  
Responsible for implementing: Service of Personnel  
Units involved: Labour advice and support for research Unit <sup>2</sup>Explicit responsible

Most of the strategy texts did not associate explicit responsible with the strategic actions, excepting the Government Plan 2014, the texts were characterized as comprising overall anonymous actions. Concerning the practices of strategy formulation and implementation foreseen by the documents, the table below describes the most mentioned practices being acknowledged.

**Figure 16. Pattern of practices within the strategy texts (Case 1)**



Source: Own elaboration

It is possible to observe variability between the texts, highlighting that it was not possible to distinguish a clear pattern of practices across the development of the different texts. For instance, the *strategic line and action plan (2003-2006)* is the text that foresees a higher embodiment of practices:

PD1: Strategic line and Action plan (TEC): To compact and reduce the offer of doctoral programs, promoting merger of programs in order to increase the level of multidisciplinary of studies ... meetings with the coordinators of the programs to analyze the possibilities and to encourage the multidisciplinary character<sup>1</sup>....To publish the call of support<sup>2</sup> for specific projects in the context of strategic planning of the units.....to promote exchange of practices between basic units<sup>3</sup>, based on the results of the internal contact agreements monitoring... To establish the academic goals of the units as the main element for allocation of economic resources<sup>4</sup> ... a committee has been set up and working groups per areas<sup>5</sup>, based on the documents produced by the working groups, a diagnostic document and a proposal for actions has been published and presented.

- <sup>1</sup>Monographic meetings
- <sup>2</sup>Internal calls for support
- <sup>3</sup>Internal benchmarking
- <sup>4</sup>Management by objectives
- <sup>5</sup>Committees and working groups

Meetings and committees were the practices that presented more convergence between the texts, followed by diverse set of practices within the development of the plans, such as the case of conversation spaces, negotiation or projects, exemplified in the following excerpts:

PD3: Government Plan 2010 (TEC): To assess the existing coordination and information spaces<sup>6</sup> in order to improve them...

- <sup>6</sup>Conversation spaces

PD4: 2º SP (TEC): ...Agreement to boost the units strategic planning ... Analysis and methodology and content discussion of the proposed strategic planning....It will be foster the implementation of new initiatives by the units and individuals and it will make an effort to identify, support and publicize these initiatives.<sup>7</sup>

- <sup>7</sup>Planning negotiation

With reference to the concept of intertextuality, which means that texts gain meaning not through their reference to an external reality, but by their reference to pre-existing other texts (Kristeva 1980). Intertextuality is not a choice, but rather an inevitable product of creating, because we are always creating into already existing histories, discourses and ways of interpreting. These existing frames have already partly shaped what we will produce and how it will be received. An author may intend to give us something original, but they can't, fully. We readers, in turn, never have direct access to a work, but can only get at it by making our way through its prior iterations and interpretations. In the attempt to explore this notion of intertextuality across the strategy texts, I have looked for direct quotes of previous texts and or patterns of concepts or issues from previous experiences, as exemplified beneath:

PD4: 2°SP (TEC): The path taken in February 1995 to initiate a strategic planning process at the University has been consolidated. Internally, many units have begun to elaborate their own strategic plans...The overall result of this period is sufficiently satisfactory to continue this model, introducing, however, those changes derived from the environment and from the implementation process...This document also includes a new vision...framed by the new roles that society demands the university and by the initiatives arising from the same university in order to develop its mission more effectively. So, this proposal does not change the essential elements that have been worked with the units, which have launched a strategic planning process...The program of action 1998 - 2002 positions itself between the past and the future....gathering the fruits of the last four years and maintaining consistency with the strategic lines which have previously initiated, it wants to be a step forward on the way to get closer to a reality that demands quality in serving the society in a changing environment ...

It could be observed that the 2° SP was the one that presented a higher level of intertextuality. The narrative along the text embedded concepts and indications from its previous text (1° SP), constructing a point of continuity in the strategy discourse being communicated by that time. Furthermore, the follow up text *Strategic lines & Action Plan<sub>2</sub>*, also highlighted some intertextuality, but in this case, the discourse was not concerned with constructing a continuity in the storyline, it rather focused on analysis, diagnosis and restructuration based on the previous experienced, particularly concerning the planning methodology for strategy implementation across units.

PD1: Strategic lines & Action Plan (TEC): To define the methodology of the units strategic planning process, guiding it in order to make it more simple, transparent and participatory and to encourage more responsibility ... To analyze and to diagnose the current structure and the results of previous experiences.

The plans which have followed it, did not foresee intertextuality with previous texts, as any directly or indirectly quote could be observed.

Another aspect explored in the strategy text content analysis was the planning formality, which indicates the extent the institution had written procedures, schedules and documents guiding the process. As the following excerpts illustrate, the documents foresaw different mechanisms to support and guide the strategy process, such as the elaboration of specific guidelines for participation within the process, planning agreements and framework, white paper or criteria frameworks.

<p>PD1: Strategic lines &amp; Action Plan (TEC):...To establish guidelines<sup>1</sup> for the identification of shared responsibility of the university community with the overall goals of the institution, incorporating participation and involvement mechanisms for individual and collective recognition of different stakeholders...program agreements with the basic units<sup>2</sup> to foster the strategic planning common component....Framework for the strategic planning of structural units<sup>3</sup></p>	<p><sup>1</sup>Guidelines for participation</p> <p><sup>2</sup>Planning agreements</p> <p><sup>3</sup>Planning framework</p>
<p>PD4: 2º SP (TEC): ...A white paper will be drafted on decentralization and organizational structure of the University<sup>4</sup></p>	<p><sup>4</sup>White paper</p>
<p>PD31: Government Plan 2014 (TEC): ...To develop a criteria framework<sup>5</sup> to guide and facilitate decision making...</p>	<p><sup>5</sup>Criteria framework</p>

As observed, the strategy process highlighted within the texts can be framed as been a systematized and formalized process, as several supporting documents were mentioned throughout the texts.

In regarding to the content type that refers to the character of the text and type of language used, I have clustered the texts according to the voice (active and passive) and character (personal, impersonal). Overall, the texts were largely structured using the passive voice, and also around verbs in infinitive form, organized in bullet points, acknowledging high level of intentionality, and broad character, given the fact that most of the actions were general and ambiguous, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

<p>PD1: Strategic lines &amp; Action Plan (TEC): ...To define the general structure of modern, attractive and competitive studies at national and international levels:</p> <p>1.1. To adapt<sup>1</sup>the studies curricula into the EHEA guidelines (European Higher Education Area)...To define the working plan for the integration of the studies...Collaboration agreements have been signed<sup>2</sup>...</p>	<p><sup>1</sup>Intentionality/verbs in infinite form</p> <p><sup>2</sup>Passive voice</p>
<p>PD3: Government Plan 2010 (TEC): Management tools, projects and support activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop<sup>3</sup> a faculty recruitment plan that allows fostering the promotion of aeronautic studies.</li> <li>• To create spaces in order to allow people participation in government actions.</li> </ul>	<p><sup>3</sup>Intentionality/verbs in infinite form</p>

PD4: 2° SP (TEC):...It describes the management model defined in the past four years; plans and working frameworks have been elaborated<sup>4</sup>, which lay down the foundations and objectives to be achieved in a given period...the institutional strategic planning is developed and becomes operative...The following table presents the strategic axis with its respective strategic initiatives:

<sup>4</sup>Passive voice

1.1 To attract and welcome students

1.2 To deepen in the academic reform, emphasis in learning process

1.3 To train people

1.4 To integrate technology in education<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Intentionality/ verbs in infinite form

Overall, the texts were comprehensively broad and ambiguous when proposing actions, it did not foresee the concrete implementation of the actions, and were mostly passive in their nature. However, some texts have also being structured using a more personal narrative, either using the references to the university name, making use of the first person plural or having an introduction section signed by the vice-chancellor:

PD32: Vision 2020 (TEC): ...In short, to set how the university should be or what we want it to be in a few years; to define the main lines of our Project (university name) Vision 2020."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>First person plural/ personal style

PD4: 2° SP (TEC): The [University name] will defend<sup>2</sup> a resource allocation model based on a joint definition of objectives (Government-University) and mechanisms for resource allocation based on the degree of objectives achievement...Our commitment reflects our will to foster the university academic and management excellence.... we know that we have to win the future. It is therefore necessary to build projects and to strive to achieve them together<sup>3</sup>...

<sup>2</sup>Active voice

<sup>3</sup>Personal style

PD3: Government plan 2010 (TEC):...This is, in short, the spirit of the Government Plan ..., a plan which we have formulated believing that our goal is to carry out a quality work, with new models and innovative methods to contribute to the continuous sustainable development of society. (Vice-chancellor signature)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Clear authorship

#### 4.2.1.3. *The repertoire of strategic practices and their enabling or constraining attributes*

This section focuses on the attributes of the strategy practices identified, which were used by the middle and top managers throughout the strategizing process at the university. Therefore, the spotlight in the analysis lies in exploring the types of practices mentioned both by top and middle managers, in order to build a characterization, but importantly, the limelight is upon answering the questions: *what are the strategy practices like and which promoted more engagement and alignment?*



Essentially, the practices considered by middle and top managers during the interviews reached up to nearly thirty different practices. In order to assess these practices throughout the strategy making process at the university, the narratives of academic managers were clustered in different ways during the first and second levels coding, which has lead to explore the direct assessment of academic managers concerning those practices; their vision about the university strategy (convergence between institutional and local practices); the governance model which may also hinder the ways strategy practices are performed, as well as issues concerning the strategy of the units.

On aggregating those types of practices, and trying to explore the convergence between local and institutional practices, I have clustered them considering which of them was more systematized than others, and were more generalized across the institution. Therefore, the two main categories of types of practices emerged were: *Standardized practices* and *Singularized practices*, as illustrated in the following figure:

**Figure 17. Categories of practices according to their systematization and scope (Case 1)**

<b>Standardized Practices</b>	<b>Singularized Practices</b>
University Cloister meeting	Specific ageements
Shared Management	Participatory planning
Council of department heads	Project management
Committee of department delegates	Internal benchmarking
Internal management system	School board meetings
General board meetings	Personalized monitoring with responsible of areas
External benchmarking	Troubleshooting specific meetings
Internal benchmarking	Periodic meetings with key people
Standing committees meetings	External meetings for brainstorming
Weekly management team meetings	Middle managers informal networks
Planning cycle internal strategy negotiation	Direct contact
Ad hoc committees	Joint collaborations
Internal project calls	Participation in discussion spaces
Customized training	
External benchmarking	

Source: Own elaboration

The *standardized practices* have to do with practices that were institutionalized at the university, which means that their rules were more systematized and they occurred in specific schedule times (e.g. benchmarking, internal calls, meetings, committees). As well as their purposes were more generalized that is, it was the point of convergence of different organizational levels (only macro, as well as macro and micro). On the other hand, the *singularized practices* refer to practices that were more individualized across the university units, which mean that they were more dependent of the micro level as well as of the management and style of the academic middle manager or management team.

Additionally these kinds of practices did not always follow systematized and specific rules, and it could take place in a particular time (e.g. school board meeting; periodic meetings with key people) or not (e.g. direct contact, joint collaborations or specific agreements). Furthermore, a sub-categorization of both *standardized* and *singularized practices*, according to their purpose, systematization and occurrence in time, were clustered in five categories, as mapped in the following matrix:

**Figure 18. Repertoire of Standardized and Singularized Practices (Case 1)**

	Standardized practices			Singularized practices	
	Cyclical	Supportive	Episodic	Unruled	Regulated
University Cloister meeting	Committee of departments delegates	External benchmarking	Specific agreements	Participatory planning	
Council of departments heads	Internal management system	External meetings for brainstorming	Middle managers informal networks	Project management	
General Board Meetings		Customized training	Direct contact	External benchmarking	
Standing committees meetings			Joint collaborations	Internal benchmarking	
Weekly management team meetings			Participation in discussion spaces	School board meetings	
Planning cycle internal strategy negotiation				Personalized monitoring with responsible of areas	
Adhoc committees				Troubleshooting specific meetings	
Internal project calls				Periodic meetings with key people	

Source: Own elaboration

As can be observed, the *standardized practices* were derived in three sub-categories: *cyclical*, *supportive* and *episodic*. All of them were driven by specific rules, and were established within the institutional basis. The *cyclical practices* occurred in specific periods of time, with established rules and strong influence of institutional power frameworks. The *supportive practices* also held specific institutional rules (as is the case for instance of the committee of department representatives) with a continuous pace, with purpose of supporting the cyclical practices. On the other hand, the *episodic practices*, also with systematized rules occurred in determined periods of time, and were yet strongly dependent of the cyclical practices.

Concerning the **singularized practices**, it derived two sub-categories which have to do on the one hand with the *regulated practices* that also follow some specific rules however, they are more implicit and the institutional power and influence are found to be less visible. On the other hand, the *unruled practices* have to do with practices that occur in different contexts, not taking place in a concrete period of time (e.g. informal networks and conversation or specific agreements), and the institutional authority exercise less control.

In order to answer the question about the effectiveness of the set of practices at place in the University, the academic managers narratives were grouped according to their positive or

negative comments and experiences associated to the set of practices being narrated into view. Therefore, three perspectives were taken into account when exploring the academic manager's narratives on the practices engagement experiences: their direct comments (positive or negative) on the practices; their perception about the university institutional strategy and governance and finally, their perception about the strategy making at University units. By associating negative or positive rates to their direct comments on the practices, it was possible to come up with a network that illustrated the convergence between positive and negative perceptions of practices (see Appendix 9A).

As can be noted, when the academic managers talked about the singularized practices in their units or across the units, their narratives were more associated with positive experiences, on the contrary, when mentioning the standardized practices, they were connected to a more negative perception. Splitting apart the narratives of top and middle managers, it was possible to observe that the academic middle managers were more critics with the standardized practices if compared to top managers. Most of the narratives of top managers when mentioning a set of practices were positive in their perceptions, albeit when confronting the same set of practices with the narrative of middle managers, it was possible to observe some divergent visions (see Appendix 9B).

In going further in the exploration of the strategy practices effectiveness, I have associated the practices with the academic manager's perspectives on the university strategy. The first theme emerging was their interpretation of the evolution of the strategy process at the university. The top managers narratives were thus grouped around three main themes: the assessment of the university strategy, the perspective about the main strategy issues and their opinion concerning the evolution of the planning process at the university. Top managers talked about the evolution of the strategy development at the university, highlighting on the one hand that the pro vice-chancellors had free room to move in policy development, aspect which was associated with the varying degrees of involvement in strategy making. These different degrees were suggested to be concerned with the distinct pro vice-chancellors responsibility fields:

PD91: DEPT-VC-TEC1: ...everything which is not forbidden it is permitted...thus if it is not forbidden than you can do it...therefore, you are granted with a very large margin of freedom.

PD90: DEPT\_VC-TEC2: ...I have been asked things, but I had a much more simple role than the others, because before assuming this position, in the area of international relations already existed an internationalization plan previously made, that covered beyond the 2014 horizon, that is, in this respect there was already a reflection being done...

On the other hand, it has been suggested that there were problems not only in communicating the strategies internally, but issues concerning the faculty profiles (often not very willing to assume management tasks) together with certain policies at the system level (e.g. educational decree-law), may cause some discomfort and interfere in the planning dynamic:

PD91: DEPT-VC-TEC1: ...you communicate things, but there are many things which I don't know how to do, for instance, the issue of the internal calls..., so we inform it to the entire [University], and there are people who come and say: Are the call being published?...here there is a problem not only concerned to communicating things inside the institution, we try to do it, but there are difficulties, that might also be related to the faculty profile, which in general is characterized by "let me be"...and on the other hand, we do not communicate well what we do ...

Talking about the main strategic issues, managers highlighted their vision on the university strategy main policies: faculty, teaching, research, and funding. The faculty policy was associated with the search for counterbalancing the different faculty profiles (teaching and research):

PD91: DEPT-VC-TEC1: Our faculty profile is very good, so, let's reward them, ...quit lectures from those who do more research... but this is not so easy to implement, but I think it needs to follow this path, and I think some steps forward have been made, for example ... professors who hold projects over a million Euros funding, what we have tried to do was, we are going to allocate them an associate professor in order to help with teaching ...

The research policy was associated with the design of overall policies that emphasized the competitive fundraising, which has to do with the vision of developing specific strategic plans by research groups:

PD91: DEPT-VC-TEC1: ... I'd like to foster a strategic plan per research groups because departments don't have the capacity to act, in the same department there are six research groups, and then I think you have to influence directly into the groups.

The teaching policy was hampered by the difficulties in fitting master and degrees offers, which may be due to inconsistency in the system regulation and the complexity of the university structure and curricula specialities:

PD93: DEP-VC-TEC4: ...the logic implementation of the degrees curricula should have been carried out first, however the whole framework regulating the system is unstable in this sense, there is no consistency and safety. During my second office term [assumed in 2011], we are now working on monitoring the implementation of the degrees in order to reflect on their results.... the work that is taking place at this moment is the assessment of the coherence between the degrees with the university Masters degrees, that is, to ensure that there is a fit and consistency between both...

The funding policy suggested being confined to fit and follow the same game rules of other Catalan universities, which suggested that the system funding policies might promote the homogenization of the universities based on funding by objectives:

PD93: DEP-VC-TEC2: ...Currently there is a funding plan based on objectives achievement, which is the same for all Catalan universities ... all universities are using the same indicators, we can say that we are following the same rules of the game ...

Concerning the top manager's direct assessment of the university strategy, the narratives suggested a *restrictive* perspective on the university strategy, which has to do with the antagonistic economic situation, but also with the unstable and not always coherent policy system, which might foster the evolvement of strategy policies based upon reactive actions:

PD93: DEP-VC-TEC3:...I think last year we were too influenced by the economic crisis, by the urgency and I think much more emphasis has been put on what is called Plan B, the economic viability plan, that is, when you're drowning, you cannot decide which direction you should swim, you only want to come to the surface... [Core business] say it out loud implies a problem. Obviously that I know what the core business of the [University] is and I have very clear in mind what could be withdrawn from the [University], myself and many other people, but of course, there is a political decision in it, if you shut down a department or centre that is not part of the core business, you will come across the Mayor organizing a camping and the Councillor behind it in order for people keeping voting on them, that's the problem...

The complexity of the university restrictive perspective can be observed in the top managers network narratives (see Appendix 9C), which suggests that there is a clear knowledge about the position of the university core business, as well as of the problematic that are to be withdrawn, however socializing the core business involves a political decision, that if it is not supported by policies at the political system level, it might therefore to be very difficult to put institutional decisions into practice. These problematic led the university to put emphasis into prioritizing the economical viability plan that was comprised of reactive actions. Other strategic decisions of more structural nature, rather than reactive, were suggested to be strongly dependent on system levels political decisions, that may ends up restricting advances in the institutional core business.

Concerning the middle managers narratives, it has been clustered around three themes: their vision about the strategy evolution at the university, their perspective on the university strategy and their views about the strategy of the units, aligned with the university. With reference to the university strategy development, it has been suggested that when the institution started with its planning program (see 1<sup>st</sup> stage planning: Figure 12), there were more clear incentives and the institutional discourse was down to promote the planning by objectives, verbalizing that

meeting the objectives previously set, was an input contribution to the whole university community, which were driven under a flexible framework:

PD43: HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M2: ... we have gone through two stages, in the first stage we were asked to fulfil a number of objectives; goals of the university, which were also operationalized into the units,... it was understood that on meeting those objectives, we were all making a contribution to the whole group... the focus was on achieving the target being set. Therefore, the targets agreed upon could be higher or lower, ... in the first monitoring, it was understood that you could not decrease the achieved target, that is, if the university wanted 12, but have accepted 6; next year will be 7 right? And the following year 8...thus, it created a positive dynamic, because you felt like approaching to what was the university vision...

However, this flexibility indicated to has decreased overtime and the problematic growing context drove, specifically concerning the economic crisis, the decision making to be more centralized, as well as it was suggested that nowadays the overall top management discourse is all about silence, that is, there is scanty verbalization about the university strategy:

PD45: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M5: ...With the vice-chancellor [P.] and the General Manager [J.] (1st stage planning: figure 12) it functioned differently, because it was the vice-chancellor, the general manager and below them people, who at that moment held highly relevant academic authority, and it counted with a tandem of representatives that defined the strategy of the university...But now, you can only make octagonal decisions, then what happens now?...as there is no money, the general manager is the one that controls, economic issues, everything goes through the general manager, and yet lots of things are not spoken.

This previous excerpt can be confronted with the top manager's narratives network (see Appendix 9C) which shows a convergence around the scanty verbalization of the strategy directions from two different points' perspectives, which are strongly dependent of political decisions, and struggling due to the economic restrictions that have led to a more centralized decision-making.

With regard to the academic middle managers views on the university strategy, it was clustered according to their positive and negative perspectives, which have led to the identification of four categories concerning their viewpoints on the strategy of the university: i) political dependency (see Appendix 9D); ii) puzzling decision making (see appendix 9E); iii) ambiguous strategy alignment (see appendix 9F) and iv) problematic organizational structures and policy making (see Appendix 9G).

For instance, the category of political dependency suggests that middle managers see the university strategy as strongly dependent on political decisions at the university system level, especially concerned with funding policies, which is also associated with the scanty definition

of the university core business. Additionally, there was a perception that there was a lack of strategic thinking at the university. The issue of the university core business inaccuracy may cause the scanty verbalization of the strategic direction being taken and, due to the fact that structural and complicated strategic decisions may need a strong support from policy level, it ends up in an ambiguous situation of not taken decisions forward, which is also may be a cause of not socializing it.

On the other hand, the aspect of lack of strategic thinking is part of the university core business ambiguous situation, that were seen by the middle managers as a consequence of a scanty holistic view of the university, aggravated by the restrictive economic crisis context, that might deliver strategy texts that may be empty of real strategizing. Therefore, this category holds a close connection with strategy seen as strongly political dependent, which may be a cause of the cultivation of mini instances of power within the institution, aspect that might being fed by the political system policies that suggest fostering strategy homogenization across universities.

Other category that had a contiguous link with the strategy political dependency was the decision making process problematic (Appendix 9E). This category suggests that middle managers associated the decision making process as being slow, embedded in non-professional teams, mainly characterized as promoting a “fits all” policy. The perspectives on slow decision making has to do with the strong bureaucratic culture that slow down the process, but also with inefficiency and gaps found between diagnostic analysis and evaluations and its further validation and implementation. Along with, the narratives suggested that there were problems associated with a heavy load of daily work that may disrupt opportunities for strategic thinking, which altogether might restrict strategic management efficiency.

Furthermore, there was the issue of non-professional teams that may contribute to the complexity of the decision making process. The following excerpt illustrates the typical middle management team of the university units:

PD53: HEAD-SCH-UPC-M6: Our management team is composed by five professors, one is chemical, the other is physicist, the other... probably they don't even have this basic culture of engineering, because some are math lectures, many of them even may not know what a Gantt chart is, or what that means project planning, you may even ask them: we will use a Microsoft project program and they don't know what it is, because all of it doesn't belong to their world. Then it happens in every school, therefore, given that it isn't a professional team, there isn't a unique way in which strategic planning can be done in a micro-level...

Additionally, the decision-making at the institutional level seems to be driven by the “fits for all” policy, which suggests that again, the ambiguous definition of the university core business plays an important part, that is, the homogenization of the same treatment for all, avoid paying attention to the units particularities. These problematic may be illustrated within the following narratives:

PD44: HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M1: ...we have for so long carrying out a fits for all policy, then, how can we talk about strategy? ... This is ok [shows me the departmental assessment exercise] but it has cost the pro-vice chancellor two years to elaborate this document, and now let's see what happens next, in the current budget cuts restrictions, do the general manager will give equal treatment for these departments [good rating] and those [poor rating)?

PD45: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M5: ...it has to be a group of people that defines the strategy of the university and the production centres, which is another thing that lacks in this [University], we don't know where our production centres are, we don't know whether are the departments, the schools, or the university campus, we have no idea, everything here is an amalgam...

PD46: HEAD-SCH-TEC-F11:...sometimes I think there is a lack of susceptibility concerning the particularities of each area, the feeling is that, the top management says, in order for no one to criticizes us, to not say that we have not considered them, we will carry out general politics without taking into account the specificities of each field... and thus no one will have arguments to accuse of favouring one or the other. That is, in this sense, is there an absence of strategy, no? ...for me, when you make a strategy and decision making, some people will like it more and others less, but if they [managers] believe that if it is for the good of the university they should do it...

The consequence of this “fits for all” policy, leads to the perception of a decision making process that is not very deliberative, with low synergies across units, and scanty autonomy and shared responsibility. Altogether leads to suggest a higher perception of the university decision making as being done under a puzzling context, which is very difficult and complex to fit in all together the particularities, interests, reinforced by adequate capacities.

Other category views strategy alignment as being ambiguous (Appendix 9F), on the one hand there was a positive view that puts forward that there were different models integrated in the university model, each of them may present structures that are more participative and visionary than others. Middle managers recognised that the university has a long tradition of planning, which has followed a different path at the units according to their own models and cultures; hence there may be units that might be more aligned with the university than others.

Additionally, the narratives suggested that strategy alignment was done by regulations and recommendations, by means of providing specific strategic lines to be followed across the university. It seems that some of these criteria regulations were not accredited by all the middle



managers, which may generate scepticism, as one interviewee illustrated with the European Higher Education Area implementation problematic:

PD46: HEAD-SCH-TEC-F11: ...I think people in this university do believe in some of these concepts [concerning the strategic planning], however, other thing is, will it also lead to increase resources?...another thing is if we will be able to reach it, do we have enough tools and resources to get where we want to go...?, for instance, when we say that Bologna [EHEA] is implemented at zero cost, well..., most of people say it doesn't make sense. How can you make it at zero cost?

The middle managers also recognized that a higher alignment may be achieved if these strategy recommendations are drawn in generic lines form, in order to reinforce the promotion of bottom-up initiatives.

PD45: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M5: ...I have always believed in this, rather than a top-down design. Let's see... it must have some criteria as a guide, in order to say: at least someone has to be excellent in research, or not. However, these criteria must be characterized as very generic strategic definitions derived from the Rectorate, then if you say, international relations are very important...stating that there won't be any graduates of this school who won't spend at least one semester abroad... or that all the graduates at least will have taken the certificate B in English... So, after saying all that, well, maybe there will be schools that don't want it, and I understand that, but that's why you have to have a strategic decision making being worked from below...

Other viewpoint concerning the category of the ambiguity of the strategy alignment has to do with plans being seen as institutional agreements, on the one hand there was the agreement from the university with the local government responsible for universities funding, and on the other, and there were agreements between the university and its different units.

PD48: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M8: I trust in government strategies, in plans based on broad objectives; rather than institutional plans, I think a plan is an institutional agreement, for instance, this university, we agree upon long term targets, it will happen if we do have a sufficient majority, and if not ... So, this is what completely lacks at the government level, the Catalan government, who is the responsible of the universities funding. However, we don't know what they think or what they do not think, but you know that they don't think what they actually say. It's complicated ....the problem is, if the vice-chancellor doesn't know how much the government will cut the budget next year or the other, how can he possible work out a plan? It is not possible to make a plan, what you can do is a kind of pact of direction, that is, we will try to get here, based on hypotheses and some scenarios, if the scenario is this, then we go there ...

Therefore, in the framework of these agreements, the electoral program may be used as a dissemination mechanism of the strategy plan, as well as a platform for building up agreements both at the institutional as well as at the unit's level. Furthermore, the formulation of these plans suggested being consequence of individual ideas rather than emerging from group's discussion, as illustrated by an interviewee:

PD44: HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M1: ... Yes you can express your view about the strategy of the [University], we have the board of directors of the department, and it is driven by themes, and, well, I think the whole strategy is formulated at the level of individual ideas rather than derived by participation in groups....

Finally, the category that suggested the problematic organizational structure and policy making view on university strategy (see appendix 9G) had to do on the one hand with the university size that is characterized by a large structure and on the other, with a clouded institutional policy making.

Concerning the complex organizational structure, the narratives suggested that the initial planning system (1<sup>st</sup> stage planning: Figure 12) that further evolved in the follow up planning cycles, were due unsustainable in large part because of the university size and structure, as the number of units ended up reflecting a very complex need of organization and control:

PD45: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M5: It was during the first strategic assessment of the units in the framework of the first contractual program, that everyone begun to realize that the system was not sustainable. 16 schools, more than 40 departments...therefore, the responsible pro-vice chancellor was overwhelmed. It was a strategic plan per units... It's when you start to find problems, together with the philosophy, which I think has been positive in this university, applying the French tradition of "Laissez faire et laissez passer", where active people, you let them do things, but it also creates a bit of dispersion ...

This complex structure put forward the gaps in counting with efficient monitoring mechanisms, and also it was suggested that the characteristic of the organizational structure promoted the duplication of work, that added to the system problematic, as well illustrated by the following excerpt:

PD46: HEAD-SCH-TEC-F11: ... Could we be more efficient? I think we are effective, efficient, I don't know [laughs]. I don't know if the structure of the university, different centres have the same degrees, I don't know if this is a source of problems in the sense that we are spending double resources where it wouldn't be necessary, right?...we are competing internally instead of devoting our efforts in competing with another university...

Along with, this complex organizational structure may be a cause of the struggle in socializing the university strategy, due to the fact that some strategy documents were suggested not being known by a great part of the university community:

PD47: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M4: ...there are documents, which unfortunately many people haven't seen it, they don't know it...

This fact may be complicated further due to the evaluation system that was at place within the university system, which tends to amplify the gap between the individual and institutional goals.

The university has implemented a system that evaluates the faculty performance (teaching and research), which was suggested not assuring an adequate connection between the individualities of the faculty in the different departments with the institutional goals being set. On top of that, problems with communicating and implementing the strategy were also being suggested as backdrops. An interviewee put forward that the university strategy may find inefficiency in its implementation, specifically concerning the level of the people, where the awareness of many institutional objectives may not be totally clear:

PD53: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M6: Well, I don't think the strategy is implemented, for example, there are professors that when they are informed about their assessment [ABCD], and they scored B, they say: how can I get B if I do everything right? And you may say to them: have you done this aspect that is underlined here? And they say, but why should I do it? This isn't important. The [University] tells you to do this and maybe you have done things much more complicated, but you haven't done this particular aspect, due to the fact that he/she thinks that the importance they give it is more important than the one giving by the university...

Concerning aspects of policy making, the narratives suggested that policies may be driven by an unbalanced vision existent between the research and teaching roles, which may have to do with a lack of strategic vision on faculty policy. This aspect might have to do with a lack of clear policy criteria on faculty recruitment. Along with, there is the European Higher Education Area implementation problematic, where narratives have suggested that there were divergent views and interests hindering the strategy and policy making.

Coming to the last issue grouped when exploring the middle managers narratives on their perception of the university strategy, I have delved into their views on the unit strategy, trying to track down the issues taking place in the dwelling mode of the strategy making, that is, what is going on when the academic managers strategize at local level using the university guidelines. Therefore, one of the first aspects identified were concerning to the unit's strategic areas, which were characterized as being restricted to the units competence, as such in the case of departments the actions were more based on faculty issues and research, and in the case of schools it was more based on teaching aspects. Middle managers narratives suggested that the strategy at the units was seen on the one hand as isolated initiatives, with scanty influence at the institutional level, which might have to do with being restricted and dependent on the system. And on the other, planning activities at the units were seen as assessment tool (see Appendix 9H)

The strategy planning seen as an assessment tool, was suggested useful for evaluation of monitoring activities rather than strategic visions and future prospection.

PD48: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M8: ...Strategic planning serves only afterwards... It is useful to assess things that have happened, but not what will happen. To make plans, particularly in this current restricted economic situation is nearly impossible.

This aspect may be associated with the perspective that the actions and activities at the unit's levels seem to be dependent of people voluntarism, which may suggest scanty recognition of local initiatives, as well as little institutional responsibility upon these initiatives, as illustrated in the following narratives:

PD53: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M6: somehow, to me what is a bit confusing, with the governance plan, even with the university strategic planning, for example, in my school,...most of the things that are made, are based upon professors voluntarism, we organize the open doors for colleges, for example, ... this is only done because there are professors who do this because they want to, if they didn't, we couldn't do it...

PD45: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M5: the university hasn't told us that the things we do are good or bad, we have decided this, for the university it's fine, if we had decided something inconsistent, would have been good too. Everything seems fine for the University, and then it's when you realize that doesn't matter if you do the things right or wrong; it has no influence at all...

These institutional policies restricting emergent local initiatives, might suggest that conditions of the university strategy implementation may be detached from the units particularities, which might produce a mismatch between top-down and bottom-up initiatives, as well illustrated by one interviewee:

PD52: DEAN-TEC-M9: ...being a school, a faculty, there are times that policies are obviously marked from the university, which we have to follow and to meet, and often it yields a workload, thus the forecast of our own strategy it is severely limited by these conditions; the objectives that we would mark as a school, sometimes are hard to reach due to the conditions that are imposed by the university...

On the other hand, there was the problematic of the implementation at people's level, due to the fact that implicating people beyond the voluntarism is quite difficult, as it seems that the results of actions associated with strategic planning were not often visible in the day-to-day activities:

PD52: DEAN-TEC-M9: ...the management team, who are in charge of the daily management has a clear understanding of what is involved, and what it means, but other people, lectures that comes to the school only to teach, often when they are told that there is a process to review the teaching guides, when they are required to comply with certain issues associated with the quality plan or strategic planning, they see it as something that doesn't go with them...

Therefore, the perspectives of the strategy at the units was often seen as a task of urgent management, which did not provide enough room for emergent initiatives, and when there it was, it seems that there was scanty institutional responsibility and recognition. The narratives

suggested that urgent management may lead to fill in objectives, but restricting emergent visions, that may further suggest a need of more room for manoeuvre in balancing the university strategy conditions with the emergent initiatives.

#### *4.2.1.4. Engagement behaviours associated with strategy texts uses*

This section deals with answering the question concerning *how the strategy texts were used*. Therefore, in this exploration, I have delved into the academic managers narratives about their perspectives on the functions and uses of the strategy text, both at institutional and unit's levels. Additionally, the mentions about the positive and negative elements influencing in the development of the strategy, were also taken into account as possible themes affecting the behaviour of academic managers when formulating and using strategy texts.

The top managers attributed two functions to the institutional strategy text: a *decision making guide* and a *budget distribution tool*, functions that held both strategic and tactical roles of the texts. The use of the text in the implementation of the strategy was associated with a platform for the definition of evaluation criteria and performance indicators of the unit's activities, which served later on as a starting point for the budget distribution. Concerning the positive and negative elements hindering the development of the institutional strategy that may burden the strategy text effectiveness, the narratives of top managers were clustered into four categories: 1) Managerial handicaps; 2) Engagement handicaps; 3) Structural handicaps and 4) Political handicaps.

Managerial handicaps refer to problems in communication mechanisms, poor implementation and inefficiencies within the organizing model. Engagement handicaps had to do with the individualism idiosyncrasy spread across the institution, coupled with a lack of interest in participating in management tasks, combined with faculty resistance. Furthermore, structural handicaps were associated with the institutional size problematic, which might influence in the complexity of managing information and implication across the organization different levels. Finally, political handicaps were mainly concerned with aspects of the political system at the government levels that had to do with economic restrictions, lack of supporting policies as well as scanty autonomy in different matters, such as human resources policies.

The narratives suggested a higher convergence in aspects of communication inefficiencies, engagement drawbacks, coupled with lack of support on decision making from policies at the governmental system level:

PD90: DPTVC-TEC-TM3: ...if we are to close facilities, this cannot be done without the support from governmental level. That is, having the University A and the University B offering repeated degrees, it's nonsense, and it seems silly to me that we compete in this way. This I think the government should make a judgment and state that it won't be allowed that two equal degrees would be offered within 30 or 100 Km... Then of course, this is very complicated and we have no institutional support from governments, nor the Catalan or the Spanish governments, and the current party (PP) is doing bad, but the former (Socialists) did as just as bad....Also I think we have important failures with communication. I'm convinced that the issue of communication is one of the weaknesses of this university in many ways, it's difficult to communicate, but also I don't know how to solve it, we have an expert in communication trying to do this...

PD91: DPTVC-TEC-TM1: ...we don't socialize what we do...

PD90: DPTVC-TEC-TM3: There are even much simpler channels, there are a lot of newsletters, the vice-chancellor emails...people only read it when there is some information about the wage, but if you talk about anything else, people don't read it. There are many activities taking place at the [University], which are more or less publicize, however people don't know them. I have also to recognize that when I wasn't holding a management position I didn't read this either. Because you have no time, most of us here have a science profile, and then we sometimes have little interest in this kind of things...

Concerning the middle managers narratives about the negative elements that were hindering the university strategy development, it was also clustered around the same four categories as top managers narratives, however the issues around communication flow conditionings were split apart and formed a fifth category of "information exchange handicaps". Middle managers talked about several issues that may avoid an efficient university strategizing, however I have focused on aspects that were more convergent within their narratives, trying to connect it with problematic of strategy implementation and strategy texts usage.

Therefore, a higher convergence was found on issues of engagement and information exchange handicaps, followed by structural and managerial aspects (See the main convergent themes in the network of Appendix 9I). The main convergent issues might suggest that such handicaps may hinder the efficient use of the strategy text, as it has to do with problems within the strategizing process, which were associated with structural aspects (e.g. bureaucracy), managerial (e.g. strategy guidelines not very coherent with specificities found in different institutional units), engagement (e.g. governance model restricts the productivity) and communication (e.g. scanty verbalization and conversational spaces). Altogether these handicaps may contribute to a dysfunctional use of the texts, that had to do with a more normative and political purpose rather than strategic in its nature.

Middle managers also talked about strategy enablers, which may withdraw and contribute to decrease such barriers. The higher convergence of elements narrated was found around issues of leadership, organizational culture, communication and engagement. Accordingly, these enablers

were grouped around two categories: i) managerial and leadership enablers and ii) engagement enablers (see Appendix 9J). As can be noted, middle managers stressed higher concern on the need of motivating and implicating staff, throughout the integration of different leadership agents across the institutional areas. Some of these concerns are illustrated in the following excerpts, which may suggest that when a higher number of elements associated with engagement, managerial and leadership enablers are at place, it might facilitate a better platform for a functional use of the strategy text.

PD45: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M5: I felt involved in the first strategic planning; I did believe in it, but didn't feel the same in the latest plans. In the beginning, as most of the academics, I didn't like it, as it seemed silly and a waste of time. And then, as we had resources, it became clear that it was a way of functioning, someone should verbalize where we were going and that the experts have very clear, when things are spoken, everybody starts to understand them better.

PD48: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M8: We have government bodies: the school board and committees, and here we try to organize things in advance, in order to prioritize things, trying to favour the widest possible discussions, in this I do trust very much, because when you have a large institution, when some initiative or police is approved, it is very difficult to assure that people are informed and willing to comply it. Therefore, the only way to do this is previously, when you are building the model, ensure that a maximum number of people participate in it and feel as much as possible involved.

PD43: HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M2: ...the alignment with the university is derived from the organizational culture, vice-chancellor and his/her team leadership, rather than anything else...we are breathing in a particular environment, by attending meetings you may contrast information with other department heads, talk to members of the top management team, this kind of things help on the creation of a way of thinking, which somehow generates a tacit agreement, a common thinking framework, you start to see the university concerns, and by accepting it, it starts to concern you as well...Thus, basically I would say that strategy alignment is supported by cultural issues, leadership and creation of states of opinions, rather than anything else...

PD49: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M10: ...I do engage a lot with my management team, we often hold weekly meetings, where we work out proposals. I do believe that this is the mission, to propose reasonably things, than to convince people about it...

PD46: HEAD-SCH-TEC-F1: ...overall, the alignment with the university is given in very specific areas, I believe that in the government bodies, in the committees of the [university], the university strategy is already defined, thus the strategy definition is carried out more at the level of individual meetings. Sometimes I think it lacks a joint strategy, because many times you get the feeling that many decisions are taken from the Rectorate, perhaps it is easier to take a decision rather than to consult fifteen centres, no?

PD43: HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M2: ...I appoint my team, but I cannot choose the responsible of different department sections, because they are elected by their people, as well as I cannot appoint the representatives at the centres, who are also chosen by their voters... Then of course, you need to integrate a way of working with these people who don't respond to you, yet to their voters...

As follows, I will concentrate the description of the academic managers views on strategy text, in order to develop further the categories of texts associated with functional and dysfunctional

uses. As described earlier in this chapter, top managers viewed strategy texts as being on the one hand a *decision making guide* and on the other, a *budget distribution tool*. Contrasting these views with the academic middle managers narratives, based on their negative and positive comments around the strategy texts perceptions; it was possible to come up with categories concerning the strategy texts functions and uses (see Appendix 9K). The convergence of narratives suggests three types of strategy texts uses (impartial, dysfunctional and or functional), which are derived from academic manager's perceptions either being positive, neutral or negative. The positive experiences were associated with narratives that highlighted the use of the document as being something practical and useful. This useful aspect was related to the reflection exercise opportunity, coupled with the possibility of elucidating common efforts.

Accordingly, the beneath excerpts emphasize the functional use of the texts:

PD46: HEAD-SCH-TEC-F1: ...this strategic plan didn't reach concrete details, that is, it has set strategic lines and objectives, operational objectives, and for some of these operational objectives, actions were derived. There were actions that were very descriptive in terms of people involved and budget, but there were others, which were very broad, however served as a point of reference.

PD43: HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M2: ...rather than making a strategic plan, indeed we exercised strategic thinking... it's our reference to 2012. So this is a document that is very handy, very much alive. This is our reference...

PD53: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M6: ...it is like a working program...

PD54: HEAD-SERV-TEC-F7: it has served us as a methodology, allowed a good organization and other benefits...

This functional use was mostly associated with the unit's strategy document, often structured as working documents or an adapted document derived from the electoral campaign program. However, when looking through the negative and neutral experiences being narrated, it was possible to observe that most of it was concerning the institutional text or the possible uses of the strategic lines within the unit strategizing activities:

PD44: HEAD-DEPT-TEC-M: Yes, we have a formalized strategic plan, which is compulsory. We are amongst the departments that do it better, but just to give you an idea, the impact of this plan on the department budget, ...last year on an estimate order, before the cuts, of 76 000 Euros, the fulfilment of the objectives didn't reach up to 800 Euros, of course, if this is a reward for a strategic plan, then....

PD45: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M5: yes, we do have a few strategic lines that are informed in committees, I'm a member of one of them, but often it seems to be concern with meeting the contract program with the Government rather than working out real changes...

PD48: HEAD-SCH-TEC-M8: ...theoretically we do have a strategic plan, but just my secretary and myself know it, we elaborate it between us, but we don't believe in it. The university orders us to elaborate a strategic plan, then we fill out some forms and



send them back, and that's it. This is our strategic plan... So it is very formal, what is called strategic planning is pure formalism, which you are obliged to do, otherwise you don't keep the money, however it is something that you are not convinced of.

PD52: DEAN-TEC-M9: ...now I would say yes, the politically correct answer is that it [strategic plan] has helped us to improve, but I think there are rooms for improvements from the point of view that it should be more practical, and its benefits should be more visible in the school day-to-day, it should be something that was incorporated into the daily work, everyone should know which are the goals, and those goals should be realistic...

Again, the above quotations illustrate the dysfunctional uses of the strategy documents, mainly associated with obligations, lack of confidence in its benefits, incoherencies between institutional objectives when aligning it at the units, or also scanty visibility of its utility and benefits on the “real life” of the units.

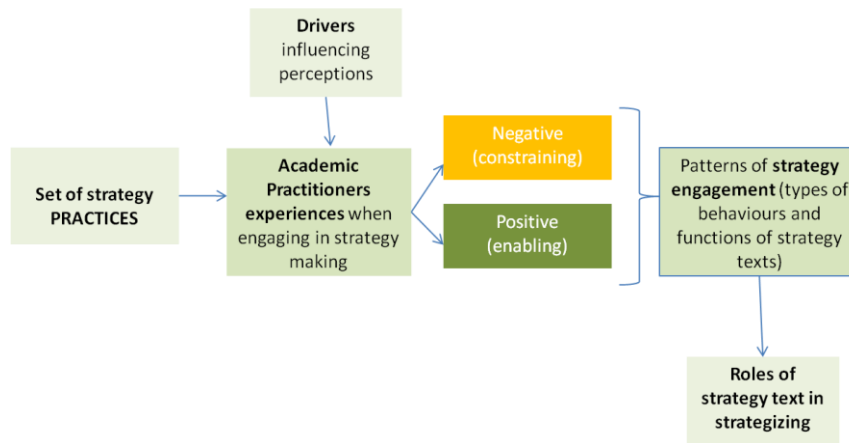
With regard to the neutral experiences, they were associated with the utility of the document, very often seen as a political document; which embedded some form of practicality. As the quotes highlight, the view of the text as a budget distribution tool puts forward the necessity of a higher connection between the strategy texts and resources, which were often scanty.

PD47: HEAD-SCH-UPC-M4: I think it [strategic plan] would be more useful as higher would be its economic ties...we would take it more seriously...

PD54: HEAD-SERV-TEC-F7: I see it [strategic plan] as both political document and working plan; I think it has been useful for us...

#### 4.2.1.5. Roles of strategy text in strategizing

This part deals with the integration of the individual case analysis in order to illustrate how the university strategy text in practice is like. For that matter, I will recover the framework used to spotlight the analysis (Figure 7) in order to map out the main themes that have emerged for each problem under exploration and furthermore, based on this integration, to illustrate the strategy text roles in the institution strategizing.



Starting with the exploration of the strategic practices, the academic managers when participating in strategizing described their perception concerning the practices, which were enclosed in two categories: a set of *standardized practices* (e.g. University cloister meeting; general board meeting, standing committees, strategy negotiation with units, etc.) with clear institutionalized rules and framed under particular periods of times, and a set of *singularized practices* (e.g. specific agreements, direct face to face contact, joint collaborations, discussion and network spaces, etc.) in which rules are more implicit, and do not follow a specific norm or standards and can be either framed under a specific time period or not. Overall, there was an equilibrium observed concerning the number of both categories of practices being identified. Furthermore, these two main categories of practices were expanded in sub-categories, which have been based on their systematization and or occurrence in time. Consequently, the *standardized practices* were divided into three sub-categories: *cyclical*, *supportive* and *episodic*. On the other hand, the *singularized practices* were split into two sub-categories: *unruled* and *regulated*.

These set of practices were taking place both in strategy formulation (building mode) and strategy implementation and consumption (dwelling mode). However, some of them were more used in the dwelling (informal network, discussion forums, direct contacts, information system) and others were more emphasized in the building mode (strategy negotiation with units, external and internal benchmarking, external meetings for brainstorming). When exploring the academic managers practitioners in both building and dwelling modes of strategy making, their narratives were clustered according to their negative or positive experiences. Accordingly, the negative experiences were more associated with *standardized practices* (e.g. general board meetings, strategy negotiation with units, council of department heads, University cloister meetings, and standing committee meetings). On the other hand, most of the positive experiences were narrating being associated with the *singularized practices*. However, it is relevant to note, that

some set of practices, held both positive and negative experiences (e.g. strategy negotiation with units, school board meetings, council of department heads).

The positive approaches to the different set of practices guided the categorization of *enabling purposes* of practices, and the negative approaches led to configuring *constraining purposes* of practices. To expand in these practices purposes, other elements of the university strategy making were also dug into. This was done by exploring the academic narratives about their views on the university strategy, allowing the identification of different strategizing behaviours. On the one hand, the elements that were driven the **top manager's behaviours** in strategy making were associated with a **strategy being very restrictive**, comprised of **reactive more than strategic actions**. This strategizing behaviour was suggested to be consequence of external elements (e. g. economic crisis and instability of the policy system) and very dependent on the political decisions. These **restrictive and reactive strategizing behaviours** by top managers were contrasted with the middle academic manager's perceptions that framed strategizing behaviours at the university into four categories:

1. Political dependency;
2. Puzzling decision making;
3. Ambiguous strategy alignment
4. Problematic organizational structures and policy making.

Strategizing behaviours associated with political dependency suggested that it may be a cause of the cultivation of mini instances of power within the institution, being fed by the political system policies that suggested reinforcing strategy homogenization across universities. Particularly relevant may be the consideration that this behaviour might suggest that strategy texts could be empty of real strategizing. Furthermore, strategizing behaviours connected with puzzling decision making were suggested as being slow, driven by non-professional teams, with a strong emphasis on a "fits all" policy. This latter issue suggests that the ambiguous definition of the university core business plays an important part, that is, the homogenization of the same treatment for all avoided paying attention to the units particularities, which seem to indicate a perception of a decision making process that was not very deliberative, with low synergies across units, coupled with scanty autonomy and shared responsibility.

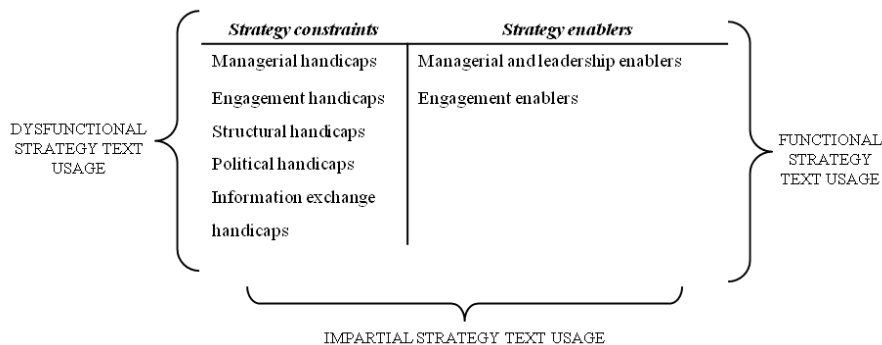
This ambiguity issue was also observed in another strategizing behaviour that was linked with ambiguous strategy alignment, which has been suggested, due to the different "structure models" at place within the university, that some units might be more aligned with the university strategy than others. Additionally, this category also suggested that alignment is

promoted on the basis of the elaboration of regulations and recommendations, which were suggested that the higher their generic guideline, higher is their capacity to promote bottom-up initiatives.

The last category was linked with problems within the organizational structure and policy making system. In the first aspect, the university large structure comprised the need of a challenged organization and controlling mechanisms and also highlighted difficulties in communications and implications of different staff profiles. The latter aspect was strictly connected with faculty policies concerns, due to the current context of the European Higher Education Area implementation and deep cuts on funding resources, as well as decreased in new recruitments and tenure track opportunities. The strategizing behaviour in this aspect was associated with a lack of strategic vision that altogether with the previous strategizing behaviours suggest being more an attitude of filling in holes more than prevent and anticipate it.

The strategizing behaviour at the units levels were being suggested on the hand, as urgent management, with scanty space for emerging strategy, and very autonomy restrictive and on the other, it was linked with isolated initiatives, with bare institutional responsibility. Altogether, planning activities were suggested as being an assessment tool, not very linked as a strategic tool. These different strategizing behaviours were further explored with strategy constraints and strategy enablers being narrated by the academic managers, emerging from it three types of strategy texts uses: functional, dysfunctional and impartial. Thus, by converging both middle and top manager’s narratives, it was possible to come up with five categories of strategy constraints and two categories of strategy enablers driving strategizing behaviours:

**Figure 19. Concurrence of strategizing constraints and enablers with strategy text usage (Case 1)**



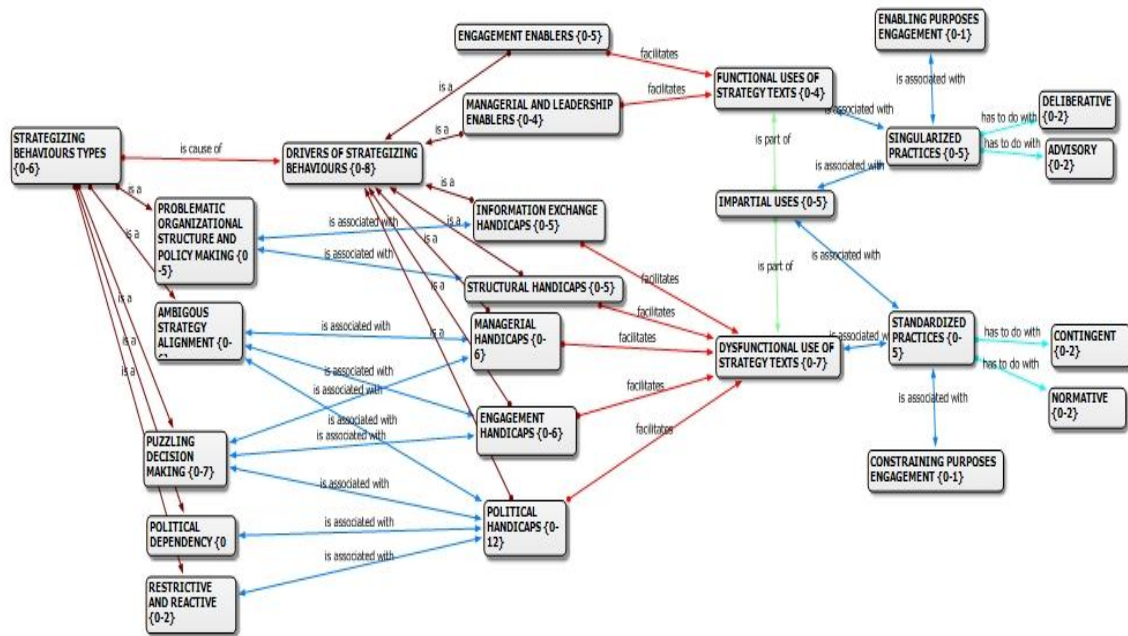
Source: Own elaboration

The strategy handicaps were suggested to influence a dysfunctional use of the texts, that had to do with a more normative and political purpose rather than strategic in its nature. On the contrary, the association of elements of leadership, motivation, joint work collaborations, and

higher level of objectives verbalization might have provided with a suitable platform for a functional use of the strategy texts.

Blending together the four main themes that came up throughout the case analysis: *drivers of strategizing behaviours* (strategy constraints and enablers), *types of strategizing behaviours*, *patterns of strategy text usage*, and *practices purposes* (constraining and enabling) led to the elaboration of the main category of this case analysis, which was related to answering the question of *what is the role of the strategy text in strategizing?* Therefore, four roles associated with the strategy text uses were identified: advisory, normative, deliberative and contingent as can be observed in Figure 20.

Figure 20. Roles of strategy text in strategizing (Case 1)



Source: Own elaboration

As illustrated in the network, this case suggested four roles to the strategy text in strategizing, which were associated with positive and negative perceptions of strategy making in the university. The convergence of these four different roles may suggest that the strategy at the university might have been experienced in different ways across the organizational levels. The set of singularized practices were more associated with enabling engagement purposes, which may led to the text being seen as a *deliberative and advisory tool*, illustrated by narratives which emphasized issues such as: a great effort of consistency, an opportunity for strategic reflection, an instrument for organizing, a shared reference, guidance or a common framework for initiatives.

On the other perspective that was more associated with the standardized practices, these practices were more linked with constraining perceptions that led to the text being suggested as a contingent and normative tool, reflected by interviewees quotations that stressed out aspects concerning: planning as an obligation, feeling of increased bureaucracy, scanty visibility of its practical benefits on the day to day management, which were very restrictive and connected to economic issues, and not promoting space for emergent strategy.

#### ***4.2.2. Case 2: Regional University***

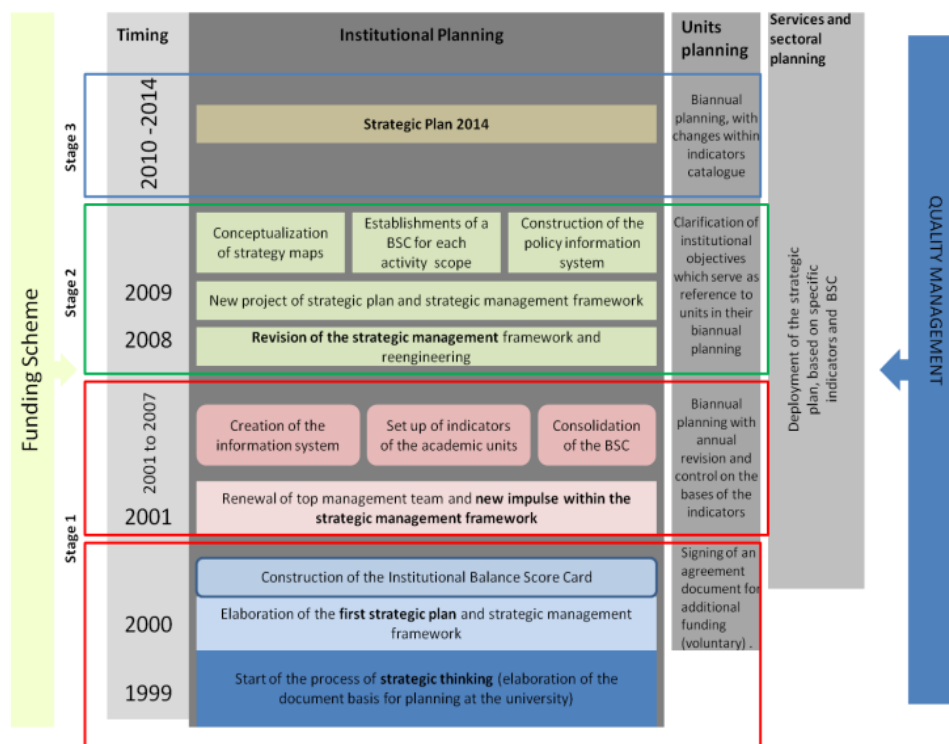
##### *4.2.1.1. Background overview of the university strategy making*

The background outline of the Case 2 was elaborated throughout the three formal visits conducted during the period of the case study data collection. These visits and initial contacts, as in Case 1, allowed the identification of different stages of planning development conducted in the university, and also made possible the determination of the ongoing strategy texts produced at the institution, related to the main stages of their planning framework as seen in figure 21. The outline in Figure 21 draws the timeframe of the evolution of the strategic management system, which can be highlighted in three main parts:

- 1) Strategic thinking process and development of its first strategy plan and strategic management system.
- 2) Consolidation of the strategic management framework and reengineering of the system.
- 3) Set up of a new strategic plan, the first presented in a format, which covers a specific horizon (2011-2014).

When the process of strategic thinking started in 1999, the top management team considered essential to adopt a strategic approach, which would express the university willingness to adapt to the changing environment and to anticipate future challenges. This willingness was translated into the adoption of strategic planning as a management tool embedded in an overall strategic management system. Thus, the initial idea was to build a strategic management system as a methodological basis or platform in which any strategic planning could be managed.

Figure 21. Overview of the chronologic path of strategy development (Case 2)



Source: Own elaboration

Therefore, the development process of strategic planning at the university during its first stage can be split into some major phases: the preparation of the strategic management system and the production of the strategic plan. As respect to the preparation phase, associated with the strategic thinking process, the university developed a plan of image and communication, which included a study of how society viewed the institution, also a map of processes was draw, training seminars on strategic management were conducted, self-assessment exercises based on the EFQM model were carried out, as well as negotiations with local government have taken place, which culminated in the approval of a new funding plan that linked funding with the accomplishment of objectives agreed upon.

For the preparation of the plan and the strategic management system, a working group was established. This group was responsible of designing the participation process of the university community in developing the plan, also designed the way the plan was to be communicated, as well as the process of formal approval of the document by the governing bodies. As a result of the work being carried out by this group, a “document basis for planning” was approved in the year 2000, which served as basis for the strategy initial deployment at the academic units and university services. The main elements that characterized the strategic plan focused on the university Mission, Vision, a general Strategic Objective and a set of actions, which were

grouped around each of the critical factors identified during the preparation process and strategic thinking. Furthermore, an institutional Balance Score Card was prepared, which included the selected institutional objectives, placed within the four perspectives of the Kaplan and Norton's model. This strategy text did not cover a specific horizon frame.

The deployment of the university strategic plan throughout the schools and departments was characterized by the invitation to each of the schools/degrees and departments to voluntarily take part in the implementation of the institutional strategic plan, by aligning the objectives and actions of their specific plans with proposals of the institutional plan. Then a document of agreement between the vice-chancellor and each of the schools/degrees and departments were signed, foreseen additional funding of actions according to the alignment of objectives being targeted.

By mid-2001 there was election time and a new vice-chancellor was chosen, initiating a second stage in the university planning history (see figure 21). The incoming top team assumed the strategic management approach undertaken until now by the university, giving it a new impetus. In this context, the need and urgency of creating powerful information system in order to link the objectives with the resources and ensure the transparency of the system was worked out. This system included the identification of indicators of the schools and departments and the publication of their definition, formulas to calculate them, as well as results of the indicators in the intranet of the university.

Furthermore, the university services, completely different organizational units comparing to the academic units, made the deployment of the institutional strategic plan in a singular way. For each service, a specific document of objectives and actions was developed, being responsible for it, both the service representative and the corresponding functional vice-chancellor, who were in charge of ensuring consistency within the corporate objectives of the university. There has also been the establishment of specific indicators for each service, including their definition, formulas and calculation procedures. The main action of strategic control of the university was carried out through the continuous improvement of the institutional Balance Scorecard.

Thereupon, after seven years of conducting this strategic planning process, the top management team proposed implementing a genuine reengineering of the university strategic management, considering on the one hand the changes in the environment and future prospective, and on the other, the organizational learning accumulated over the years. The objective of this review process was to draw out the university future strategic positioning in the market (ability to differentiate itself and maintain dynamic competitiveness). This review process was conducted



throughout a detailed analysis of the current situation (SWOT analysis), by the assessment of the organizational learning that took place through the implementation of strategic management system approved in 2000, and the analysis of the status of the indicators, action plans and relevant initiatives. After this initial analysis, a draft document containing the proposal for the strategic management system revision was formalized, followed by the process of participation of the university community, culminating in the validation during 2009 of the new strategic management system.

Major changes and significant improvements introduced in the renewed strategic management system were the conceptualization of the university strategy maps, the construction of the institutional balance scorecard together with one dashboard for each area of activity, more flexible structures embedded within management by processes and roles, greater emphasis on communication and improvement of specific communication channels, emphasis on interdepartmental working groups and their mainstreaming, strategic planning deployment at the level of people and greater emphasis on knowledge management. Then, the main results achieved with the introduction of these changes were related to the clarification of institutional objectives; improvement of the internal consistency of objectives and actions; gradual construction of a policy information system for decision-making; more flexibility on setting up incentives; major cultural change relate to the mentality of working based on objectives; actions and indicators; as well as the strategic plan seen as a communication tool.

By mid-2010 vice-chancellor elections took place, and after two mandates the vice-chancellor gave way to a new substitute. The incoming vice-chancellor was elected based on an electoral campaign program that was widely discussed and explained to the university community. The major changes proposed by the new top management team were the translation of the vice-chancellor electoral program into a new strategic plan document, but this time, with a specific time horizon (2011-2014). However, other aspects that have influenced in the update of the previous strategy document approved in 2009, and more specifically, the economic crisis which has had a significant impact on the institution, inducing the formalization and adoption of a plan of budget consolidation during 2010, based on the need to control spending, and in the implementation of multi-year funding plan of the public universities of the local government, that dictate funding policies up to 2017, implying a frozen budget until 2013. All this in a situation where the university had launched the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which entailed a change in the educational model, also in the way the degrees were managed, as well as tackling new challenges such as the accreditation of official degree titles.

Consequently, the methodology followed for developing the university new strategic plan with the horizon 2014 used as reference starting points, the vice-chancellor electoral program and the strategic management system approved in 2009. It followed six months work, where each pro vice-chancellor examined the reality of their areas of competence. Alongside, from October 2010 until April 2011, a project was elaborated to assess the development of the university strategic management system at the schools, departments and services, led by an organization and management expert. Between January and February 2011 the vice-chancellor had a series of meetings with the management teams of the university schools and all head of departments, where he explained the outlines of the plan, and collected concerns and priorities of schools and departments. Finally, the new strategy plan was formally approved by the Steering Board in May 2011. With this strategic plan with restricted timeframe (2014), the new top management team exploited the culture and expertise of the institution, adapting the strategic objectives of the previous strategy document approved in 2009 to the new situation the university was emerged on.

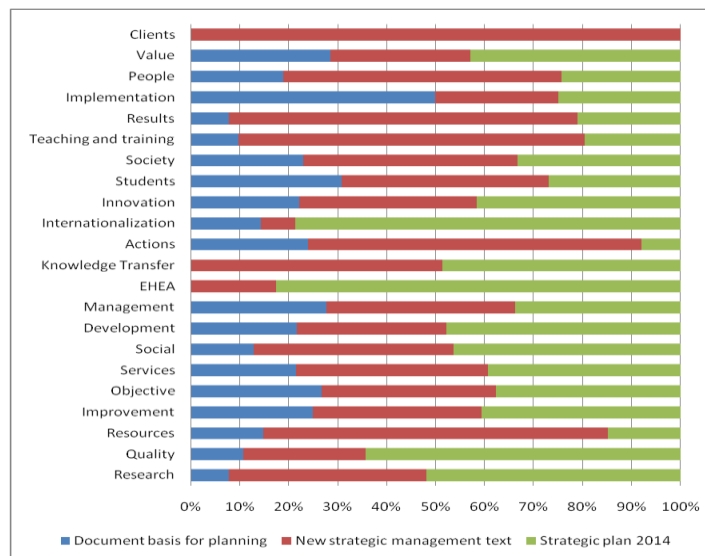
This overall background draws attention to three different periods of planning within the university strategy process development (Figure 21). These three periods corresponded to different vice-chancellor mandates. Respectively, the two first stages corresponded to the establishment, development, revision and consolidation of the strategic management system. Moreover, the third stage was associated with a major change in the process, introducing a strategy text document framed and constricted to a specific time horizon, as well as introducing changes in the way strategy objectives of the university was closely aligned with external funding policies. In this manner, the further analysis of the university strategy text will concentrate in examining the three strategy text produced by the institution along its three stages planning: the first strategic plan (document basis for planning); the reviewed strategic management system document and the new strategic plan horizon 2014. These strategy texts are complemented with annual documents produced by the top management, which includes the annual plan of action to be carried out, called “lines of government”. As such, together with the three strategy texts, 11 other related documents will be examined.

#### *4.2.2.2. University official strategy texts and its embedded discourse*

The content analysis followed the same procedure as in case 1. The first path was the exploration of the texts structures, which means looking for the main elements, content, keywords, description of the methodological path, as well as the inclusion of actors involved in the proposed actions.

Concerning the frequency of words across the texts, it was possible to observe that some key aspects presented overall convergence. However, it was possible to note some differences in the emphasis given to some constructs along the texts. For instance the concept of “client”, the revised strategic management text was the only document that presented higher emphasis upon this concept. “Internationalization” and also the “European Higher Education Area – EHEA” also presented different weight across the text, where higher number of mentioned could be observed in the strategic plan 2014. It was interesting to observe that the emphasis on teaching and training seems to have decrease overtime, contrasting to emphasis being put on research, internationalization and knowledge transfer. This relationship can be observed in the following figure:

**Figure 22. Frequency count of keywords across strategy texts (Case 2)**



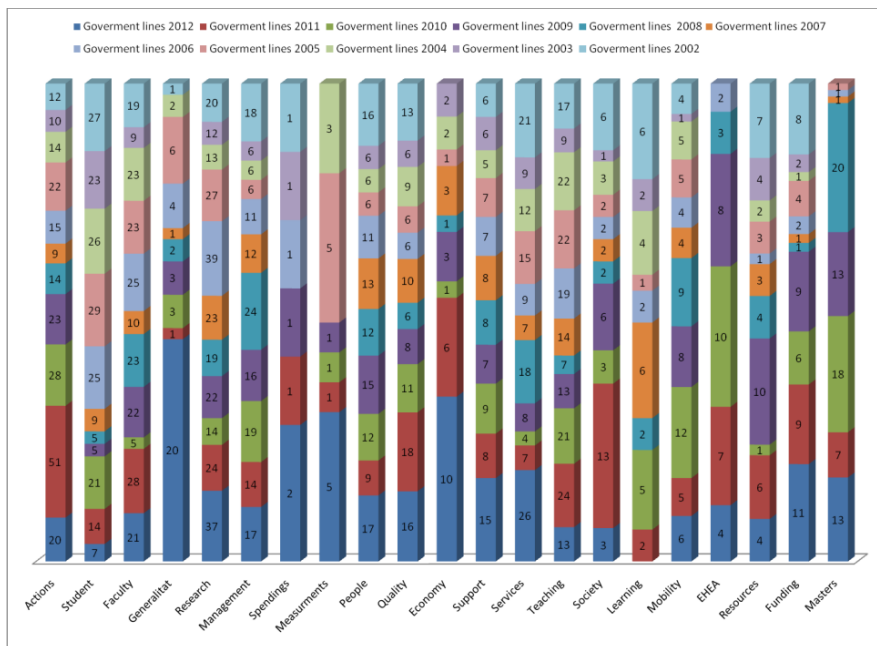
Source: Own elaboration

On the other hand, exploring the frequency of words and concepts included in the government lines documents, which refer to the annual prioritization of actions by the top management team, it can be observed that the pattern of core issues was kept, yet it highlighted a diverse degree of variability overtime. Observing the inclusion of “actions” in the documents, it is possible to observe that the planning intensity kept average situation overtime, except from the 2011 document, which suggested an important increased in the number of actions being proposed. Other core areas such as teaching, faculty policy, people, research and learning also presented a balance on the emphasis being put overtime, yet can be observed that it suggests that citations referring to “teaching” have decreased in comparison to an increase in “research”.

One interested aspect that is relevant to take into account, is the fact that if we detailed observe the three most recent government lines (from 2010 to 2012) it is possible to note that concepts

such as “spending”, “economy”, “funding”, seems to have increased in the number of citations. Particularly interesting is the increased in the citations of the keyword “Generalitat” (Autonomous government body) that might illustrate the severe economic situation framing the public higher education institutions in Spain, and suggest that the priority lines are embedding these contextual driven issues.

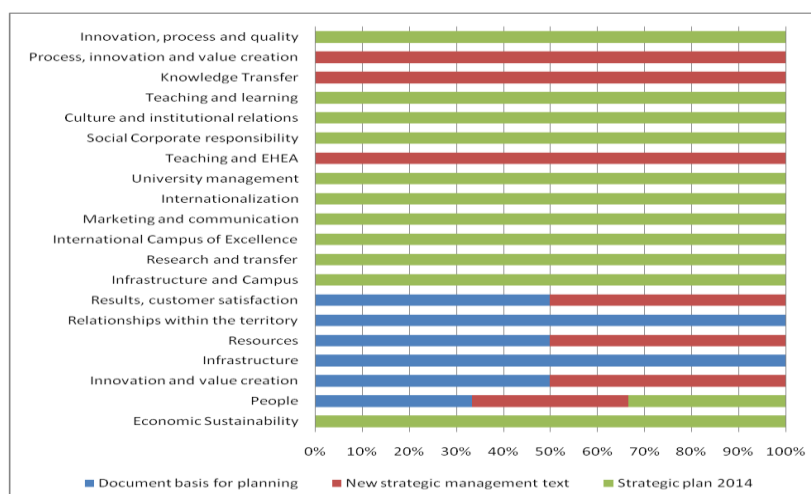
**Figure 23. Frequency count of key aspects across government lines (Case 2)**



Source: Own elaboration

Additionally, when exploring the main themes and strategic areas included in the texts, the following outline can be identified:

**Figure 24. Key strategic issues and areas embedded in the texts (Case 2)**

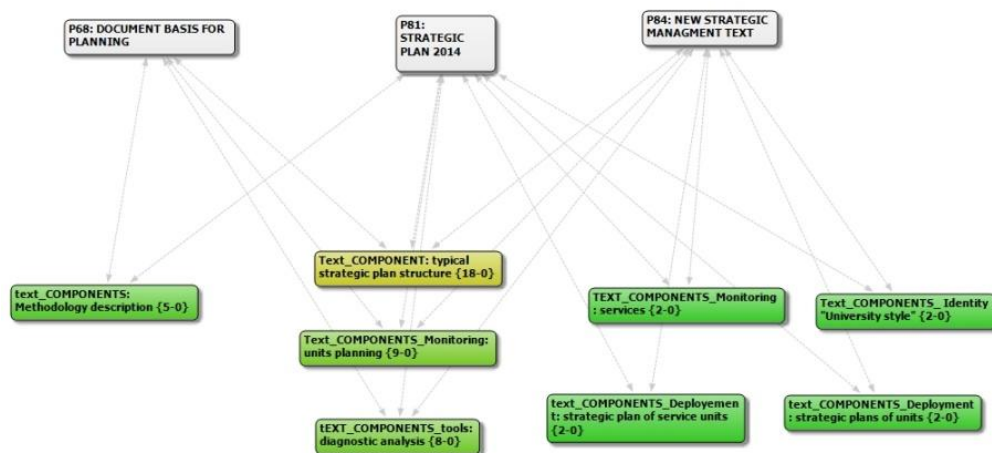


Source: Own elaboration

As noted, the *new strategic management text* includes the main issues from previous *document basis for planning*, taking into account that both elaborated the strategic objectives around the four perspectives of the Balance Scorecard, where emphasis was put on innovation and value creation, people, resources, and customer satisfaction. The revised text, which has been elaborated and validated around 2009, added attention to aspects of knowledge transfer, teaching and the European Higher Education Area which coincides with the need to adapt and implement the new curricula. The newest *strategic plan 2014*, was structured to comprise a specific time horizon, and addressed specific strategic axis, with particular attention to issues of internationalization, campus of excellence and economic sustainability.

Furthermore, concerning the co-occurring components across the texts, it was possible to observe that the texts were formalized following a typical strategic plan structure (inclusion of mission, vision, objectives, axis...). Moreover, the texts converged on the inclusion of issues of units planning monitoring mechanisms, as well as description or mentions of a diagnostic analysis process for strategy decision making. As can be observed in the beneath figure, the colour graduation of the rectangles emphasises the relevance of the component that is, the number of times it has been coded and clustered.

**Figure 25. Co-occurring components within the strategy texts (Case 2)**



Source: Own elaboration

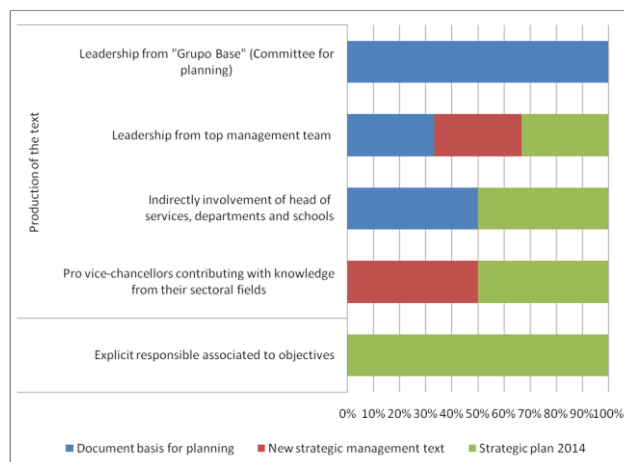
An outright description of the methodological path followed for the production and formalization of the strategy text were found both in the document basis for planning and in the strategic plan 2014. Other components such as implementation procedures in academic and service units, performance monitoring at service units, as well as the emphasis upon the

“university style” of doing things and its identity as a key strategic factor were highly convergent across the latter two documents.

Additionally, the identification of explicit and indirectly involved actors mentioned within the texts was explored. The *document basis for planning* was a descriptive document, setting up the “technical” and “strategic” concepts and terms for the establishment of the strategic management process. As such, it mentioned directly the role of the top management team in taken the further steps to start the process, constituting the committee that would be responsible for conducting and implementing the strategic management system. During the production and formalization of the document and its criteria for further deployment, the text made clear references to the committee and also to the university different middle managers who were involved in providing insights.

On the other hand, the *new strategic management text*, which was a result of the university strategic management program revision, adds in the role of the pro vice-chancellors in the revision process, in the task of identifying and supporting the elaboration of the sectoral policies within their fields. It was the *strategic plan 2014* that explicitly mentioned responsible, associating them to objectives and strategic axis.

**Figure 26. Actors foreseen in the strategic texts (Case 2)**



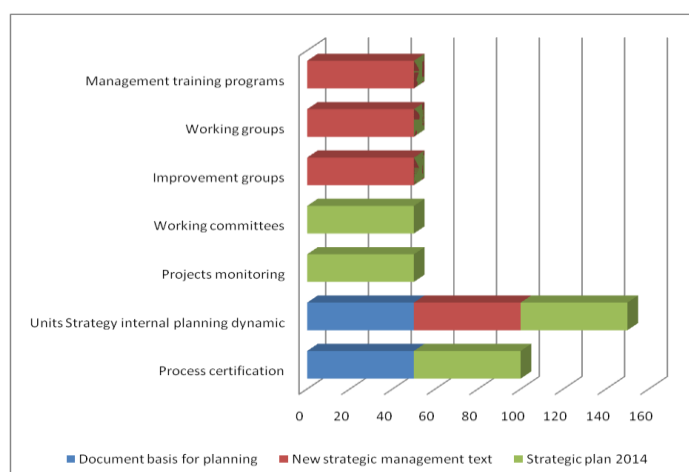
Source: Own elaboration

The association was however broad and general, given the fact that the actions proposed were connected with the annual government lines and also with the balanced scorecard monitoring, in which more concrete specification were worked out. The *strategic plan 2014* was in great part derived from the interaction that took place during the vice-chancellor electoral campaign,

where several interactions were held between different campus collectives. Thus, the text held an indirectly implication of academic middle managers, and also head of services.

Concerning the practices being foreseen within the texts, it can be observed that the framework for strategy deployment at the units moreover kept a pattern across the texts, where the unit's internal planning dynamic maintained its biannual scheme, yet different procedures and criteria were either changed or simplified. The most mentioned practices across the texts can be observed in figure 27. The practice of process certification was also very strongly embedded in the institutional planning culture, as it was closely linked with the university quality management and external EFQM certification, which has led the institution to be awarded with the "Seal of Excellence". Different working committees and working groups were mentioned across the two latest texts.

**Figure 27. Practices foreseen across strategy texts (Case 2)**



Source: Own elaboration

Looking for explicitly intertextuality embedded within the texts, it can be observed that the texts presented a clear connection between them, on the one hand it mentioned the previously text, making clear the continuity in the university strategic direction being taken up to now, and on the other, emphasized the changes being introduced. Additionally, the texts included some aspects of comparability with the previous texts, that is, the comparison between the performance indicators being obtained in different periods with the expected ones. Some excerpts from the texts, illustrates this intertextuality aspect:

PD84: New strategic management text: After seven years of its [strategic plan] adoption, it was appropriate to undertake a renewal process, including the changes that have occurred in the environment and future prospects, as well as all the learning and knowledge being accumulated by the [University ] during this time ....

PD81: Strategic Plan 2014: Apart from the vice-chancellor renewal, there were other issues that fostered the updating of the strategic plan being approved by the [University] in 2009. More specifically, the economic crisis has had a significant impact on our institution, materialized in the adoption in 2010 of a plan to counterbalance the university budget, aiming to control the spending and implementing the multi-year funding plan of the universities (PFP)...

The two above excerpts give an account of the continuity of the planning culture; however put forward the need of revision or changes in order to adapt the university strategic management system to the new context and demands.

PD81: Strategic Plan 2014: People are the greatest asset of the [University]. The university community, composed of faculty, administrative and technical staff, and students, had actively participated in the EHEA implementation...In the coming years we must regain the enthusiasm and align everyone in the University strategic objectives.

This extract suggests that in the past the university has counted with a relevant participation from the university community in the strategic objectives of the institution, yet apparently this interest has stepped back, and there was the need to be recovered. In the following quote, it can be observed that the text mentioned the official previous strategic text, but also the text from the vice-chancellor electoral campaign that supported the final elaboration of the strategic plan, once the vice-chancellor won the elections.

PD81: Strategic Plan 2014: The methodology followed for developing the Strategic Plan 2014 was as follows: the vice-chancellor electoral program with which he was elected in 2010 and the strategic management system adopted in 2009 were the reference point documents...

Furthermore, the beneath quote illustrates the consideration of the previous text, but also introduces a comparison of the indicators achievements during the previous period, highlighting its relevance for the continuity of the university strategic management culture.

PD84: New strategic management text: The University has experienced during the period of its first strategic management system, from 2000 to 2008, one of the most fruitful and rewarding stages of its history ... A comparative of the indicators associated with the key success factors success... highlights the trajectory developed by the [university] in the past eight years...

Overall, the two texts that were elaborated subsequently after the *document basis for planning* presented a higher level of intertextuality, clearly highlighting the path for the continuity of the strategic management system, as well as framing the justifications for the conduct of revisions and or application of corrective changes.



In relation to the planning formality, the texts considered other documents that were either complementary to the text or supportive, as illustrated by the following extracts:

PD68: Document basis for planning: The funding plan of the Generalitat foresees that significant parts of the universities income are to be associated with the establishment of objectives achievement system.

The funding plan of the autonomous government (PFP) was mentioned in the first document as a conditioning for the starting out of a policy of funding by objectives, which in certain ways supported the set up of the strategic management system within the university. On the other hand, the latest text implied the directions taken in the new autonomous government funding plan, in order to align the strategy of the university with the funding policies procedures, especially in the context of the severe economic crises and budget cuts.

PD68: Document basis for planning: The White paper of the Valencia University System highlights the relevance of all the universities counting with strategic management tools in order to face the challenges, among others, new technologies, and social and territorial development.

Additionally, the document basis for planning also mentioned other policies documents, as the Valencia universities white book, which put forward the main trends and challenges universities should be taken into account, particularly when constituting their management structures.

PD84: New strategic management text: TOOLS TO SUPPORT STRATEGY: Management Structure and support of the strategic management (SDE). Ongoing development process of SDE...

PD68: Document basis for planning: ...One of the most important elements of the program is the "consensus document" that collects the essential elements and scope of the voluntary agreement between the Vice-chancellor and the schools and departments, with the aim of providing additional resources to these units to complement its budget to the extent that each of these units may propose a plan of action, aligning it with the University by incorporating certain institutional global objectives.

The above excerpts give an account of the supporting documents or elements that were complementary to the strategy texts, when organizing and structuring the university strategy policies and directions. Both examples illustrate the existence of a management structure that supported the strategic management system, in which the text was embedded. Also, within the strategy implementation policies, there was other document supporting the procedures, as was the case of the "consultation document" that set the path for the unit's elaboration of their own action plans. Overall, it can be noted that the strategy texts were enclosed in a formalized

systematic of planning, which included other supporting documents, guidelines or structures that were used when elaborating or putting the texts into practice.

When carrying out a more detailed analysis of the texts content, with particularly attention to their narrative styles, I also clustered them according to the use of an active or passive voice, nested in a personal or impersonal style, which emphasized either a technical or more narrative like character. As such, the extracts beneath give an account of the type of language and style with the texts were elaborated with:

PD68: Document basis for planning: Strategic objectives- resources perspectives:  
Objectives:

1. To maintain at least the number of students in official degrees.
2. To accomplish the objectives agreed with the Generalitat in the multiyear funding plan framework...

PD81: Strategic Plan 2014: The general objectives of the Strategic Plan 2014 are:

1. To consolidate the university teaching offer within its own teaching model.
2. To increase the results of excellent research.
3. To increase the relationship with businesses...

PD84: New strategic management text: INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Perspective of results and customer satisfaction
  - 0.1.1. To increase the satisfaction of all stakeholders.
  - 0.1.2. To increase the knowledge, skills and employability of students...

As observed in the above fragments, all the texts elaborated the objectives and strategic perspectives in bullet point's structure, using verbs in infinitive and with an anonymous and broad approach. However, the *strategic plan 2014*, presented a relevant change in the way the objectives and strategies were further presented. For instance, for each strategic axis, there was a brief description of the context, previous to the presentation of the strategic objectives connected with the axis that also counted with an explanatory narrative:

PD81: Strategic Plan 2014: AXIS 3: Internationalization

Globalization is a characteristic of our time. The [university] cannot only focus at local levels, while there are many universities committed to internationalization. Taking into account the environment and local needs, it is necessary to design an internationalization strategy of academic activity, research and knowledge transfer.

Strategic Objective 5: To promote the internationalization of teaching and research.

It is increasingly common to see degrees and masters being offered with an international component. So there is the need to explore and implement international joint degrees, which will increase the quality and attractiveness of our offer. With respect to research and transfer, there is the need to foster the internationalization of those emerging research groups...

As observed in the above example, between the presentation of the strategy axis and the strategic objective, a narrative was included, which contextualized the circumstances that were driven the

strategic actions and direction being taken. This example may suggest that the previous texts presented a more technical character; the language was evolved with specific specialized conceptualizations, and the description was broader. Additionally, the type of voice used was overall a combination between passive and active voice. Yet most of the documents were mainly characterized by the employment of active voice as illustrated in the following extracts:

PD68: Document basis for planning: The University Top management team is aware of the responsibility of having to anticipate changes in an increasingly competitive environment... the top management team had considered the relevance of developing a strategic management system in order to facilitate the coordination of all areas of its activities, which in the future could integrate and harmonize in a sustained way diverse improvement initiatives...

PD81: Strategic plan 2014: ... the [University] is committed to the promotion of international mobility, which shall be formalized in a multilingual plan...

Also, some fragments denoted that yet, the passive voice was extensively used when describing some actions being undertaking:

PD68: Document basis for planning: To carry out this purpose, a program agreement has been designed...

PD84: new strategic management text: ...four strategic maps had been elaborated, which tried to detail the major strategic issues in the university different areas as well as the level of institutional leadership... For each area of activity it had also been defined strategic objectives, which were appropriately distributed and weighted according to the perspectives, aiming at measuring the organization key aspects...

On the other hand, the strong intentionality of the texts, specially the text relate to the revision version of the strategic management system, was visualized with the extensive use of verbs in future tense and expressions that emphasized “it would be necessary...”:

PD84: New strategic management document: ...it would be necessary to foster engagement...it would be necessary to foster higher alignment with social and cultural changes as the main sources of innovation...it should also be necessary to explore the possibility of programs that would involve...

The content analysis suggests that the texts were highly technical in their characterization, yet presenting some changes on the elaboration of the latest strategic plan document, introducing a more narrative like description of the objectives and strategic axis. The language was mostly characterized by the use of active voice, still, combined also with a passive description, which added a more ambiguous character to the texts.

4.2.2.3. *The repertoire of Strategic Practices and their enabling or constraining attributes*

As in case 1, this part elaborates on the results of the types of practices narrated by top and middle managers. Both case 2 and case 3 follows the same procedures when unfolding the analysis, as such I will solely focus in describing the results. Accordingly, the academic managers have mentioned around twenty different set of practices, as can be observed in the figure beneath:

**Figure 28. Patterns of practices mentioned by academic managers (Case 2)**

Practices mentions by TM		Practices mentioned by MM	
Productive conversation spaces	Information system	Informal conversations	Internal initiatives benchmarking
Briefings	Management by objectives	Planning monitoring	Strategy negotiation with units
Committees	Personalized attention	Standard Committees	Management by objectives
General board meetings	Strategy internal planning negotiation with units	Monographic and operational meetings	University Cloister meetings
Monographic meetings	Catalogue of indicators		School Board meetings
Consultancy	Training		
Direct face-to-face contacts	Informative rounds		
BSC			

Source: Own elaboration

When unfolding these practices in two set of standardized and singularized and its derived sub-categories, the outline of the practices in this case was as follows:

**Figure 29. Repertoire of Standardized and Singularized Practices (Case 2)**

Standardized practices			Singularized Practices	
Cyclical	Supportive	Episodic	Unruled	Regulated
Committees	Catalogue of indicators	Consultancy	Productive conversation spaces	Committees
General board meetings	Information system	Training	Briefings	Monographic and operational meetings
Planning cycle strategy internal negotiation	BSC		Personalized attention	Internal initiatives benchmarking
University Cloister meetings	Management by objectives		Informal conversations	School Board meetings
Planning follow-up			Direct face-to-face contacts	
			Informative rounds	

Source: Own elaboration

Furthermore, when exploring both middle and top academic manager’s positive and negative comments about the previous set of practices; it was possible to come up with the network that integrated concurrent perceptios of practices (see appendix 10A). The convergence of narratives suggested a positive convergence on both sets of standardized and singularized practices. Going through the directed quotations of academic managers about these different practices, it was

possible to note that they were mainly descriptive and the perceptions arising from it were mostly associated with neutral or affirmative experiences. For instance, most of the standardized practices (e.g. general board meetings, planning monitoring, standard committees) were related to positive views. This may be due to a concurrent aspect being suggested that had to do with organizational culture and size:

PD39: VCRCT-REG-M6: ...basically meetings with departments and institutes, this is possible due to the university size, you can meet with all the heads of departments and institutes, they are many but still acceptable, therefore you can communicate with them directly ...

PD40: VCRECT-REG-F1: ...you cannot suddenly impose things, it is very difficult, thus, you have trainings, personalized attention, monographic meetings, I say to them you can call me when you want something and I will meet personally with the director or head, I also attend the meetings they hold at the units, all these sort of things is possible due to the institutional size, because if it was large, then you won't have this proximity....

PD41: HEAD-SCH-REG-M4: we are also all represented in the council of government, there we get to know things and collaborate, that is, information flows... the model seems to be consistent, but of course this model in a large university is unthinkable, because not all the deans and other middle managers could assist the university council of government, ..., in this sense it is more difficult to interact...

PD36: HEAD-DPT-REG-M3: I believe that this university, which has an intermediate size, I would even say, that it is small, I think this is positive, and in this sense, management is more efficient than in a larger university, where it is difficult to get to know everything and put all together in one context ...

The negative perceptions were mainly associated with the dynamics of strategy internal planning negotiation with the units and also with some references to the format of trainings. Concerning the strategy negotiation with units, the perceptions from top managers were that the middle managers when coming to negotiate the unit's objectives, they often set it at very bottom levels in order to assure that the objectives would be met. On the other hand, one middle manager stressed that this negotiation had much more to do with politics, which was seen to be strongly statistics embedded:

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: ...when they [middle managers] come to negotiate the objectives, they used to set it at a lower rate; it is when you realize that it comprised a negotiation strategy. Thus, I marked guidelines and said, by showing them their indicator and the university average indicators, ok, if you're in the middle, what I want is that you come closer, if you are above the average, than I want you to keep it....

PD34: HEAD-DEPT-REG-M2: it is a political concern, because the data is what matters most.... to do statistics. But beneath these statistics, we do what we feel like, or what we can do, given that they don't allow us to do most. We would do much more than what the statistics allow us... they rather set us obstacles.

With respect to trainings, one top manager put forward the problematic of most of the training formats, which in the first stage of the planning cycles (see figure 21) were conducted by specialized consultants, who employed a highly “technical” vocabulary that was not very easy to be translated and understood, depending on the different top manager’s professional backgrounds:

PD40: VCRECT-REG-F1: ...We, top management team were given training ... and when we met after the training sessions, which were many, it was hard, I told the vice-chancellor: look, sorry, but next time I'd like them to talk to me in [clear language], they tried ... I think I'm not a person who cannot understand things but I lack the basis to understand what they were talking about, because they used terminology that I hadn't heard before...

In order to dig deeply into their perceptions referring to the practices effectiveness, quotes about the academic manager’s insights in relation to the university strategy, strategy of the units, as well as observations dealing with engagement and strategy implementation were further exploited. Therefore, top managers when talking about the university strategy, acknowledged their perspectives about the strategy evolution process, denoting the several key aspects influencing positively or negatively. Regarding the university strategy making development, top managers have suggested that in the university initial planning stages (see figure 21), the process was characterized to be notably guided and conducted, where many meetings with consultants were held, as well as productive debates at different levels took place. There was a concurrent view upon the fact that the planning culture in the university was very widespread across the institution. However, this planning culture seemed to have been taken for granted, which may suggest to have contributed to the creation of an “automatic routine”.

PD39: VCRCT-REG-M6: There is a problem, which I perceived as when you hold it [planning mechanisms] too many years, and keep those economic resources, then people move exclusively by the economic resource and it becomes merely a matter of let's do this and submit those papers ... it basically becomes routine ...

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: By the end we had come to an automatism, a routine. So I think it is okay to change, fostering people to say: Hey! Now what shall we do? Then again you go back to think in terms of what you want them to think, otherwise you will have a routine type of: it is strategic planning time, let's put the usual stuff and that's it...

This automatism in the dynamic of planning was suggested to have been cultivated during stage 1 and 2 of the university strategy development phases (Figure 21). In the stage 3, the planning model was reconsidered throughout the establishment of a rethinking process, which was conducted during the vice-chancellor electoral campaign that was characterized by an intensive consultation inner the university community.

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: Then we decreased time based on all the reviews done, reflected in the electoral program, it has been a very interactive process, with many meetings, then there was a sense of what the university community wanted... So we elaborated a much simple document, a document for communication....

One relevant change being discussed was the need to enhance the communication potential of the plan, which was suggested to have been overly technical and complicated, resulting in a document difficult to be communicated, therefore, the reconsideration process involved the simplification of the concepts and planning related information:

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: ...changes concerning the system were associated with trying to better disseminate the strategic plan, because those two people who were leading the project used to expose the strategic plan and people really didn't understand concepts such as Kaplan and Norton, strategic maps, that is, although it was a very sophisticated document from a technical standpoint, it wasn't a good communication tool. Then we have considered that this [Kaplan and Norton, etc.] didn't need to be communicated, those elements were the basis, we knew that it held the strategic management model, however there was a need to elaborate a document for communication, which people could understand...

Likewise, the determination of giving greater visibility to the strategy within the institutional framework was also another important change being introduced into the planning dynamic. This was done by appointing a Pro-vice-chancellor responsible of the university strategy, contrasting it's historically dominance by a technical office:

PD40: VCRECT-REG-F1: ... during the last office term, there was a pro-vice chancellor in charge of planning issues and strategic direction, however the strategic planning was handed to a group of technicians, that is, it was carried out, but it felt like being a bit sloppy, no important progress was made, indeed the internal planning dynamic was conducted every two years, conversation were held with departments, but as this process were basically left in the hands of technical staff, there wasn't much political will in fostering its relevance.... Now I think we have taken a step further, the current pro-vice chancellor has boost this dynamic, we have aligned policies, I think that's important, so we work a lot as a team...

These changes corresponded to the internal dynamics, however great concern during the planning process restatement was also put on the problematic of the public funding system, which had been suggested as one aspect that was limiting and constraining the pace of the planning. The financial autonomy was suggested as being a key aspect in the strategy development process, due to the fact that political autonomy without financial autonomy was considered as being worthless:

PD39: VCRCT-REG-M6: ...we have our own resources, by being a small university we can better control the finances, but nowadays the government owes us funding from March and April and May, and of course, there comes a time ... when the priority is to meet the payroll, and of course, that in terms of liquidity, in terms of the budget, this year 2012, obviously there was an approved budget cuts, but we have to revise it at any time for further cuts, of course we know nothing of the possible budget for 2013, then

this economic situation totally restricts a strategic plan or strategic lines, or whatever you might call it, ...we cannot do it, not because you do not motivate people, ... it is only to implement actions that impact good results ....at the end you know that political autonomy is a bit vague words if you don't have financial autonomy...

Additionally, during the stage 3 (see figure 21) of the university planning, the top management team decided on promoting a higher alignment of the institutional strategy with the current management team, which has been done by setting up a time horizon to the strategy document. This change reflects the concern of the top management in giving more authority to the strategy document, due to the fact that the university counted with a strategy document that served as a reference basis; however, it was not framed under any management team leadership. As such, with these changes, the top management team intended to reverberate the current management team perspectives, which was still embedded in the university vision, however introducing a finer equilibrium between the short term (top management program) and long term (university vision):

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: ...it begins in 2000, in 2009 it is revised and reissued, but there wasn't an end, therefore, the university has a vice-chancellor electoral mandate, comprised of four years, and we understood that he/she must develop his/her program, so we said, let's foresee it to 2014, then obviously there are policies that go far beyond what is a strategic plan, but the strategic plan belongs to a team, then we understood that we should narrow it down ...

Contrasting these narratives of top managers with the middle managers perceptions, one key aspect suggested by middle managers when asking them to talk about the university strategy, was the fact that the functioning of the university and the knowledge of the institutional strategy process were more visible when holding managerial positions. This aspect emphasized the complexity of the non-professionalized model of governance, that on the one hand, there was the problematic of assuming a management position without the correct knowledge of the university functioning, and on the other, there was the concern of implicating the university community in the strategy development process, which may result in an intricate process, due to the fact that the benefits of the practice of strategy planning efforts were not always well known.

PD41: HEAD-SCH-REG-M4: ...Since I'm involved with management tasks I got to know better the strategic plan, because when you do research or teaching we are not very receptive to this kind of initiatives ....

PD58: DEAN-REG-F1: ...I had always been a member of the faculty and the university boards, but the information that used to reached me, I wasn't really looking for. I only put attention in certain things when I needed it... I gained some knowledge about the operation and strategy of the university at the time I assumed a management position.... and I'm delighted with this privileged position, because it allowed me to have an overview of things I never had before...



Overall, the narratives of middle managers referring to the university strategy were both a mixture of neutral, negative and positive perceptions; nevertheless most of it was characterized as suggesting an outright recognition. Yet, one of the middle managers interviewee was more critical when expressing his vision on the university strategy development, who suggested that the university for many years had been working with strategic management and planning practices, and despite efforts to improve the process, there was the impression that it resulted very complex to effectively generate implication. The criticism was mostly associated with the normative aspect of the planning practice, which was prompted as being restrictive to the compliance of funding regulations or budget distribution, confined to reactive actions and conditioned by the local government public funding schemes:

PD34: EAD-DEPT-REG-M2: Then I'm doing things I know I'll have to change, because in order to implement them it depends on decisions there are to be taken two months later. Thus, I've to lie...And you get used to lie, to fill in fake stuff... Then the things that are established not always get done... you try to do it more or less, but there is bureaucratic type of things that aren't really met ... now the new top team have changed something and have tried to do it more holistic. But as the Government is committed to set very specific targets (and the university wants to implement it similarly), I honestly don't believe in this. Maybe I'm wrong, but these specific indicators with numbers, I can put the number and then afterwards I really do what I want. I don't see it inspiring...

Additionally, the interviewee further suggested that these dynamics were characterized by a control driven focus, which emphasis was put upon controlling mechanisms rather than concentrating upon results:

PD34: HEAD-DEPT-REG-M2: I don't see it as strategy, I see it more as an intention of implementing a management trend not so based on the fulfilment of the objectives, but standardized, systematized, and as an operational task of control...

In addition to, other negative perception was associated with the increasingly complexity in the budget management set in the planning negotiation dynamic as well as in the efficiency of the actual university structure functioning. The first concern was associated with the fact that due to the change in the way the management of the budget was to be conducted, it seems that the usual variables concepts were changed, and the new dynamic was yet to be consolidated, aspect that was generating uncertainty upon the correct procedures. The latter aspect was related to the growing dynamic observed within the university, which led to the concern of the supporting services capacity overload, due to the fact that the supporting services structures seemed to be growing smaller for the actual university demands, which might suggest that if the university keeps growing in its current path, organizational redistribution might be needed:

PD37: DEAN-REG-F3: ...We have had huge problems with the budget, now to manage the budget is much more complicated than last year, but hopefully it can be solved soon ... I think we're at a point that if we grow a little more, we have to reconsider the service support shared between the various departments and centres, in the sense that sometimes these services didn't meet our internal demands, and in this sense it is sometimes difficult...

One aspect that was brought forward by an interviewee as a negative impact of strategic planning practices was the complex task of counterbalancing the micro (units) and macro (institution) strategies with the politics at the system level. It has been suggested that there were pressures based on policies from government level that were being translated into institutional needs in order to give responses (i.e. equilibrium between academic and management tasks), which consequently might create higher levels of workloads that sometimes may not ensure a correct balance between the different needs (i.e. individual, unit and institution):

PD38: HEAD-DPT-REG-M1: when we talk about strategic plan, we need to think that there are three basic elements: the faculty, of course, at the individual, micro level I mean, who need to be involved, the institutional level, and pay attention, the system level as well. What do I mean? Nowadays, when within 10 minutes there is a meeting where I have to lay off five people in the department, associated professors of course, but this kind of things aren't pleasant, when we're informed by the Regional Government body about the Law Decree... while we've to worry about it, we're at the same time being constantly bombarded with tasks, you cannot imagine at this university, what's happening and this is the negative part of the strategic plan.

All-embracing, the most positive perceptions of middle academic managers were associated with the recognition of a professionalizing management and quality concerns, which focuses was on the development of a social integration with the territory, the participative approach to strategy making, and the consolidation of the planning by objectives culture:

PD38: HEAD-DPT-REG-M1: ...there was resistance at the beginnings, but I do think it has been consolidated... So the idea is, this social integration that we worked hard, we tried to work it long enough, it is very important to bear in mind in order to understand how we've changed the academic mindset, In fact, many companies and universities came to see what we've done with the strategic plan...

PD36: HEAD-DPT-UJI-M3: ...This University has been fairly well managed, both strategically and economically... It is true, we all have economic difficulties ... but from what I've heard, we're not the worst in this matter, and just because it has been well managed economically and also I think there have been professional teams managing the university various aspects...

Another aspect being stressed was the importance of promoting a finer integration of the society participation in the university strategy. The narratives foresaw that it could be ensured by attributing more relevance to the university social council, however assuring that this council would not be used as a political instrument, problematic that prompted the need of a more clear definition of the social council roles:

PD38: HEAD-DPT-UJI-M: ...the University Social Council has been blurred, and furthermore the governing board, because most of our bodies are technical, that's a mistake, I think, ... then the idea is that you've to strongly foster the culture of participation, dialogue and deliberation, the idea of thinking together ... here there has been given more responsibilities to the Social Council than what it previously had, and both business persons and politicians have strongly come to integrate the Social Council...the academic representativeness has decreased importantly...Then the link with society which was the primarily function of the Social Council has been transformed into a political tool...

In complementing the academic manager's perspectives upon the university strategy, issues of strategy implementation and involvement were exploited in their narratives. As such, convergent issues could be observed in both narratives referring to key aspects of the engagement problematic. On the one hand, top managers noted the importance of providing mechanisms for the integration of different organizational levels, but also emphasized the problematic of achieving the implication of distinct collectives, particularly faculty staff, who often are distressed about the bureaucracy workload:

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: ...I think we should go for what is realistic...ok, when you see in books that planning, culture, yes perfect! ...but when you come to the practice I think you've to enable mechanisms to guide them at least a little, although not 100%, some units are at 10%, some at 50% and others at 100%...

PD40: VCRECT-REG-F1: ...by the end a professor says: the Minister, the government, the system are telling me that I've to do research, then I do it. I'll give my classes and try to do it good, but don't ask me to fill in all these papers!

Moreover, specifically referring to implementation issues, there were two aspects being suggested by top managers, on the one hand there was the consideration that the strategic planning practices have been assumed with different degrees throughout the institution, and on the other, with some complimentary and a bit contradictory character to the previous aspect, it was suggested that the university strategy was implemented, yet it was seldom known:

PD40: VCRECT-REG-F1: it is assumed, all departments do it, some will meet the objectives better than others, but everyone assumes that if they don't do it, they aren't doing a key aspect of the university...nowadays I think if you asked in the different departments, nobody would question doing the strategic plan, on the contrary, they would think that when you want to bring forward some activity or prioritize a goal, or perform some types of actions..., strategic plan is good, because it comprises some money, which is not much, we never deal with large amounts of money, but it is just a little recognition because you've launched something special and this aspect, the departments do appreciate...

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: in the university services, by how the plan was implemented, they indeed knew the institutional objectives, the existence of the strategic plan, but we were surprised to learn that in the departments and centres, they didn't know it, that is, if you asked what were the university strategic objectives, or if the university had a strategic plan, we found that it was difficult to say.

This latter aspect was also mentioned by middle managers who emphasized that it was difficult to achieve a homogeneous involvement, and that the strategy results were suggested to not be sufficiently socialized.

PD34: HEAD-DEPT-REG-M2: Many times you are given bureaucratic tasks. The university sends you information from a database, which you feel that it is done only to justify that this service exists. You don't really see how it serves you. You don't really get to see why...

PD36: HEAD-DPT-REG-M3: ...Well, we are improving things overtime, particularly concerning the dissemination issue and people involvement, definitely it is difficult...

PD41: HEAD-SCH-REG-M4: I'm sure there's a strategic plan, which is accessible, however half of the faculty haven't read it nor knows it. It is very difficult to thrive when the faculty who should be involved don't know it...

On the whole, I have merged together the narratives of top and middle academic managers about the university strategy, strategy implementation and engagement problematic, resulting in the elaboration of five categories that described the university strategizing behaviours dynamic: i) normative, ii) control driven, iii) routine driven, iv) participatory driven and, v) disruptive driven (see appendix 10B).

These different perspectives suggested a close interrelationship between the categories, which displays the strategy making development process evolution within the university. On the one hand, academic middle managers talked about a high concern upon the strategy making being *participatory driven*, which was facilitated by the institutional size being reduced, allowing good communication flows. Also this participative approach has been assumed and promoted by different top management teams over the long university tradition of planning culture, which may suggest that it did not experience important ruptures in its model, it also may suggest that the organizational structure did not count with important power struggles.

However, another set of category that was antagonist comparing to this previous perspective, highlighted both by top and middle managers, put forth the *routine driven* strategy making, that took for granted the management by objectives and strategy negotiation with the units, pushing the participatory approach to an automatism and routinely process that was suggested to be followed without much space for strategic thinking. The routine driven was denoted to be a reflection of strategy making being more technical than strategic in its nature, which might be consequence of a task that was mostly in charge of a technical team.

Parallel to this routine driven perspective, two set of categories were also elaborated: *control and normative driven*, that stressed out on the one hand, the economical dependency on public

funding, which may restrict the strategy development pace, and on the other, this dependency might have led to a planning practice dynamic that put pressures on objectives and controlling results, which combined with the automatism of filling in objectives and indicators, may ended up in not socializing the real benefits of the planning practices.

Therefore, the top manager's narratives brought forward that although the university did not present important power struggles, there was a need to give more fresh air into the long-lasting planning culture, in order to counteract the discouraged and mechanized approach to planning that was endured on the last years. Thus the *disruptive driven* perspective to strategy making was introduced in the third stage of planning (figure 21), which brought forward changes in the way the strategy practices were conducted as being previously mentioned. These changes were characterized in great part by giving more visibility to the university strategy, by clear framing it under a specific time horizon, by assuring more symmetry between the long and short time strategic visions, as well as assuming a more institutional responsibility by appointing a pro-vice chancellor in charge of the strategy planning practice, disrupting the technical tradition that has been at place so far.

#### 4.2.2.4. *Engagement behaviours associated with strategy texts uses.*

When talking about the strategy texts, top managers narrated the elaboration process, the function of the documents, as well as perspectives concerning the unit's strategy development, highlighting issues referring to the strategy text components (i.e. implementation tools, funding aspects, communication channels, etc.). Furthermore, middle managers when talking about strategy texts at both levels - micro and macro, also stressed out the strategy text function, elaboration dynamics, assessment perspectives, as well as the role of the strategists.

Regarding the function of the strategy texts, top managers mentioned it as being a *persuasion tool*; *organization and prioritization tool*, or a *negotiation tool*. Likewise, middle managers emphasized it as *persuasion tool*; *guidance tool*; *reflection tool*; *confined management tool* and or a *bureaucratic tool* (see Appendix 10C). The convergence of the narratives suggested that most of the text functions categories had to do with positive perspectives of the text usage, which were associated with practical uses that put forward some of its purposes. From one set of perspectives, texts were suggested as a useful tool for prioritize the activities and persuade the group on taking part in the activities embedded in it.

This purpose was strictly connected with the *organization and prioritization* as well as with the *guidance* functions. Both of these functions were also connected with the *reflection exercise* suggested as being a key aspect of the strategy text functions, which led to provide guidance, throughout the organization and prioritization of activities and objectives. On a different set of perspectives, the categories of *negotiation and confined management* tool that had to do with more neutral experiences by middle managers were mostly appreciated as tactical activities in setting objectives, driven by economic motivation.

These two text functions categories were suggested to be related with the development of the automatism routine in the university strategizing practices. The most negative experiences narrated by the middle managers concerning the text functions led to categorizing it as a *bureaucratic tool*, which was associated with the university current context, where the division between teaching, research and management activities was suggested to not be well balanced, leading to the increase in the sense of work overload. This perspective led to suggest that the planning practices were also being seen as bureaucratic assignments rather than a relevant and necessary institutional management process.

Top managers talked about the elaboration process of the strategy document, mostly referring to the text that corresponded to the third stage planning (figure 21). The elaboration of the text was the result of a thorough review on the continuity of the planning model, which was done by applying in-depth interviews with all the academic middle managers. Also, there was joint work between the pro-vice chancellors team in defining the sectoral policies:

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: ...I wanted to know what middle managers thought of the strategic management system, whether it was effective, what was the strengths, its weaknesses, etc... To get to know their perceptions...Based on the conclusions of this study, we've elaborated a much simpler document, with emphasis on the communication aspect. Concerning the implementation issue, the main change in departments, centres and institutes was the introduction of a fixed catalogue of indicators. On doing it we asked ourselves, how the departments are involved? The departments, in our view, are teaching providers, also research and then also obviously have issues of human resource management, etc... Then based on this established indicators, also aligning it with an element that for us was essential, the multi-year funding plan of the Generalitat of Valencia.... So that was basically the fundamental changes.

PD39: VCRCT-REG-M6: yes, the whole model was reconsidered. We've intervened, not so much in the overall design, because it has to be done by a specialist, but we've participated in each of our fields, through revising things...

According to the perspectives of the middle managers, these changes introduced were seen as been more positive, most of them have stressed that with this revision procedure, the process

was simplified, which provided a feeling of more flexibility, specifically concerning the adaptability feature in the management of the budget associated with the strategic plan. However, one drawback being suggested had to do with the decreased in the economic motivation, derived by the continued budget cuts designated to the strategic plans:

PD36: HEAD-DPT-REG-M3: ...the budget dynamic has changed, now you don't establish a budget proposal separating it per action, it is rather like a regular budget of the department, there is an amount that you distribute in the same chapters than any other department budget... but you don't associate it to specific actions, for instance if you have three actions you could theoretically devote all the money in one action, in this sense it is much more flexible.

PD38: HEAD-DPT-REG-M1: I think it is a good instrument ... they're trying to simplify it, because before we had, for example, an action, an indicator, a target, and it was dropped down into four lines and we had the acronyms and after all this complication at the end it was only 200 Euros for one thing you had to spend two hours to figure out what it was, and now it is different. This year we were given a global amount associated to the department's strategic plan, only by defining a series of actions, however the department board decides where the money goes, I think that has been good...

PD41: HEAD-SCH-REG-M4: ...each year is decreasing. In the first two years it decreased 7%, this year 10%, but well, that is the current reality, with less money we've to do the same actions, and achieve the same results...

On the other hand, academic managers when talking about the process of elaboration of the strategy document mentioned the dynamics of the strategizing at the units. One interviewee suggested how this process was characterized in the past decade:

PD36: HEAD-DPT-REG-M3: ...strategic planning started in 2000, then it is done biannually, then the heads of the units have been formulating various strategic plans and actually it doesn't have to fit with the office term, for instance, we can assume the management position and it might coincides with the ongoing implementation of the strategic plan... there has been a continuity, all managers worked similarly since the strategic plans dynamics started, by assuming the continuation of the ongoing strategic plan and formulating the one corresponding to the new biennium, following more or less the same method...

The previous quote illustrates the strategy making process in the framework of the strategy negotiation with the units that was suggested to have led to the automatization and routine driven perspective previously discussed. Therefore, the disruptive change perspective suggested a modification in this dynamic, specifically on the way the goals were being set:

PD41: ...what happened now? usually when there is a history of the previous targets being achieved, then you used it, but now there has been this change in the past two years, and setting the targets depend on what one expects to reach rather than base it on your historical database...we in our plan, we take the indicators we want, depending on the action and we propose a goal. Then we formalize a strategic plan for the biennium and it is signed by the pro-vice chancellor and the unit's heads, and then we've to comply with it and monitor the targets.

The preparation and elaboration of the strategy text in different units were suggested to be open and participative, some units implicated different responsible of areas, in the case of one faculty, the vice-deans were involved in order to set goals priorities referring to the organization of the master levels degrees offer. On the other hand, the elaboration of the goals settings was open to the overall community, especially for gathering ideas, yet the participation rates were often not very successful.

Also there was in some cases a working consensus among the professors, administration and service staff and management team when setting the strategic planning goals. On the contrary, there was also an isolated work of a head of department, involving only the secretary of the unit. The following quotes illustrate the convergence of the dynamics of the strategizing practices taking place at the units:

PD36: HEAD-DPT-REG-M3: ...we always try to foster it [strategy text elaboration] to be as participatory as possible, that is, it is always open, when we're in the elaboration process,...in defining the actions it is always open, then when it's time to formulate new actions, anyone who wants to share ideas is welcome, but overall this has scanty effect, that is, theoretically the process is open, however it is very difficult to gather ideas...

PD35: HEAD-DPT-REG-F2: we are given the strategic lines, the indicators which are to be used throughout the university, all departments and centres, etc., thus we elaborate our own indicators based on the strategic lines of the [University], and it derived from consensus and agreement carried out amongst all the faculty and services representatives of the department.

PD37: DEAN-REG-F3: ...we have divided what each vice-deans office has done, what was the standard tasks of the dean office and what was more general and transversal. The dean team office is composed of three people, who have designed a series of goals with a transversal character, which could be used by the whole faculty, from the point of view of the masters and the degrees, which is one of the changes that have occurred this year, the strategic plan had also covered the level of the Masters...

PD35: HEAD-DPT-REG-F2: we, professors of the department, elaborated a draft of the actions for each indicators established by the pro-vice chancellor of strategic planning and quality office, which has been approved by the Governing Council of the University, and once these drafts were done, the technical staff revised it, and furthermore it was approved by the department council and signed by the pro-vice chancellor...

PD34: HEAD-DEPT-REG-M2: Every two years you have the strategic plan. We get together, we are informed about our target rate achievements and then we negotiate new targets. Then we take the proposal to the department council, people don't usually say anything, because they trust in what the secretary and myself do. Then we meet with the pro-vice chancellor and we come to an agreement with the council. We agree that there is an amount of money to do certain things ... concerning the other stuff, people don't really pay attention...

With reference to the issue of implementation and alignment, middle managers talked about the use of the catalogue of indicators as the main tool that foresaw alignment with the institutional objectives:



PD35: HEAD-DPT-REG-F2: ...we saw what we could do, and basically all indicators were relevant to establish the actions and there were always some specific actions that we could try to establish....

PD36: HEAD-DPT-REG-M3:...the catalogue [indicators] is shared by all and everyone can add specific indicators, but usually few new indicators are added, ...we all use more or less the same indicators,...there are a series of meetings, we are given a period to elaborate the strategic plan, then we send a proposal to the pro-vice chancellor, and furthermore we hold a meeting to discuss the proposal, then some details can be changed and a final proposal is elaborated and further validated by the department council, which is going to be implemented during the next two years. And at the end of each period, we analyze the results; we receive the results that have been obtained for each indicator, and what it means in terms of the economic impact of the strategic plan towards the next year, etc....

On this line top managers talked about tool, mechanisms and other supporting instruments that were used in the task of implementing and aligning the institutional strategy. One key aspect being suggested was the directed face-to-face contact and the proximity between the Rectorate and the middle managers, as well as the *management by talking policy* that was suggested as assuring more visibility of the convergent objectives.

PD40: VCRECT-REG-F1: ...I don't know how many times the academic pro-vice chancellor sees the heads of departments, definitely many times, and each time they have a problem, they go directly to the pro-vice chancellor, that is, there isn't excessive problems due to the university proximity, by counting with a single campus, it helps a lot, and then the university size also allows us to keep the Rectorate open...to maintain direct face-to-face contact with them, to talk, to explain, to talk again, to explain again, to gain the trust of someone within the department who can understand better, and further work this out within the department...

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: everyone knows the strategic objectives... well, this isn't only the strategic plan merit, but merit of a policy, since we have assumed the top management, we've been trying to align all the objectives of the multiannual funding plan ... in two years, all departments are lining up, this is the result of much work being done on dissemination, putting emphasis on what was important. So I think this is being effective, not specifically the plan, but everything. But with the Plan, you make sure that all departmental councils know that these goals are important. So this is very positive.

When exploring strategizing practices both top and middle managers highlighted handicaps influencing in the development of strategizing practices at the institution. Combining both narratives of top and middle managers, it was possible to come up with seven main categories of strategizing handicaps that may hinder the strategy making process at the institution (see Appendix 10D). The convergence of narratives allowed observing that it seemed the mayor concerns of academic managers were mostly related to political and managerial handicaps, followed by aspects of structures and change management, specifically related to managing different mindsets.

The managerial and political handicaps were found to be strictly connected, the *technical driven strategizing* practices that have been suggested to have influenced in the development of the automatism in strategic planning routine, was also associated with the perspective of limited definition of institutional responsibilities, which might be aggravated by problems bounded with the political context of instability in policies and restrictive autonomy in economical matters.

The relevant aspect of the *decision-making* was related also to the automatism in planning practices that seemed not to have allowed learning generation from the planning process, which also ought to present a closer connection with the scepticism of planning benefits associated with the mindset handicaps. The drawbacks from the *organizational structures* were associated with the problematic of the bureaucratic feeling of workloads derived from the divisions of academic and management tasks, exasperated by the deficiencies found in administrative process.

The language complexities associated with the strategic planning practices was an interesting aspect being identified, which has been suggested to be a strategy text communication potential drawback, mainly due to the vastly account of technical and specialized strategy concepts and vocabulary, ending up being quite complex to communicate.

PD38:HEAD-DPT-M1-REG: ...I agree with the university structure composed by governing council, University cloister... but well you need to define well their functions, don't make they vote, that is, don't make the University cloister to think about money and budget and later the governing council to think ideas, presumably it shouldn't be like that...

PD37: DEAN-REG-F3: see, here for example, this is what might confuse us [shows me the strategic plan balance scorecard], when the vice-deans see all these things here [indicators, targets ...] they get very nervous. Well, to visualize the relationship between action, the exactly indicator, this is planning, this is teaching, and so on... this is very difficult for people to understand, what they clear understood were the actions, so the technical staff and myself... I have advised them here in the office... if I could solve the doubt ok, if not, came in the technical person, who was very good on giving support...

PD42: VCRECT-REG-M5: ...the changes which concerned the system was related to better disseminate the strategic plan, because those two people who were leading the project exposed the strategy plan and people couldn't really understand concepts such as Kaplan and Norton, strategic maps, that is, although it was very sophisticated from a technical standpoint, as communication tool it wasn't effective, then what we've considered was, that this [specific concepts] don't need to be communicated, we knew that it was the basis of the system that held the model, but we must do a document for communication, which people could understand...

PD40-VCRECT-REG-F1: ...I think that the most important challenge we have is that who are setting the standards is outside the university, in the political, regional and national governments, and in this moment they don't seem to have...although there have been continuity in regional government concerning the political party, the economic crisis is having an important impact... there a multiannual funding plan,

which we are submitted, this plan has a fixed percentage per number of students, but also there is a percentage of the budget that comes by objectives, then for us it is very important to align our goals with those of the funding plan, and this has been a great achievement...

Concerning the strategizing enablers, it was possible to identify seven categories being narrated by both middle and top managers (see Appendices 10E and 10F). There were concurrent perspectives upon the strategizing enablers related to issues of organizational structures, communication and language aspects, as well as leadership styles. It was possible to note that the category of *organizational structure*, particularly concerned to the institution relative small and medium size, had facilitated better system agility, more possibility to build and maintain direct face-to-face contacts between top and middle management levels, as well as ensuring flexibility in monitoring actions. This organizational size aspect was closely connected with the *communication enabler category* that was reflected in an efficient flow of information.

The *language aspect* functioning as enabler was especially concerned to the problematic found in the institution, where strategy documents were found to be experienced as being very technical, and the process overly complicated due to its highly procedural and administrative nature. In order to overcome these language complexities, some issues were being narrated as providing enabling platforms in strategizing practices, such as the case of the Rectorate working with a contact interlocutor in the different units, who served as a translator of the strategy language to local instances, thus facilitating a better understanding of the different proposals being set.

PD39: VCRCT-REG-M6: So this whole issue of quality, monitoring, strategic plans, there are many people who aren't convinced, then there are people who even might be against it, but come on, there has been much continuity, all the vice-chancellors have come from the same areas, and shared same ideas, thus in this university, it hasn't taken place important power struggles...

PD40: VCRECT-REG-F1: it took a while, training were carried out for middle managers and also academic degree directors...well, what happens is that we are in a university, and things move very slowly, there are always some people who don't want to engage,...that there are issues that have nothing to do with their duties at the university, so they may resist,...also the university size, I think it is essential, at this university it is true that you can get things done more easily if you compared it to other universities...

The concurrent *aspect of leadership* on the perspective of top managers had to do with the changed needed in the automatism found in the university strategizing practices, which pointed out to a higher promotion of leadership visibility, positioning the technical people as reference for supporting the process, but also enhancing a higher institutional responsibility in the university strategy making, by appointing a specific pro-vice chancellor in charge of the institutional strategy.

On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the middle academic managers, the concern was upon specific issues, such as previous experiences of managers when assuming managerial positions, relevant consistency between management team members with the institutional objectives and idiosyncrasy, as well as scanty power struggles. This latter category had also adjacent connection with the aspect of the university *culture and identity as an enabler factor*. The university culture shared vision suggested to have allowed on the one hand a higher integration of people and on the other, the continuity in the planning framework activities, which was framed within the management style at place.

PD36: HEAD-DPT-REG-M3: ...there is enough freedom to decide exactly what types of actions you want to do, that is, no one dictates the actions, you're guided by examples, then if what you propose is reasonable, and the argumentations are also clear concerning the results you want to achieve with those proposed actions, from the pro-vice chancellor office, as I remember, when I've attended meetings to negotiate strategic plan, almost never we had to change things, on the contrary, from the input basically everything was correct, only some details needed to be adjusted and or needed further clarification, but concerning changing the actions it almost never had been necessary...

Contrasting both views of academic managers concerning the handicaps and enablers influencing positively and or negatively in the university strategizing, it was possible to draw out a network of categories of text functions and uses (see Appendix 10G). The network builds a convergence between the strategizing handicaps with the strategizing enablers, derived both from different positive, negative or neutral perspectives narrated by academic managers. Therefore, the texts functions were associated with the academic manager's views on the university strategizing practices. The result of this cross-association was the configuration of two types of strategy text usages: functional and dysfunctional. Accordingly, the *dysfunctional text usage* was more associated with the functions of the text being experienced as a bureaucratic and confined management tool. On the contrary, strategizing behaviours associated with the *functional uses* of the texts were related to the participative, disruptive, communicative and professionalizing driven strategizing behaviours, where the text function were perceived as being a tool for persuasion, guidance, reflection, negotiation, organization and prioritization.

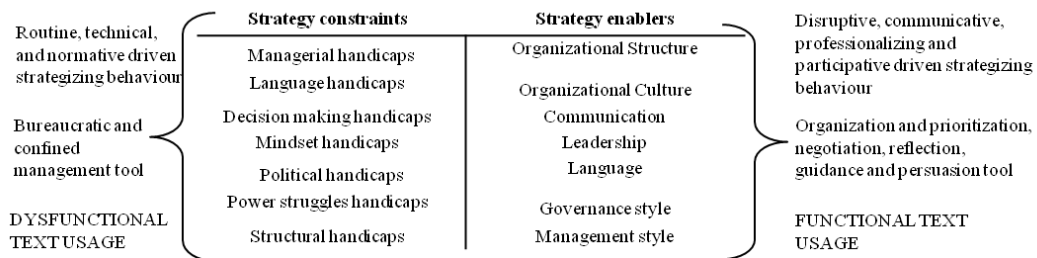
#### 4.2.2.5. Roles of strategy text in the university strategizing

Observing the two sets of practices being identified in this case (singularized and standardized) both have presented highly convergent positive experiences, being the most negative acquaintances related to specific standardized practices such as the dynamics of strategy negotiation with units, as well as some management subject trainings. One aspect that was

suggested as being key enablers was the organizational size and culture, which had favoured information flow and face-to-face direct contacts between different organizational levels. These concurrent positive and negative viewpoints of academic managers on the university strategizing practices supported the configuration of five categories of university strategizing behaviours types. Positive perceptions were related to the *participative driven* type, which overtime was restricted by the evolving of *routine driven* strategizing behaviour that was most associated with the negative academic manager’s perceptions.

In parallel to this category, two more categories were also associated with antagonistic experiences, the *normative and control driven* that were correlated with problems in economic restrictions, and regulations control mechanisms. The disruptive driven strategizing behaviour seemed to have evolved in order to counterbalance the previous mentioned negative categories standpoints. This latter category was related to more emphasis being put in the institutional responsibility, reflecting a higher visibility of the institutional strategy beyond its normative and routine aspects. Combining these different strategizing behaviours types with the narratives related to the constraints and enablers of strategy at the university, it was possible to come up one the one hand with seven categories of strategy handicaps and, on the other, with seven categories of strategizing enablers, as illustrated in the beneath figure:

**Figure 30. Concurrence of strategizing constraints and enablers with text usage (Case 2)**



Source: Own elaboration

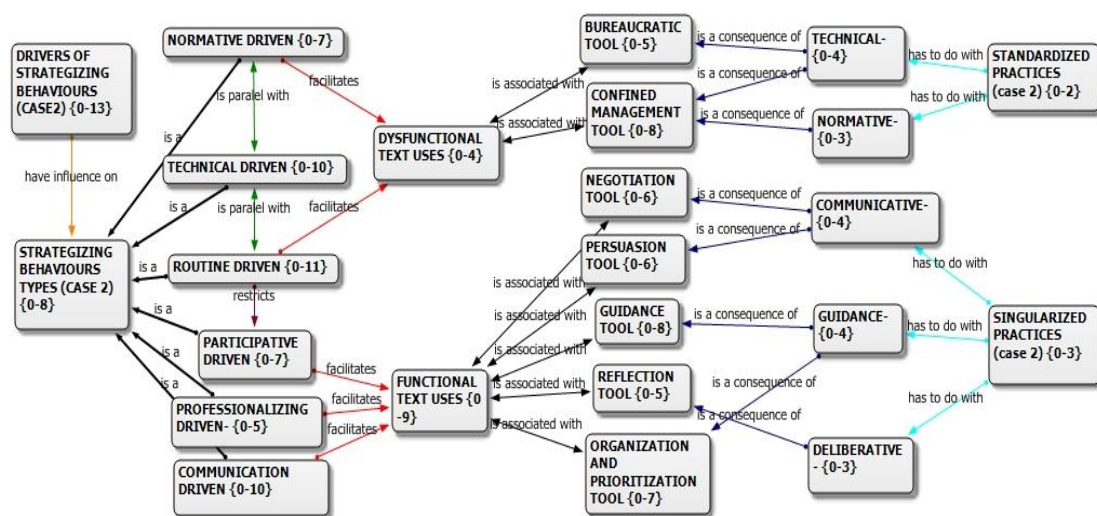
These constraints and enablers were suggested as being drivers of the university strategizing behaviours, which were associated with different functions affiliated to the strategy texts. As can be observed in the above figure, issues of managerial, decision making and structural handicaps (i.e. limited definition of responsibilities, scanty learning generation from the planning process, centralization of decisions, feeling of bureaucracy and workload) together with political and power struggles constraints (i.e. instability in the policy framework, scanty autonomy in strategic issues, or mini instances of power) were suggested as supporting the evolvement of the normative and routine strategizing types. Additionally, the language and mindset handicaps (i.e. scanty knowledge of the planning benefits, difficulties in understanding complex concepts) were

added to these problematic, bringing forward the technical driven strategizing behaviour. Altogether, these behaviours were suggested to be associated with a dysfunctional use of the texts.

On the other point perspective there were different set of enablers, which could be split into three main subjects: i) communication and language (i.e. efficient information flow, direct contacts between academic managers, translator actors); ii) organization culture and structure, and governance style (i.e. small size, scanty power struggles, productive conversation spaces, correct use of the university governance bodies); iii) leadership and management styles (i.e. continuity in the management vision and idiosyncrasy overtime, flexibility in the monitoring of the actions). These set of enablers were suggested as being drivers of the disruptive, communicative, professionalizing and participative strategizing behaviours that were indicated as comprising a platform that prompted a functional use of strategy texts.

Compiling altogether the main themes that derived from the case analysis: *drivers of strategizing behaviours* (e.g. constraints and enablers), *types of strategizing behaviours* (e.g. positive and negative acknowledged perspectives), *patterns of strategy text usage* (functional and dysfunctional) and *strategy practices purposes* (standardized and particularized practices associated to more enabling or constraints acquaintances) guided the elaboration of the main category related to the question of *what is the role of strategy text in the university strategizing*. Accordingly, five main roles were being attributed to the strategy text in strategizing activities: communicative, guidance, deliberative, technical and normative. The overall compilation of the within-case analysis findings are draw out in the beneath network:

**Figure 31. Roles of strategy texts in strategizing (Case 2)**



Source: Own elaboration

The strategy text functions that were experienced as a bureaucratic and confined management tools were associated with constraining purposes of strategy practices, suggesting that strategy texts were exercising a technical and normative roles in strategizing activities. The set of standardized practices, specifically cyclical and episodic, were connected to these roles, which were also correlated with normative, technical and routine strategizing behaviours.

On the contrary, the set of strategy text that were associated with positive and enabling strategizing experiences, suggests that the texts were experienced as being tools for organization and prioritization, negotiation, reflection, guidance and persuasion, which may comprise a platform for the emergence of strategy text roles that drive communicative, guidance and deliberative actions. These roles attributed to the strategy texts were embedded within disruptive, communicative, professionalizing and participative driven strategizing behaviours.

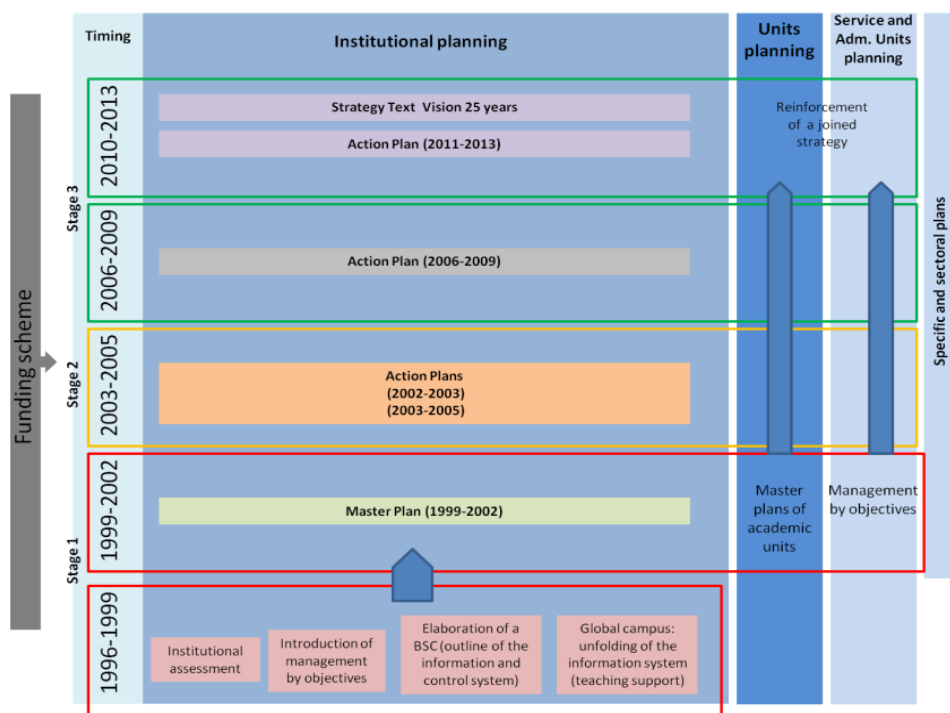
### ***4.2.3. Case 3: Research University***

#### *4.2.3.1. Background overview of the university strategy making*

As acknowledged in the previous cases, the initial meetings with the contact person helped on the task of identifying important documents related to the university strategy development, but also helped on mapping out a first sketch of the university strategy making background regarding the university structure and organizational culture. One relevant aspect mentioned by one interviewee, aspect that should be taken into account when observing the strategy development path undertaken, was the fact that the university, born from a completely new project, since its foundation, presented a clear concern respect to research, quality and internationalization. These concerns were suggested as being the major indicators guiding the development of the university, influencing in the strategic project that had been consolidated over the years.

Throughout the consolidation of the university project, different stages, which have resulted in the production of various strategy texts, took place. Mainly, as observed in figure 32, three periods or stages that coincided with different vice-chancellors mandates can be highlighted.

Figure 32. Overview of the chronologic path of strategy development (Case 3)



Source: Own elaboration

The stage 1 corresponds to the period of the first university vice-chancellor. The university was created in 1990 and its first years were characterized by a strategy carried out informally. This was a period associated with the consolidation of the university and its three campuses. At its inception, the university project idea was not aiming at bringing into being a mere repetition of what already existed by that time (i.e. reproducing the model of other universities), however the representatives of the foundational project, took the opportunity to design a completely new model of university, which emphasis focused upon the achievement of excellence both in teaching and research, embedded in a framework of rigor and quality.

As such, one of the first strategies foreseen was the concept of *differentiation*. Furthermore, this initial project design also pinpointed other strategic commitment related to the *dimension* the university should achieve, and the consolidation of its dimension should be carried out through a *sustained growth*. The context in which the university was created could be considered idyllic, due to the fact that in the late-1980s, the Catalan university system was on the border of collapse by the overcrowding of some studies and universities. Hence, it was becoming clear that the rapid growth and massification of higher education institutions adversely affected the quality of teaching.



Bearing this context in mind, the representatives of the university project creation designed a model of university that foresaw a clear and concise *differentiation strategy*. This strategically initial venture had its basis on two crucial aspects: the *university location*, with the creation of an urban campus, and the setting up of a *university model based upon a rigorous selection of teaching staff and students*. Therefore, the initial effort of the project was based on its differentiation strategy, employing an innovative approach design which necessarily should prioritize quality over quantity issues. This "different" project was titled "elitist" by other universities by that time, because it put forward a model very different from the one wanted and being conducted by the historic universities that existed by that time.

During these first years, several discussions about the general characteristics of the university model were held in the university community. It had served to create a common culture, as well as to agree upon and adopt some criteria that would be the *foundational strategic aspects* of the university project, which seemed to have guided the evolution of its strategy process overtime: the teaching model, the academic regime, curricula, assessment of students, research policies, faculty policies and relationships with society. Thus, since its inception in the early 1990s, the university has had to change some of the basic aspects of their teaching model and adapt it to ongoing changes, significantly characterized by the emergence of new information technologies. For instance, the "Global Campus" (a project that supported the interactive applications in teaching, research, management and services), became the internal communication network or intranet of the University. On the other hand, in the teaching framework model, the creation of the project "Global Classroom" accounted for a renewal of teaching methodologies.

Other very important mainstay of the university was the *research aspect*. Throughout the university first 10 years, it established its major research structure: departments and institutes, as well as a classification of research was conducted, resulting in the creation of a "map of the university research" that was completed in 1996, which had evolved overtime. As respect to teaching staff policies, from the outset, any new faculty could not be incorporated immediately; however he/she had to go through a trial period, known as the "tenure track". Over time, the faculty policy introduced and consolidated other rules; such as that the university PhD graduates could not be hired by the university.

These policies were very groundbreaking within the Spanish university system, and it might illustrate the differentiation strategy policy being carried out. Furthermore, the issue of *internationalization* has also been other important strategic issue. From the first moment of its creation, internationalization was presented at the university vision, particularly in the attraction of talent (both student and teaching staff). For instance, the percentage of teachers of foreign

nationality is higher than the average of continental European universities, as well as there exist an extensive network of international relationships and agreements.

Since its creation in 1990, the university had three vice-chancellors, and as observed previously, the first vice-chancellor was the responsible of the university project creation and also took lead of the elaboration of the university statutes in 1993, that coincides with his first statutory mandate. In 1997 vice-chancellor elections took place, with the re-election of the first vice-chancellor. The top management team, either of the first and second mandates, had built a high degree of unity from day one. It was when started a revision process of the results being achieved so far, as well as the setting up of a basis for the university development according to prospective challenges.

During this time, several initiatives of institutional and organizational innovation and improvement were conducted within the university. Some actions taking place during this period were the institutional assessment as part of the program promoted by the University Council and the Quality Assurance Agency of the Catalan University System; the introduction of management by objectives, which consisted in the definition of objectives and mechanisms for implementation and monitoring of the university support services activities; the introduction of an institutional balance scorecard, which outlined a system of information and control of the university activities and projects; as well as the creation of the “Campus Global”, which allowed the development of an information system that first started as a tool to support teaching and, overtime, was extended to the field of research, administration and management.

Meanwhile, by the end of the decade of the 1990s, it took place important transformations in the Spanish university system and the concept of the strategic planning began to gain relevance. Overall, many higher education institutions started to introduce new management tools for improving quality and innovation, designed to achieve greater effectiveness, efficiency and quality of its services. It was in this challenging context, that the university started to carry out a strategy thinking process, with the aim of reflecting upon its organizational and institutional improvements, resulting from the consolidation of its first years of existence, but with the determination of setting up a guide and a basis for adapting it to new future perspectives.

As such, during the first vice-chancellor second mandate the first strategy text of the university was elaborated. This strategy text was named “Master Plan” comprising a time horizon for the period (1999-2002). Although this “master plan” was not conceived as a proper strategic plan, however the methodology applied in its elaboration had followed the basic guidelines of a strategic planning process, and its contents format were presented and organized according to

the classical elements of a strategic plan (i.e. mission, vision, objectives, strategic lines, etc.). Therefore, with the drafting of the “Master Plan”, the top management team articulated a set of instruments, in order to support innovation initiatives and institutional and organizational improvements that started to take place in the previous period.

On a more lower and operational level, the institutional Master Plan, set the stage for the deployment of master plans of departments, research centres and institutes, in which the units defined and established their objectives and activities. On the other hand, management by objectives was a tool used to define the objectives and actions of the university services. The master plans of the academic units and the management by objectives of the administrative units also comprised a support to the implementation of the actions of the university general master plan, giving that resources, timing, bodies and levels of responsibility were being set.

By the end of his second statutory mandate, the vice-chancellor gave way to a renewal of the top-management team, due to the fact that by law he could no longer extend it. The new vice-chancellor and her team elaborated a new document that can be suggested as being the second strategy text produced and formalized by the institution. Hence, the incoming top management team elaborated a document called “Action Plan” covering two years (2002-2003), where new goals were set, yet embedding in it some of the provisions of the previous Master Plan (1999-2002).

The formalization of this action plan was the result of adjustments within the contents of the vice-chancellor electoral program, adapting it also to the new higher education context, which had coincided with the setting out of the new educational law (LOU). Once the Action Plan 2002-2003 was completed and partially implemented, the top management team set its priorities for the next biennium, formalizing the Action Plan (2003-2005). This period was determined by the need to come together in a common European higher education and research area, as well as by the formalization of a financial contract-program between the university and the Government of Catalonia for the period (2002-2005).

Furthermore, when the action plan (2002-2005) came to its end, it was, once more, vice-chancellor elections time, which ended up with another top management renewal. This period marks an inflection point in the university strategy development, which reflects the beginning of the third stage in the university planning story (see figure 32). The new top management team started to work on a new action plan, with the idea of maintaining the university leadership profile that has been present since its creation. The result of this work of reflection and analysis was the elaboration of the university third strategy text, which was also called “Action Plan”,

covering four years' timeframe (2006 -2009). The actions foreseen in the plan put forward two main goals: on the one hand maintaining the university unique profile and on the other, ensuring its sustainability, both in economic and social terms as well as respect to public interest. The actions were embedded within three strategic priority lines relate to teaching model, research and internationalization.

The top management team presented a renewal electoral campaign and the vice-chancellor extended his mandate four years more. This period was characterized by intensive reflections and discussions around the university future challenges, from which two strategy documents started to be drawn: "University Strategy 25 years" and the "Action Plan" for the period 2011-2013. The document "University Strategy 25 years" was the result of a deliberative process with the objective of consolidating the university basis facing the perspective of 2015, year which coincides with the celebration of the university 25 years.

At the same time, the complex economic situation of the public and private system facing the country, have brought the top management team to define a Plan of Sustainability for the period 2011-2014. This Plan, obliged on the one hand, the application of a serious of measures throughout the university all levels in order to ensure the economic sustainability of the university financial model, implying a comprehensive control of the accumulated deficit, and on the other, prioritized even more the future actions to be conducted. Within this context, the top management team formalized an action plan (2011-2013), which included several actions divided into four specific lines of work, embedded in a governance and management framework that have been defined within the document "Strategy 25 years".

As such, this general vision of the university strategy development, being underlined in figure 32, allows the observation of the three main stages taking place in the evolution and consolidation of the university model, contemplated in its foundational project back at the beginning of the 1990s. As in case 1 and case 2, these three main stages corresponded also to different vice-chancellor mandates. Moreover, as in case 2, some members of the top management team participated in different vice-chancellor mandates, which could have facilitated a major cohesion within the teams.

Therefore, the stage 1 can be characterized as a period when the basis for the university model consolidation was set out, with the formalization of the university Master Plan, which consisted of a relevant strategy document that has set the basis and influenced the elaboration of subsequent documents. On the other hand, the second stage corresponds to a very intense moment of adaptation of university degrees to the European Higher Education Area process,

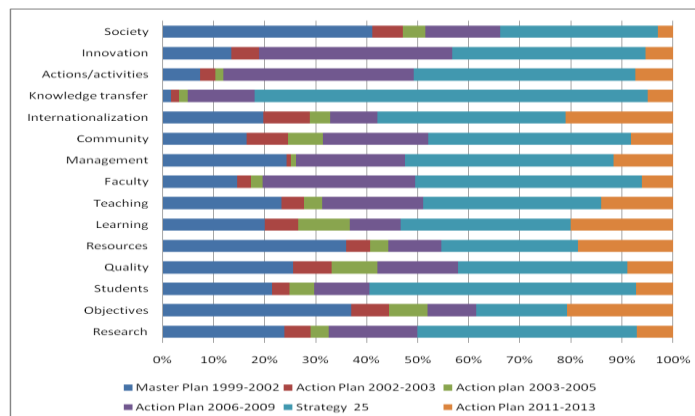
and can be considered as a blending phase in the university consolidation path. During this phase, two separated documents in formats of actions plans were elaborated and implemented. The current stage, the third one, brings forward important changes in the way the university is managed, and relevant discussions are held regarding its future challenges, framed in a complex context of the national economical crisis. During this stage, the university produced two strategy texts, the former was delivered in a format of a strategic plan (University strategy 25 years), and the latter, as an action plan ingrained in it.

Accordingly, the further analysis of the university strategy texts will concentrate in examining the six strategy texts produced by the institution along its three stages planning: the master plan, the four action plans and the document of the university strategy 25 years.

#### 4.2.3.2. University official strategy texts and its embedded discourse

The strategic core areas (e.g. research, teaching, transfer) kept a pattern across the evolution of the strategy texts over time. It is important to highlight that the Master Plan and the Strategy 25 were more extensive documents, and as can be seen in figure 33, the number of words and concepts were consequently more numerous, contrasting with the action plans, that were more brief documents, particularly the biannual actions plans, that covered the periods 2002-2003/2003-2005. Overall observing the document of the *Strategy 25*, it suggests a higher emphasis concerning *knowledge transfer* and exploitation of *internationalization strategy*, combined with keeping emphasis on research and innovation. Other feature related to the emphasis on the faculty policy is an aspect strictly associated with the strategy of attracting talent, which also might be associated with internationalization and quality constructs.

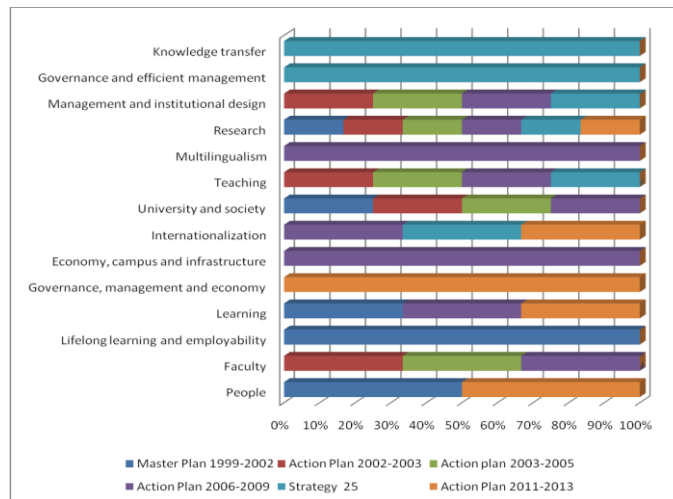
**Figure 33. Frequency word count across strategy texts (Case 3)**



Source: Own elaboration

After overlooking the most cited words across the texts, I have read through the texts and coded the strategic areas that were being addressed, and as can be seen in figure 34, it was possible to note that there was a pattern of strategic core areas, such as *research*, *teaching model*, *university and society relationship*, as well as *management and institutional design* that had kept its regularity within the texts.

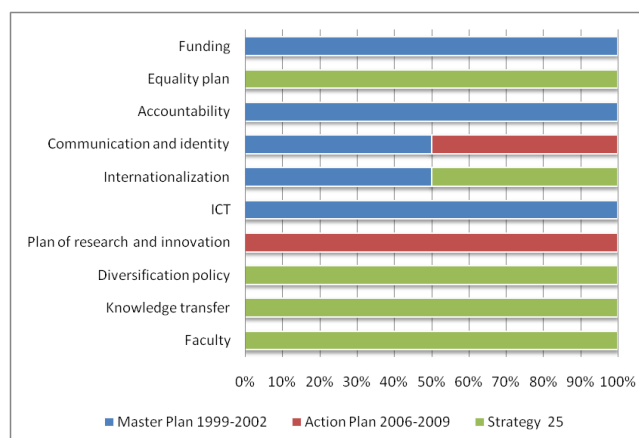
**Figure 34. Convergence of strategic areas across texts (Case 3)**



Source: Own elaboration

Predominance over issues of *knowledge transfer* and *internationalization* were observed in the recent strategy texts. Additionally, when clustering the transversal policies being contemplated within the texts, it was possible to come up with the following pattern:

**Figure 35. Convergence of transversal policies across texts (Case 3)**

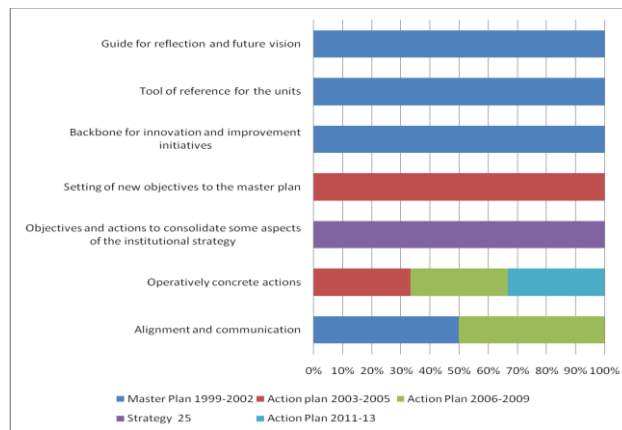


Source: Own elaboration

The above figure illustrates the strategy text in which policies were explicitly mentioned. As such it can be noted that the issue of *internationalization* had been a core concept born in mind

since the university first official strategy text, as well as concepts like *communication and identity, accountability and funding*. In another perspective, when looking for the functions of the documents being addressed within the texts themselves, it was possible to observe that the texts mentioned their main aim and functions in different forms, as observed in the following figure.

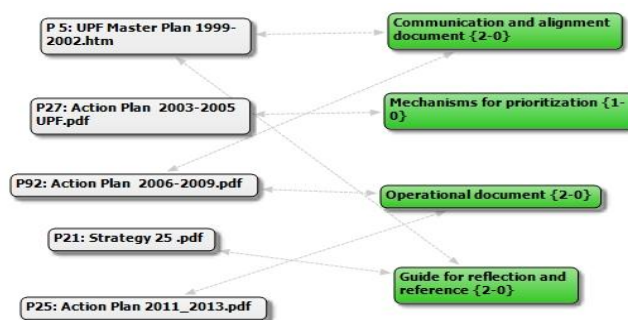
**Figure 36. Strategic text explicit functions and aims (Case 3)**



Source: Own elaboration

When clustering the considered functions of the texts being highlighted within the documents, it was possible to build four main categories related to the following functions: i) tool for communication and alignment, ii) prioritizing mechanism, iii) operational document, and iv) guide for reflection and reference. These main categories can be observed in figure 37, which illustrates the double correlated functions of the documents:

**Figure 37. Convergent functions of strategy texts (Case 3)**

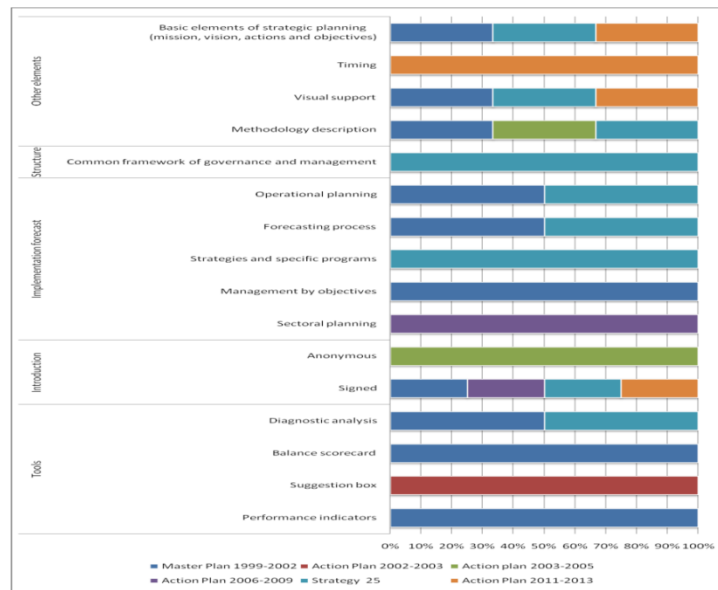


Source: Own elaboration

Exploring the main components included within the different texts, it was possible to identify relationships that can be observed in figure 38, which suggest the main divergent aspects across the texts, particularly concerning the two types of texts along the planning history of the

university: on the one hand, the *master plan* and the *strategy 25*, and on the other, the *action plans*. The former documents were more completed and detailed when describing the strategic diagnostic, the methodological path, as well as the forecasting of implementation procedures and processes. In the latter cases, the documents were more comprised of the description of strategic objectives and actions linked to it, that is, in the former case, there were more connections to the guidance and communication tool and on the latter, it fit more with the texts operative function (see figure 37).

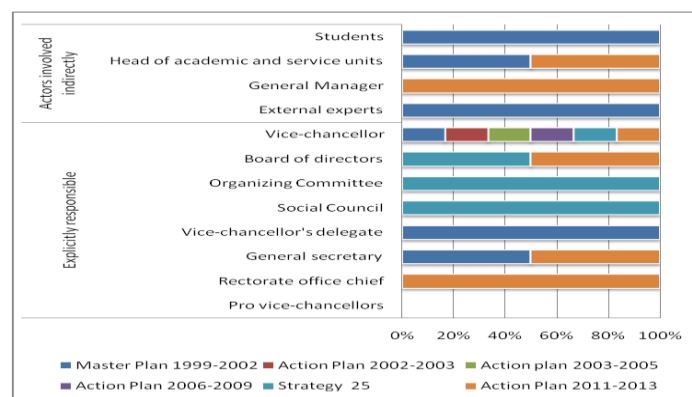
**Figure 38. Components across strategy texts (Case 3)**



Source: Own elaboration

Additionally, when examining the prospection of roles and functions of the different actors highlighted within the texts, it was possible to elaborate the following figure, which gives an account of the agents that took part directly or indirectly in the university strategy making process.

**Figure 39. Main agents involved in strategy making (Case 3)**

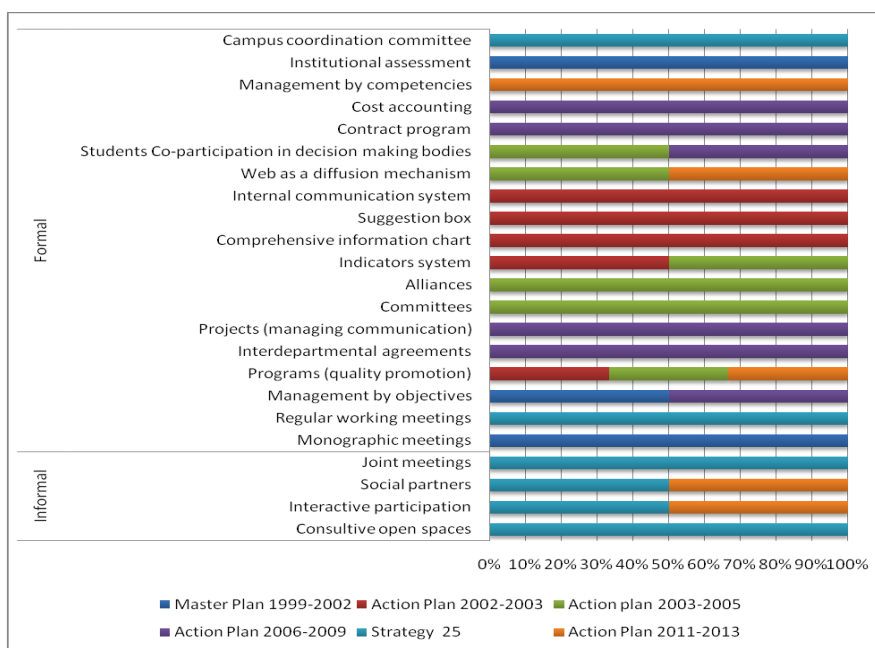


Source: Own elaboration



Given the fact that the action plans from the periods 2002 to 2009 did not have an exhaustive description of the methodology involved in the production of the documents, thus it was not possible to cluster the foreseen actors, due to the fact that scanty mentions could be found. Furthermore, when tracking down the practices that were prospected within the texts, it was possible to cluster it in two different sets: informal and formal, as appreciated beneath:

**Figure 40. Practices considered within the strategy texts (Case 3)**



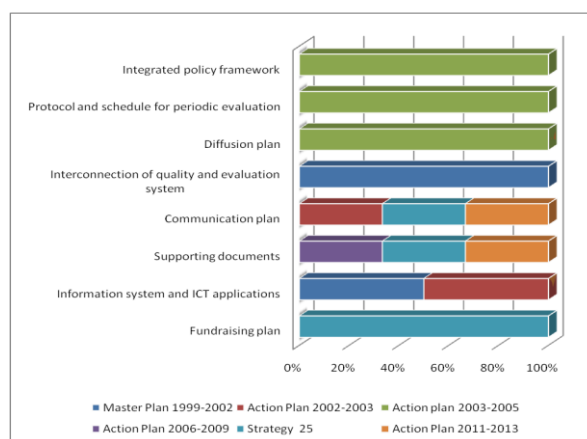
Source: Own elaboration

As it can be noted, there were a great variety in types and formats of practices being foreseen within the texts, which in some cases were clearly convergent between some of the texts as was the case of establishment of different programs, indicator system, management by objectives or the use of the Web 2.0.

Additionally, when analysing the intensity of the university planning formality that is, the consideration and the existence of other mechanisms, documents, or frameworks that supported the strategy making within the university, it was possible to come up with the relationship expressed in figure 41.

Overall, the documents acknowledged some integrated documents and mechanisms that supported the strategy making process at the university and gave an account of the formality of the process, specifically, to which extent the institution had written procedures, schedules or documents conducting and supporting the process.

**Figure 41. University planning formality (Case 3)**



Source: Own elaboration

Moreover, when exploring the *intertextuality* across the texts, it could be observed that the documents presented a comprehensive convergence between them. Only when searching for specific citations of previous texts in both Master Plan and Strategy 25 plan, it was not possible to find concrete acknowledgements, in the first case it was due to the fact that it was the first formalized strategy document, which emphasis was put on contextual elements that were driving the transformation within the university system environment. And in the latter case, it also did not strictly mentioned the previous texts, it rather presented the performance indicators that were achieved so far, using it as a starting point for prospecting a strategic vision and objectives.

PD5: Master Plan:...it have been introduced in the higher education environment new tools for management and improvement of quality and innovation in the university management and organization, designed to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness and quality of the service. In this sense, the [University] has chosen to implement improvements in its information and evaluation systems. These improvements contribute to the planning process in two ways. One the one hand it is based on the knowledge of the university development and the results of the processes and services of the institution. And on the other, it gives support to the evaluation process and results...

PD21: Strategy 25: The document is structured as follows: first the main facts and figures of the [University] are introduced in order to acknowledge in a clear and synthetic way the evolution of our institution in recent years. Then, the mission, values and goals underlying the [University] strategy 25 years are presented, and thereafter the document is divided into four main areas of actions within a common working framework.

In the case of the action plans, there were clear evidences of previous texts, as the following excerpts illustrate:

PD25: Action Plan 2011: On March 3rd, 2010 it was presented to the Governing Council of the [University] the document Strategy 25 years, the result of a deliberative process and with the objective of consolidating the foundations of the University foreseen 2015...

PD06: Action Plan 2003-2005: In 1999 the [University] elaborated the Master Plan (1999-2002), which allowed working with new tools in the field of planning... Later, in a context of change and with the vice-chancellor renewal, it was formalized an action plan for 2002-2003 that has set new goals, while developing some of the provisions of the Master Plan, it has done by adjusting to the contents of the vice-chancellor electoral program and the new university context... once the Action Plan 2002-2003 has been finished and partially implemented, the top management team set its priorities for the next biennium (Action Plan 2003-2005), a period that will be determined by the need to converge on a common European area for higher education and research and by the program contract between the [University] and the Generalitat of Catalonia (2002-2005).

In the previous quotation it was possible to observe several mentioned to other texts: the electoral program of the new vice-chancellor, the funding contract with the government authority, the previous strategy documents (master plan and the action plan 2002-2003). Also in the following extract, it can be observed citations related to the funding contract program with the government authorities, as well as the continuity in the planning policies.

PD92: Action Plan 2006: Since the development of the Master Plan (1999-2002), the [University] has maintained a constant effort of planning its activities ... formulating various action plans, including this one, scheduled for the period: 2006-2009, it is the third.... This Action Plan continues the planning policy that was embedded within the two previous action plans; the program contract signed with DURSI and the Master Plan (1999-2002) its precedents.

Furthermore, when exploring the language being employed across the documents, it was clustered according to type of voice used, as well as character and style. Comprehensively, the texts were characterized by an impersonal style, specifically, the narrative and the presentation of the objectives and strategies were elaborated using extensively verbs at the infinitive form, and also contents were structured in form of listed numbers or bullet points. The following quotations illustrate this impersonal character that followed a pattern across the texts:

PD5: Master Plan: 1.1.To develop actions aimed at constituting a diversified offer of technical education degrees....1.2.To take into account the social needs in the development of new studies...To review and expand the range of degree offers...

PD21: Strategy 25:...To position the university as a research institution with a clear mission of excellence ... to consolidate the current educational model in line with the European educational framework ... to plan and develop teaching and research in order to enhance knowledge transfer and promote innovation to the society ...

PD25: Action plan 2011: To design a range of undergraduate and postgraduate appealing offers to the social environment of the university, which combines.... To consider postgraduate education from a global perspective, covering several objectives ... To encourage collaboration with international institutions of research and teaching (students and mobility) ... To encourage collaboration with postgraduate platforms...

PD92: Action plan 2006: 19.To foster innovation, promoting activities to protect intellectual property and transfer of knowledge and technology. 19.1. To boost necessary policies for the protection of intellectual property ... 19.2. To promote the creation of technology-based companies (spin-offs) and give the university a regulatory framework that protects and makes it possible. 19.3. To create areas (incubators) for technology companies...

Along with, there were also some parts across the texts that presented more personal approach. Particularly, when the texts included an introduction section signed by the vice-chancellor or other institutional representative, it brought upon the use of verbs in first person of the singular, combined with explanations of the text finality or contextualization aspects that framed the texts, as can be noted in the following quotations:

PD5: Master Plan: I would like to emphasize that the Master Plan is designed as a flexible tool ought to be adapted to future changes. This is the reason why its profile is intentionally generic, but at the same time it allows stimulating the various academic and administrative units and all sectors of the [University] in order to define their objectives in a participatory way....

PD21: Strategy 25:...I invite you all to appropriate this roadmap and spend all our efforts to bring to fruition the intent that it embedded. If we do so, the roadmap of the [University] 25 years, will be a useful tool and it will be marked in the genetic code of the University....

Comprehensively, the texts mostly combined the use of passive and active voices. Specifically, the active voice was mainly used to highlight for instance, the finality of the document, the description of the text structure or to emphasise specific actions or objectives:

PD92: Action 2006: The Action Plan of the Management Board is a planning document that aligns and make it visible to the whole community the main objectives to be achieved in this period ... the Action Plan includes 58 objectives and 102 sub-objectives...

PD5: Master Plan: ... the [University] has chosen to implement improvements in its information and evaluation systems... The plan is also a document marked by its holistic character, due to the fact that it analyzes and contains a set of objectives derived from a comprehensive study...

PD21: Strategy 25: The strategy document [University] Strategy 25 focuses on defining a set of objectives and actions foreseen the 2015 horizon... The [University] aims to consolidate its differentiated project, which is based on the one hand in the students proximity and in its teaching quality, and on the other, in a research with large international projection... the [University], through its departments, is committed to a teaching policy, which is focused on hiring faculty, though the prioritization on the selection, recruitment and retention of international talent...

PD35: Action Plan 2011: This plan ... obliges ... to apply a series of measures at all levels to ensure the economic sustainability of the university financial model...

On the other hand, the passive voice was mostly associated with specific descriptions of actions, in which actors or responsible were mentioned in an implicit way:

PD05: Master Plan: ...new tools had been implemented for the management and quality improvement and innovation in the university management...

PD25: Action plan 2011: it was considered necessary to operationally define a number of key actions that will be carried out, its implementation will be executed and completed from now until the end of the current mandate ... the Strategy [University] 25 has been presented to the University board, which was a result of a deliberative process, with the objective of consolidating the university foundations...

Comprehensively, it was possible to suggest that the documents were highly intentional due to the great number of actions included which have used verbs in their infinitive form, and were also mostly impersonal, given the fact that those verbs were highly ambiguous.

#### 4.2.3.3. The repertoire of Strategic Practices and their enabling or constraining attributes

This section introduces the results of the analysis of the academic manager's narratives about the university strategy practices. One of the first aspects analysed was the pattern of practices being narrated by both top and middle academic managers. Figure 42 illustrates the set of practices that were considered by academic managers, which reached up to more than twenty different types of practices.

**Figure 42. Pattern of practices referred to by academic managers (Case 3)**

<b>Standardized</b>	<b>Particularized</b>
Committees	Informal networks
Reporting	Directed contact top management
Annual brainstorming meetings	Emailing
Top management meetings	Consultive meetings
Joint meetings	Sectoral meetings
Benchmarking initiatives bottom-up	Shared management
Competence map	Interlocutors in formal channels
Management by objectives	Local board meetings
Standard committees	Monographic meetings
Information management	Informal committees
University council meeting	Discussions forums

Source: Own elaboration

Applying the same analysis criteria as in case 1 and case 2, this pattern of practices was clustered into two sets of categories: *standardized* and *particularized* practices, which were further unfolded in sub-categories as illustrated in the figure bellow:

**Figure 43. Subcategories of standardized and particularized strategic practices (Case 3)**

Cyclical	Standardized		Particularized	
	Episodic	Supportive	Unruled	Regulated
Committees	Annual brainstorming meetings	Reporting	Informal networks	Local board meetings
Top management meetings	Benchmarking initiatives bottom-up	Information management	Directed contact top management	Consultative meetings
Sectoral meetings		Shared management	Emailing	Interlocutors in formal channels
Joint meetings		Competence map	Discussions forums	Informal committees
Management by objectives				Monographic meetings
Standard committees				
University council meeting				

Source: Own elaboration

Furthermore, following with the exploitation of academic managers acquaintances with these different categories of practices, it was possible to create a network that integrated the relationship of enabling and constraining perceptions with the categories of strategy practices at place. As a result of this correlation, two analogies were drawn out: positive and negative viewpoints (see Appendix 11A).

Accordingly, an overall view of this network might suggest that the strategy practices at the university demonstrated a prominent correlation with positive perceptions. Both set of standardized and particularized practices were perceived positively. Nevertheless, it was a group of standardized practices that was mostly associated with negative apprehensions (mainly related to cyclical set of practices: joint meetings, committees and general board meetings). These negative perspectives were mainly mentioned by middle academic managers who have experienced the joint meetings, or the general board meetings as political spaces, restrictive to discussion and deliberative debates.

Furthermore, one top manager highlighted the political role of the general board meeting, emphasising that it was not operational, similar to the experiences expressed about the joint meetings. Some quotes show part of these concerns:

PD62: DEAN-F4- RES: ...in recent years I can see a difference concerning the number of meetings of deans and other representatives for a particular topic; I've being called to attend many meetings... I think in the past year the numbers of meetings of this style have importantly increased....

PD97: DPTVC-TM1-RES: The government council is useless. Well, it serves to validate things, of course, so that everyone can have a voice in the affairs of the university, but it isn't practical, neither are the joint meetings.

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: ...the university council meetings are much more political, and formal... I complain that in recent years the joint meeting has become something too formal and not too open to discussion ... you've the feeling that there is the management team, and there are us, to whom they have to explain things, but we aren't part of the management team ... the only thing I complain about, is that the top management team do lots of work on figuring out things, but sometimes linking what they do to the whole university, for example, you think of, they are constituting a committee to discuss the faculty training on supporting them to get accreditations, well, they create this committee and assign it to a pro-vice chancellor, and choose two department heads and a professor... They create the committee and start to work, and the document that is worked out in this committee, is further taken into the standing committee. Maybe the professors who have been represented in those committees were from the health sector or other knowledge areas ... according to what things they may introduce in that document, it will be useful for me or not ... I think it misses a part that was supposed to be very rich, which is to explain the intricacies of each matter, and it lacks because at this meeting [joint meeting] we cannot speak ... it isn't practical, scanty productive, it is informative for us, we're at least updated on the elements that are important....

Nevertheless, the same set of cyclical practices was also being experienced positively by academic managers. One of the most mentioned practices was the *joint meetings*, which presented some contradictory views when confronting it against the negative perceptions being previously discussed. Part of the narratives highlighted this practice as functioning as a facilitator of the integration of the university management levels; a platform for deliberation and information, as well as a platform for topic testing and consensus building:

PD62: DEAN-F4-RES: ...once a month we get together in a table with all the pro-vice chancellors, the vice-chancellor, the general manager and the assistant managers, it is a large table, but a table. So it is true that once a month we've access to information concerning the university overall lines, it is shared and we can give our views. It generates opinion, I was able to review certain issues, both to say it was fantastic, as to state objections... consensus is built at this table ...

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: there are the joint meetings (informal), the governing council (formal), the joint meetings are organized once or twice a month, regardless of other meetings that can be held...but the joint meetings are the most interesting thing, they aren't perfect, I could criticize many things on how it could be done better, but I think it's the most interesting thing done in this university, and it is the only time you feel part of the university management ...

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-M4-RES: It is in the joint meetings where topics are discussed and polished in order to achieve a maximum rate of agreement and consensus, which I think is the way the university functions...

PD98: DPTVC-TM3-RES: I've withdrawn projects after presenting them in the joint meeting. When I saw that it wasn't quite mature due to the fact that it couldn't be fully understood, or would cause more harm than good, I've withdrew it, re-elaborated and it has been re-presented once more in the joint meeting.

PD99: DPTVC-TM2-RES: ...any issue that isn't mature enough we test it in the joint meetings, and if we see that further work is required we then withdraw it. More is done and it is again presented in the next meeting. This makes possible that in this university the governing council is more executive and lesser problematic, if compared to other universities.

In order to delve into the strategy practices effectiveness, quotes concerning several issues were exploited: comments on the university strategy, university development key aspects, strategy alignment, evolution of the strategy process, strategy main areas and key issues, involvement of strategy at the units and resources associated to strategy progression.

Therefore, when top managers talked about perspectives on the university strategy, three main issues could be highlighted: their viewpoint on the strategy evolution process, their perspectives on university strategy key aspects, and issues of strategy alignment across units. All-embracing, narratives from top managers suggested that the university has gone through different transition periods that were characterized by very distinct objectives. Essentially, it was suggested that the university model has been a result of the consolidation of the foundational project of the institution, which put forward a *differentiation and excellence driven policy*. This initial project objective was suggested as serving as a framework of reference from which the university “ethos” was impregnated overtime, and might have been a strong driver for the existence of scanty power struggles. The following top manager’s narratives excerpts may illustrate some of these issues:

PD97: DEPVCH-RES-TM1: You are subjected by decisions of strategic character that have been previously taken, which determine the university way of being, and surely you aren’t going to change it... Thus what we’ve said in the last strategic document and the actions we’ve included in the Action Plan, already incorporated all aspects that we considered strategic for the university ... No, the vision hasn’t change...it has been enriched and adapted; the overtime evolution as well as external circumstances necessarily lead to change.

PD99: DEPVCH-RES-TM2: The first phase [figure 50] refers to a foundational stage of consolidation and completion of the university infrastructure... At the second vice-chancellor mandate, the university grows, and the administrative structure begins to be more professionalized. And in the current stage with the actual vice-chancellor, which is the phase I’ve been more involved, particularly in his latter mandate, the university doesn’t want to keep growing, but rather organize internally what we are doing. That is, to decide which areas it can grow a little, and focuses on specific aspects that I think hadn’t been raised initially, such as the theme of internationalization ...Although there isn’t a clear separation between these stages, yet is possible to see transitions...

PD98: DEPVCH-RES-TM2: The university strategy was a bit different. The other universities were mostly created during a time when there was a massification of students...Then when the policies designed by the university first vice-chancellor were completely different from the others, that is, to hire the best people, it was when began the opposition by other institutions... And even today, although our relations with other universities are very good, yet you have to say things carefully, because according to what we might say, the responses are very quick: of course, you can do it. Yes we can do it because we’ve designed this policy... Sure, to establish standards, policies, strategies in order to be accepted by an engineer, a lawyer or someone from the health sector have its complexity. The only way I found to do it was on the one hand, to design action frameworks that would comprise a minimum standard, and on the other, to accept all those who were justified exceptions to that common regulatory framework. And that was what has allowed us to progress with some peace during these years.



Concerning the viewpoints on the university strategy key issues, top managers suggested that the *university culture and climate* were key factors influencing and conditioning positively the strategic decision making in the university. Additionally, other issues were also being brought forward as supporting the university strategy model; a clear definition of the university objectives, which were framed within short and medium term, comprising a sharp economical driven strategy for competitive resources:

PD98: DEPVCH-RES-TM2: And somehow, you're imbued with that spirit, but then there are many differences which could be talked at length. But culture underlines decisions, underlines strategies, as well as schedules. You don't have the same facility to advance in all aspects... Our economic part is more opportunistic, that is, we are a university which is good is gaining competitive income resources, such as FEDER funds or funds in the ministry, etc... And our vision in 2009-2010 was that the higher the competitive income resources attraction capacity, the faster our strategy could advance. Therefore, it was a fully opportunistic strategy...

PD97: DEPVCH-RES-TM1: Indeed, I wouldn't say in a very categorical form that we are suffering serious economic difficulties when developing our international policies, for example. You have to handle yourself in an environment of budget austerity but if the objectives are clear and well defined, the machine can move on...

On a different perspective, one top manager interviewee brought forward the issue of the *lack of a higher transversal work* that should be taken into account when carrying out joint work throughout the university strategizing process. This concern was particularly related to issues of decision making comprehending short and long term decisions that should facilitate a higher integration of the team with reference to objectives that were often set individually by the distinct pro-vice chancellors, given the fact that the pro-vice chancellors may have their own strategic vision on different issues.

PD97: DEPVCH-RES-TM1: ...largely, I've missed a more transversal work between the other pro-vice chancellors in defining the vision. Instead, we've developed the aspects that concerned my office with scanty implications from other offices, and now I realize it would probably had been much more fruitful, if it had been done more transversally, fostering people to contrast if that was really suitable and what problems might emerge... Sometimes what may be strategic for you, it may not be to others, as they might attached to it less importance. It is a reflection that I've developed in recent months, not because there have been conflicts, but it is a problem of operability and to see that not everyone has the same commitment with the same goals, even though these goals have been considered strategic. Perhaps this aspect might be related to the fact that each pro-vice chancellor's offices have their own visions.

On the other hand, concerning aspects referring to the task of aligning the strategy across the units, top managers narratives stressed that the main issues taken into account were related with the establishment of an open dialogue dynamic in which values and attitudes were aimed to be worked out. This aspect was found to be analogous with issues of listening, persuasion and implication.

PD98: DEPVCH-RES-TM2: ...here the alignment of objectives is done is this way: by trying to persuade, trying to win them all, listen a lot, trying to write down what they said. Well, consensus-building work... There is a unit which has one strategic plan, one of the fewer which has it. My intention was that each unit would elaborate its own strategic plan as a product based on this [Strategy 25 document]. [The former director] of this unit which does have a strategic plan was a fan of the strategy ...So I had to say to him that what he was doing was exceeding this [institutional plan], it was breaking some dynamics of this plan [institutional], which was aimed at giving much room, to set guidelines in order for you to add something more, according to what you think would be convenient...

Contrasting the top manager's views with the academic middle managers perspectives on strategy making, it was possible to come up with mostly convergent narratives regarding the key aspects in the university strategy, as well as their viewpoints on areas, mechanisms and evolution of the process. One interest issue highlighted was the level of knowledge of the university strategy, which was suggested to be both shared and highly socialized among the different organizational levels:

PD94: HEAD-DEPT-RES-M3: ...As a department head I'm perfectly aware of the short and long term relevant decisions, both that have purely tactical and also strategic dimensions.... I'd say that it [university strategy] is known by all who holds management positions, and other people also do, of course, being a small university, and with reduced numbers of students, administrative, technical and faculty staff, ...with this limited structure composed by departments and centres greatly facilitates the information flow and the participation in the university decision-making by those who manages these lower units. Sure, if there are 40 departments, the heads cannot participate daily...they cannot become part of the information circuit...with 40 heads of departments, more than 20 deans, plus the directors of institutes or centres... in the end the circuit ends up having too many players, and the information flows becomes blurred...

PD95: HEAD-DEPT-RES-F2: When you assume a management position and start to attend meetings, it is when the university strategy becomes clear...

Concerning the different perspectives of the narratives of middle managers regarding the university strategy, there were mostly positive perceptions on the key aspects such as the *differentiation policy* embedded in the university culture, which has been called the "founders father spirit", the talent attraction policy, the emphasis on people, as well as the institutional image and promotion. The following excerpts clear highlight the main convergent aspects being mentioned on their perspectives upon the university strategy:

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-RES-M4: ...there are two key points, I think there're several elements which might explain the success of the [University], one is that we're a new university, a new university in Barcelona; this is a very important element, Barcelona is attractive...secondly, the [University] since its commencement had a slogan in which highlighted "people", that is, emphasis on people has been the focus of the project, this has been carefully thought of from the university outset...

PD62: DEAN-F4-RES: The University has strongly fostered the faculty policy focused on research excellence. And I'd say that it had brought very positive consequences, with no doubt, a well prepared professor will have more capacity to compete for projects, etc...

PD63: DEAN-F1-RES: ...The four main ideas of the university original project, that is, the strategic focuses that were imbued from the beginning and which had been maintained, were concern with the ideas that the university needed to be small and manageable, have a clear commitment to specific market niches, it didn't want to cover all fields and provide places to fill in those that were overflowing in other universities, focus on research as a key aspect as well as counting with an innovative teaching model...

Perhaps the most concurrent issues were the differentiation strategy policy, the faculty policy based on meritocracy as well as the consolidation of the teaching model and research focus, as can be observed in the following narratives excerpts:

PD61: HEAD-DET-RES-M8: When talking about the strategy of [University] there is one very clear aspect for me, which is the "excellence" concept. The discourse is, you should try to get the most out of the resources, the intellectual capital we've, the people we've, seeking excellence both in teaching and research... Then these actions of persecuting excellence are a constant in the [University]...

PD60: DEAN-M2-RES: I'd say that when you join in the faculty, this aspect of excellence, focus on publications high impact factor, the policy of emphasizing the students holistic learning experience, very holistic and yet being as much as technically advanced as possible, thus these ideas permeate and are shared by the university staff...it is one of the aspects of the university identity...

PD96: HEAD-SCH-M7-RES: The university core foundational milestones were derived from people who started out the project with very clear ideas of creating an university to count with an urban profile, embedded in the territory... trying to be good, attracting quality to generate more quality in the territory ...

PD63: DEAN-F1-RES: ...the basic principles that the university "fathers" have always highlighted were related to the idea of designing a university with very clear characteristics: it should be manageable and flexible. Therefore the university was born with this clear goal: to not necessarily be large, focusing on specific market niches and strategic axes of certain aspects that hadn't been worked before. The project of the new university foresaw a new model of university, which was characterized by being agile, with a strong territorial presence, by creating a totally urban campus, to be fully inserted in the community...

PD94: HEAD-DEPT-M3-RES:... since its commencement, the university wanted to build a profile based on the founding fathers idea of clearly distinguishing the [university] of the rest of the university landscape, by fostering centres of quality in teaching, by emphasizing the singular faculty policy, by being very committed with a research policy with an international driven character...all these aspects still remain as the university identity hallmarks...

The university teaching model and the faculty meritocracy were other concurrent issues that were suggested to be specially connected with the previous mentioned aspects of the differentiation policy, constituting an important asset within the university model outcomes:

PD55: HEAD-DPT-M1-RES:...The university strategy, at least in terms of the faculty recruitment policy, is focused on hiring the best professor and researchers, and the level of requirements is very high in this regard... and then each department has its own criteria and variations between departments can be found, but I'd say that the university sets a very high standard in this matter.

PD62: DEAN-F4-RES: Concisely, the university had been very demanding on the tenure track faculty policy...it may have positives and negatives aspects, but perhaps currently this policy which has been fostered for many years by previous top management teams, is shown positive results...

PD64: HEAD-DEPT-F6-RES: ...in this model of international faculty recruitment, the promotion is based on the candidate merit and it is very systematized, we've established protocols, which are met with great rigor, this is what I think have allowed the department to have advanced in quality...

Furthermore, when exploring the academic manager's narratives about their views on the main aspects of the university strategic directions, the main areas being pinpointed were the conception of the teaching model as a product, the focus upon internationalization, and pre-eminence on the "star units".

PD63: PD63 DEAN-F1-RES: The focus has been always linked with the relevance of research... since its commencement this strategic focus has promoted a new teaching model, which facilitated and gave relevance to the research task...

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: The University has some differentiators elements, which I think from my viewpoint, high interest had been put on teaching quality, with great integration of the research aspect... the university have always fostered teaching innovation... and we're constantly being demanded to catch up...

PD95: HEAD-DEPT-F2-RES: Our University wants to be a university known for its research, wants to be leader in research... wants to specialize in the third cycle, internationalization... knowledge transfer...

PD94: HEAD-DEPT-M3-RES: I'm convinced, as department head, because one knows more or less the European scene, and also know what you have in your own university, then you've to compete with a product of quality, well differentiated, and you've to make it internationally visible... this is the university willingness...

PD62: DEAN-F4-RES: ...the university has worked out multiple action lines in order to address the issue of competitiveness; one has been the support to the researches, in all the requirements for submitting proposals for competitive research projects calls...

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: There are departments that have preferential treatment because they're somehow departments with higher projection and research income capacity, and all this kind of things, and this may happen at any university. We're a department very consolidated in teaching, but we aren't a star department in other aspects...I'm convinced if I call someone from the top management team saying that I've a problem, they'll treat me differently from someone who might call from a star department...But I'd do the same, I don't see it as a bad thing...

Respecting the viewpoints on the strategy alignment degree, it was suggested that there were different realities depending of the unit, and that the dissemination of different initiatives have had distinct impact across the units. This issue was suggested to be associated with the aspect of the *core business driven policy* embedded within the university strategizing practices:

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: it would be necessary to work hard to foster more interdisciplinary work, research and teaching projects across different departments, in order to break down those department barriers because I think it would be good for the university...

PD64: HEAD-DEPT-F6-RES: ...the university is pulling out a series of initiatives, we're in line with them, and for us it seems absolutely right, but actually it doesn't have much impact in the department's trajectory, because we've been doing this for a long time...

Comprehensively, when comparing and merging both top and middle managers narratives, it was possible to elaborate different categories of strategizing behaviours. On the one hand, top managers viewed the university strategizing as: *flexibility in action and open dialogue* and on the other, middle managers contemplated the university strategizing as: *core business driven, objectives highly socialized, and differentiation driven policy*. These concurrent views will be furthermore elaborated in the comparative network analysis.

Exploring the specific issue of the strategizing activities being carried out within the university units, academic managers talked about how strategy making was developed, as well as which areas it was focused on. Concerning the main issues of micro strategizing, the narratives suggested that there was *autonomy in performing local initiatives* and that most of the actions were galvanized within the strategic lines of the institutional document. This had to do with work being carried out in order to create consensus in the implementation of strategic lines when deploying specific policies, and that this high consensus degree were shared and particularized.

PD58: DEANF1-RES: It was totally inspired by the university master plan 2005-2009. Logically, it couldn't be otherwise. One of the things that I do have clear is that everyone needs to follow the same direction...I've deeply examined the university master plan. Basically, my action plan was focused on not going against the university discourse...I've read the university document because I wanted, no one has obliged me to, I've very large autonomy.

PD60: DEAN-M2-RES: I'd say that it is a more philosophical inspiration, and through documents issued by the [University] or through talking to the vice-chancellor, to the pro-vice chancellors... The concrete implementation is carried out by the dean team, where specific responsibilities are shared...

PD96: HEAD-SCH-M7-RES: ...we want to make things right, with quality, on this aspect we all agree, and then everyone can think of how things are to be done in your own field, what tools you've, I know that there were units that have examined it [the strategic plan of the School] in order to elaborate their own document, because they thought it was also interesting to have one. They will further particularize its scope, its potential, their tools, their specific objectives, but we all argue on the aspect of pursuing quality...

Consequently, the middle managers narratives suggested that the unit's strategy initiatives were mostly fitted within the university strategic lines. The academic managers specified that the

elaboration of these micro *initiatives were embedded in a framework of a higher level of autonomy*. Comprehensively, the unit's strategy documents were mainly result of an electoral program or an action plan that were not necessarily constructed as a strategic plan. In one case, there was the elaboration of a parallel strategic plan.

PD55: HEAD-DPT-M1-RES: Yes, let's say that my program especially had the goal of internationalization, to make the department more open to the world, and these goals are reflected in actions that aim to attract researchers who have an international CV, to foster teaching positions that are competitive internationally, encouraging international research projects. This is my program, my desires.

PD96: HEAD-SCH-M7-RES: the university has done an institutional strategic plan, and alongside it we also prepared a strategic plan, at least my predecessor believed that the whole issue of strategy was fundamental, he had also the feeling that if you didn't follow any strategy, as we were constantly doing things on the run, and this made no sense, so with this in mind we've developed a strategic plan.

Additionally, when further exploiting the narratives about the strategy alignment, it was suggested that the different institutional strategic initiatives might have had distinct impact across the overall units. The complexity of building the compatibility of the initiatives and its cohesion across the organizational levels have suggested that there might be an indirect impact of the institutional strategy at the units, that is, the excellence driven policy at the institutional level may have a greater influence in the unit performance, rather than what the units could elaborate in its own strategic document. Also, the complexity of choosing and coordinating different initiatives have been suggested as may requiring more abstract levels of integration.

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-M4-RES: ...you can choose a path of large or few projects, but it shall be coherent with the university...I see the research groups as instruments to enhance the department's activities, but not submitted to it, then all this requires a more abstract level of fusion, which may be based on the lines of strategic plans or on agreements of specific committees...

PD96: HEAD-SCH-M7-RES: ...the university has a higher level strategy, which may have tools that have been attempted to attract and retain professors and researchers of quality, because then this will result in a good research and good teaching across the departments. This action has a higher effect in my unit than what I may write here [in the strategic plan of the School].

Concerning the process itself, some aspects identified were related to the existence of established protocols, and that the decision making was based on group decisions that were embedded within a platform where information could be shared. Specific discussions and also debate forums, transversal networks and informal connections were mentioned as being applied tools during the strategizing activities across the units. Two relevant aspects emphasized were the transparency in budget management and continuous information and accountability:

PD64: HEAD-DEPT-F6-RES: ...we've a well established protocol on certain things, we've a fairly stable organization and, for example, hiring policy, we've established protocols, which nobody questions it, it is well consolidated...

PD60: DEAN-M2-RES: we're a group of 10... Then it's a group of people that helps the dean to make decisions, specifically concerning teaching structures. And then there're subcommittees of everything you can imagine, many. And then there is a close coordination carried out with the head of the department, and in the faculty management structure there is one representative of the department and I'm also represented in the management structure of the department, that is, there're many transversal levels of connection...

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-M4-RES: ...the debate was much more specific; there were issues that could advance well, for example, to find indicators that would be relevant to the teaching function. However, there were other issues that were more complicated, such as the operation of the degrees that were taught in the university system ... that was much more difficult, that is, to define which might be the strengths and weaknesses and how to implement it and see which scenario would strengthen us...Of course, all of these things a strategic plan cannot tell you...

PD62: DEAN-F4-RES: I normally bring back information and share it with my team in order to see what will be the best way to implement these lines in our context, no? I had the opportunity to give my opinion on certain initiatives or lines that I thought could generate problems at my school...also other deans could express their views according to their contexts...In this faculty, I've also started to do budget presentation, the faculty accountability status, then annually, it is presented to the faculty board, this hasn't been done before, but I felt that it was a good time to explain certain things that had been done in the faculty, right?

PD95: HEAD-DEPT-F2-RES: in the department Web regular information updating and in other communication channels, other aspect was postgraduate quality and specially the doctoral degrees... transparency and timely information to all members within that department. Then it was proposed the creation of an intranet, where it is available the rules governing the operation of the department, the minutes of meetings, etc...

Moreover, one aspect being emphasized by one middle manager that had elaborated a proper strategic plan document was the fact that the macro and micro strategizing emphasise distinct aspects. For instance, in the latter case, strategic thinking and development of potential initiatives were suggested to be embedded in a framework where there was less room for manoeuvre:

PD96: HEAD-SCH-M7-RES:...we saw that what we were proposing wasn't much different from what the university does [at the institutional level], but of course, there are different levels, because one thing is to think about the strategy of the university as such, and another thing is to develop strategy at a particular school with specific studies, the room for manoeuvre is smaller...

Concerning the strategic areas emphasized by the units, the main aspects being narrated made references to actions that aimed at promoting excellence in research, improvement of processes and innovation enrichment. Also specific actions were conducted in order to promote the excellence of the university degrees offer, along with actions to support internationalization. Additionally, the culture of quality, identity and values of the university model held in common

by the different academic managers, were being suggested as key drivers fostering the micro strategizing activities.

PD55: HEAD-DPT-M1-RES: Yes, this [working plan] is fully integrated into the strategy of the [university], because it also promotes internationalization and all this kind of things...

PD58: DEANF1-RES: ...what I'm particularly satisfied from a strategic standpoint, is about the results of the alignment being achieved between the faculty international relations with the university... one of the objectives of the faculty was to obtain external funding and how to get it ...we have developed a communication plan...generally, it includes various activities that are eligible...

PD96: HEAD-SCH-M7-RES: ...we've set as an objective promoting the internationalization of our studies... consolidating good student's exchanges, both for our students and for students who want to come to our school, and for this to happen, there must have subjects taught in English.

PD60: DEAN-M2-RES: ...the excellence of the studies, student's employability and the best structure to develop this quality experiences, are the main concerns of the university, which the faculty emphasized, independent of the dean who is in charge...

Concerning the resources associated with the unit's strategy, middle managers talked about a flexible budget system that had to do with the unit's autonomy in managing their budgets, which was enclosed in a framework where resources were provided from diversifying sources (e.g. standard unit budget, teaching plan activities, and research income revenues).

PD61: HEAD-DET-M8-RES: ...from the research projects, there is one part of the revenue which is given to the research groups, and partly goes to the department, that is, departments with more research, receive more money ... So I've some money to apply in what I want...but I don't receive any instructions from the Rectorate saying what I've to do...

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-M4-RES: concerning the management of the "teaching action plan", the Rectorate give us money, and how we use it is a decision of the department itself, that doesn't mean we can do whatever we want, but what I want to say is that we do have a wide possibility...

PD95: HEAD-DEPT-F2-RES: The university gives money to each department for its ordinary functioning...Then there are various items, ...you have the money for the regular operation of the department, but then you receive money that comes from what is called COFRE, research co-funding, that reverts to the department a percentage of what the university charges for canon in research projects, then a portion of that money comes back to the department.

PD62: DEAN-F4-RES: there is a budget of the faculty which is autonomous... it depends on the decisions we take in the team, there are some specific parts more or less defined, but it is flexible...

Altogether, when merging and contrasting the views from top and middle academic managers concerning the university strategy and the different analogous countenances, it resulted in the



elaboration of six categories that suggested the portrayal of the strategizing behaviours at the university: i) differentiation policy driven; ii) core business driven; iii) objectives highly socialized; iv) open dialogue driven, v) flexibility in action driven and vi) autonomy driven (See networks in Appendices 11B and 11C which illustrate the convergent views from top and middle academic managers respectively)

The overview of the academic manager's narratives suggests that there was a concurrent view on a category related to the *differentiation policy strategy* that has been intensively mentioned by both profiles of academic managers. Some aspects being acknowledged made reference to higher authority being put on the development of a teaching model as a product, facilitated by the integrated research focus that was embedded in a flexible framework that had to do with exploiting people as one of the main strategic assets. Comprehensively, most of the quotes were associated with positive apprehensions of the strategizing practices and strategic directions at place within the university. Moreover, this emphasis in the quality teaching model was a consequence of preminent work being done in establishing a consolidated faculty policy that was mostly based on meritocracy, contrasting with most of the current academic inbreeding problematic often observed in the Spanish higher education system.

The *core business driven* strategizing type was a consequence of the excellence policy driven, based on the differentiation strategic directions being taken. Both of these categories were framed by the clear definition of objectives that were suggested to be very well recognized. Also, the *autonomy driven strategizing* had to do with clarification of the university model objectives, and to the autarchy given to the units either in its local strategic or operational initiatives development, as well as with process procedures and budget management.

PD58: DEANF1: I know where it is [institutional strategic document] and I've read it because I wanted it. No one has imposed me to do anything; I count with large autonomy...

PD61: HEAD-DET-M8-RES: ...I don't receive instructions from the Rectorate stating that I should do this or that. No, we are given an overview, and then I can see how we're positioned in relation to others...

Furthermore, the perspectives from top academic managers were observed as complementing the middle academic manager's viewpoint. Accordingly, the *open dialogue* and *flexibility in action driven* categories of strategizing behaviours might be suggested to have foster the creation of a framework where the university strategic aims and objectives were highly socialized and shared amongst the different levels of management when implementing the distinct field policies.

Moreover, complementing the academic manager's views on the university strategy implementation, on the one hand top managers have highlighted three main aspects: strategy monitoring, the role of the actors and the main drawbacks. Concerning the institutional action plan, top managers suggested that the document was well known and that mechanisms to communicate and monitor it were foreseen.

The main drawback being suggested was related to resistances associated with different visions of middle managers. Furthermore, the strategizing roles that were suggested, underlined top managers as being responsible of political decisions and middle managers more associated with objectives adjustments when implementing policies.

PD98: DPTVC-TM3-RES: ...the assessment and planning unit that is dependent of the office of the pro-vice chancellor of strategy, periodically provides quantitative data of how things are evolving. Thus we've regular quarterly reports... also we discuss it with the deans, we inform whether they are doing well or not...

PD97: DPTCV-TM1-RES: There is a chain of command, and the pro-vice chancellor doesn't order the dean or a head of department or school to do this or that, there is another type of relationship.... the role of the dean or the head of department it to carry out policies that meet the strategic objectives set by the university in specific areas, and we support them in this task ... you've to negotiate and try to reach consensus, weaving complicity, incentives, it is a complex game. They play a decisive role in implementing your policies but there is the problem that as they aren't in your chain of command, you cannot ensure that things will be done...

PD99: DPTVC-TM2: We ascertain an internal communication ratio and define a monitoring plan every six months. I've just presented the 2nd monitoring report; the next one will come out in January. This monitoring is very technical, because there are about 160 ongoing actions and each action can be not initiated or be progressed about 25, 50, or 75%, it also can be completed or may be cancelled...

On the other hand, from the point of view of middle academic managers with reference to the university strategy implementation, fundamentally, the institutional strategy was suggested to be aligned with the units through three main areas: internationalization, research excellence and the faculty policy. Overall, it was suggested that the strategic objectives presented higher level of consistence across the organizational levels when implementing the distinct policies, which might lead to suggest that it may have been facilitated by actions from the Rectorate that provided general guidelines for middle managers to carry out policies that were in consonance with the university strategic objectives.

PD94: HEAD-DEPT-M3-RES: ...the strategy is implemented successfully, and with a clear profile, which is distinct from other universities, the Spanish and our immediate surroundings...

PD63: DEAN-RES: In terms of implementation, I do think it is implemented; all of us that hold management positions know it and have assume it.

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: the general lines that were marked by the university are lines that nobody can disagree, what the university wants is exactly what we all want, from the Rectorate actions have been made in order to guide the departments on aligning to these lines...

However, the strategy deployment was also suggested as being limited by restrictions derived from the specialization of the units or the existence of distinct mindset backgrounds. These aspects might have to do with the overall broad general character of the institutional strategy guidelines in order to allow autonomy to the units to implement the policies according to their own capacities and interests. This autonomy, connected with the different unit's profile, might have led to possible division or fractures to emerge, as suggested by one interviewee.

PD65-HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: ...I have to say that there have been times when many exceptions were made due to specific pressures, which might contribute to the raise of divisions. I'm not criticizing, because when you are managing, sometimes you have to make exceptions...The strategic lines are very general, no one could be against it... Any university should have these lines in its DNA. Then, when you get into the detail of how they are to be implemented, then it is when we may have differences, but we haven't got into this detail... on the one hand there are some general guidelines and the philosophy of the institution, and on the other, the concrete implementation is made by each unit, for example, the faculty does the mobility plan, and the university elaborates some generic strategies on this topic...

Furthermore, also linked to the previous aspect, the university institutional strategy text may exert scanty direct incidence in the units, fact that might be concerned with the different degrees of development that could be observed across the units, as well as with the own units policies that were already at place (e.g. research, teaching model or internationalization promotion), which were suggested not being antagonistic with the general guidelines that the university was promoting.

PD95:HEAD-DEPT-F2-RES: ...I think the strategy of the University is well implemented in our department ... I think there are some departments that are much more advanced in implementing the university overall strategic lines than others, concerning issues of internationalization, international faculty recruitment, based on academic merits, that sort of things... For example, concern the international recruitment, you may realize that there are departments that say, uff, this in my department will create problems because we still have people with that old mindset..., however there are others department which had implemented it long ago...

PD64: HEAD-DEPT-F6-RES: ... the plan [institutional] is fine, but it doesn't have a direct impact on us because, in a way I'd say that [our department] is one of the university departments with clearer lines respect to internationalization, research excellence, and a number of objectives that the university has proposed in this institutional strategic plan, then we are already doing it naturally, and we don't need to change what we are doing... well, there are some overall goals of the university that I think in some areas of the university might be more advanced than others, because as the university wants to move forward, thus it sets some goals and some of them will need more or less implementation efforts across the departments...

Concerning the perspective on the different agents taking part in the university strategizing practices, top managers talked about the role of the governing council as a political body, the role of the Pro-vice chancellors in carrying out political and technical decisions, the coordination role that takes place in organizing the responsibilities among the top senior team, as well as the division that exist between the operative management done by the general manager and the strategic management led by the Rectorate.

PD99: DPTCV-TM2-RES: ... I had to work a lot with the entire top management team, that is, my role as pro-vice chancellor of strategy is when they ask me: what do you do?... And I usually say that my tasks are very simple, I've to distribute the game between the pro-vice chancellors. In other words, try to avoid that any member of the group might slow down, trying to see where and how we could keep improving. And it is a difficult and unpleasant role, which I try to do very politely, very diplomatically, with much left hand, but I think I've very good relationship with the group... the general manager is in charge of the management by objectives plans, the administrative part of the university, which needs action plans or programs in order to be able to organize the daily management. But I see scanty strategy behind these plans. There is a micro-strategy aiming at organizing, however there isn't a strategy of continuous improvement or intensification of some areas, giving more importance to international position or post graduation, yet they are plans with a more executive character. If you may notice, these plans comprise very short-term 2-3 years...

PD97: DPTVC-TM1-RES: ...the government's council is useless. Well, of course it serves to validate issues, so everyone can have a voice in the affairs of the university, but it isn't a practical body... My decisions are more political, thus I hold a weekly meeting with the service director of my office concerning all the decisions that might have political implications...I must also say that nowadays with emails the contact is daily. But it's worth at least once a week to review issues, and also to plan. This I do every week...

Notwithstanding, middle managers when talking about their specific role on the university strategizing activities, on the one hand they indicated that there was an indirect contribution of middle managers to the university strategy and on the other, the micro-strategizing was customarily limited to specific issues. They have suggested the role of the middle managers as being receptors of the university strategy. They also brought forward that there were several issues that act as facilitators of this role of "strategy receptors": direct contact with top management team, participation in committees and meetings, as well as participation in debates, discussion forums and decision-making bodies, plus the use of the university information system. On the other hand, inhibitors were associated with scanty information being received or the insufficient interest in participating in management related activities.

PD62: DEAN-F4-RES: ...As dean I've actively participated whenever I were asked to attend in different meetings, and also in these joint meetings, where general lines for certain specific issues are discussed... yes I've participated in what has been the design of the new regulations for the university...also in committees...

PD61: HEAD-DET-M8-RES: I acknowledge that I didn't have any role in the design of the university strategy, not personally, let's see, my role was as a receiver...

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-M4-RES: let's see, at the joint meetings...many issues that are presented were previously prepared by committees in which the department tries to be involved... the participation is done throughout the discussion of these issues...

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: the truth is that there isn't too much involvement of the head of departments in some of these strategic decisions of the university. And that's partly our fault and partly the fault of the top management team. Partly our fault because we've a very busy agenda and this kind of activities that involves thinking what we've to do, is tiring. The top management associate us to different working committees in order to work on very specific issues, I haven't really participated, since I've assumed the departmental head, in any particular committee that involved thinking, I've always being called to organize something that has to be implemented...

PD96: HEAD-SCH-M7-RES: then we, strategy receivers, the middle managers, said: well, we're with you, let's go for it. And we've reflected on it [strategic plan], interesting ideas that we've tried to collect from here [institutional document]...

PD94: HEAD-DEPT-M3-RES: Yes, I do participate in the university decision-making spaces, in which those decisions are matured, prepared and sometimes formalized. I've a direct contact-line with the pro-vice chancellors and with the vice-chancellor ... Yes indeed, I've participated in the process of developing the strategy of the university, for example, [in the strategy document 25], let's see, we had a pair of monographic meetings of directors and deans, specifically devoted to that, and also we receive periodic information from the vice-chancellor and pro-vice chancellors...

PD63: DEAN-RES: ...throughout the initial development of the university, the top managers indeed tempted to create a cohesive community. The first vice-chancellor... had always promoted the involvement of all staff, but by the means of information system. The implication was assured through ensuring the information flow. We were all informed of the Project progression.

#### *4.2.3.4. Engagement behaviours associated with strategy texts uses*

Going deeply into the academic manager's different viewpoints concerning the strategy text, the main topics suggested made reference to the institutional strategy text function, the process of its elaboration, the monitoring and revision mechanism, as well as perspectives upon its problematic. Furthermore, also elements referring to the strategy constrainers and enablers were explored in their narratives. When talking about the university strategy text, middle managers suggested two main functions to the university strategy text: i) Reference point tool and ii) Generic guidelines (see Appendix 11D). One category had to do with positive perceptions of the text function and utility; on the one hand the document was suggested as being a document that provided a reference framework for any initiative that could be conducted across the university, and on the other, it was acquainted as a document that embedded the potentiality to explore and predict future direction the university might be delved into.

The following excerpts illustrate the emergence context of these themes:

PD62: DEAN-F4-RES: Well, it also implies to know how to navigate in times of crisis, right? In my view, strategic plans go beyond it, projecting the future in other areas...

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-M4-RES: ...normally you've a frame of reference within the strategy document and it gives you a more wide vision than the problem that you want to attack (faculty recruitment, how to position ourselves in research, etc.)...usually a strategic plan should provide a framework, which doesn't mean that it may gives you solutions, yet it gives you a framework and there is a previous work done, and definitions, that is, the strategic document supports you in two ways, one: It illustrates a framework and secondly, it gives some axis on where to further advance, which are endorsed by the university community, it isn't something you come up with, but is a framework of reference for the initiatives you want to take further... It justifies and legitimates certain initiatives. That is, therefore it isn't a normative document, instead beneath it there are commitments, which allow you to know that you are moving into a kind of consensus, where it is very difficult that people may say no to you...

On the other hand, there was a category that was more associated to a rather neutral perspective of the text function, which suggested that the institutional strategy texts were characterized as presenting very broad guidelines, that did not concrete specific directions, leaving the document open to a large number of possible interpretations, which may suggest the association of the texts with the category of ambiguous documents.

PD65:HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: It is the DNA of any university...There are very general lines... The document I've seen when I was in International relations were very interesting, but very vague, that is, there was no specific lines on where we will go, where we will act ...

Top managers mainly talked about the role of the latest strategy document (Strategy 25) and the action plan associated with it. It was possible to observe in the following quotes the emergence of four categories of strategy text function: i) tool of the top managers, ii) roadmap tool; iii) strategic reflection exercise tool and, iv) flexible management tool (see appendix 11E):

PD99: DEPTVC-TM2-RES: That is, basically this document [strategy 25] has been disseminated as a strategic document in order to communicate that we had carried out a strategic exercise and that it had been finished, and that this [the document] was our roadmap for the coming years. This dissemination was more informative; we haven't done a great show, because we perceived it as a document that was starting out a new stage. Until now, we did a brainstorming exercise in order to begin the execution ... this action plan is a subdocument of the Strategy 25, in which there is a selection of topics. In the introduction of the Action Plan is explained that it derives from the Strategy 25 document, which is the strategic plan ... Therefore, the Action Plan is a selection, prioritization of certain actions within the document [Strategy 25] to be done in the next 2 years. The [Strategy 25] indeed cover a time horizon foreseen 2015. Consequently, we decided to elaborate an Action plan coinciding with the end of the mandate of the vice-chancellor [2013], but also leaving an open document [strategy 25], in order for the future vice-chancellor to decide if he/she wants to follow the same lines or change everything... There are always unsatisfied collectives, who might turn the writing and evaluation of a strategic plan into a negotiation and this isn't a negotiation, instead the management team decides to make a strategic plan and it does... Why? .... We didn't want to negotiate non-strategic issues in exchange of a strategic plan. It makes no sense...Yes, there was a major effort concerning the

presentation of different issues, listening, gathering feedbacks in two rounds, one round of definition and a second round of approval, and that ultimately everyone could see reflected in the document their contributions, only if they were strategic... The strategic plan isn't an assembly document and it cannot be. Therefore, the governing council didn't approve this plan, because it is a strategic plan of the management team and accordingly, the plan was indeed communicated...

PD97: DPTVC-TM1-RES: ... The action plan [2011-2013]... is renewed periodically and the achieved and non-achieved targets are assessed and adapted with the future goals....

It was interesting to observe the category of TM (top management) tool, which suggests the idea that the text was not a negotiation tool, it was rather being suggested to be strictly connected to a specific management team, therefore it was acquainted as a working document, top down tool, yet being elaborated with bottom-up insights. The relevance being suggested in this category was the fact that in the context of the universities, the strategy elaboration and implementation with units, mostly involves tactical, operational and other management issues that are not always related to real strategic subjects. The concern stressed by this category had to do with ensuring that strategic insights were taken into account and worked out in order to be further communicated.

Respecting the function of the strategy text at the units, most of middle managers indicated that their units did not count with a formalized strategic plan; nevertheless the documents were characterized as partial plans (e.g. faculty, internationalization, etc...). Specifically concerning the functions middle managers have attributed to strategic text at micro level, it was possible to elaborate on four functions: i) organization and systematization; ii) strategic thinking; iii) guidance and v) valuation (see Appendix 11F). Accordingly, the perspectives of middle academic managers in relation to the function of the strategy document when used at the micro level were overall acquainted as being positive. By contemplating the relationship among the categories, it was possible to note that it was mostly complementary to each other. The strategic thinking function is closely connected with the guidance tool, which is also associated with the valuation utility. Both categories are somewhat linked to the organization and systematization use.

Digging into the narratives of academic managers regarding the drawbacks and enablers influencing in the strategizing activities taking place at both organizational levels, it was possible to identify different handicaps and enablers being suggested. Specifically exploring the viewpoints of top managers, four main themes were pointed out: i) implication assurance, ii) organizational culture, iii) routine aspects and iv) external factors (see Appendix 11G). The following quotations mainly illustrated some of these categories:

PD99: DPTVC-TM2-RES: I can hardly see negative elements, but of course there are things that could be refined. I think incentives are one aspect which could be improved. If I would go back to do it again, I would look for clear incentives, which not necessarily need not be economic. Ultimately, I would seek clear incentives to foster more involvement of external and internal stakeholders. And this would be one thing that I would devote more time to think. We had no time, we haven't raised this aspect and this would be an issue.... Another issue I found to be very problematic was the cultural diversity, not in the academic area which I already knew and therefore I was prepared to understand it, but the cultural difference in the management area, the general manager. Each level of the general manager office had a different management culture, and this surprised me, and therefore, I thought here there was a clear improvement point, if you have a certain management homogenization you gain in efficiency... It also cost me a lot to break the inertia of doing action plans, most of the people saw it [strategy 25 document] has another Action Plan with a time horizon of two years and, they came with their list of projects for the next two years, with a very high level of detail, and that left a little room to isolate your perspective and see what was the meaning, the role of each of these projects... Unfortunately, right now everything is at risk, with these constant political changes, economic restrictions and especially the current uncertainty, make people question everything, even their own institution, where he/she used to feel comfortable, and where more or less things were done reasonably well ...

PD97: DPTVC-TM1-RES: Sometimes there may be difficulties arising from the need to develop joint actions with other pro-vice chancellors offices, with other services, because what you consider strategic they might see it differently. For instance, we have assessed that our participation in international training programs such as Erasmus-Mundus was well below what it should be, given the degree of internationalization of our faculty and schools, etc... then maybe you might find that when it comes to be implemented you may find out that you don't have enough personal, you would need a relevant complicity with the pro-vice-chancellor of post graduation, and perhaps the main concern of his office is another, right?... Sometimes what might slow down the implementation of the grand strategies is this kind of things. I don't consider it a serious problem, because we progress, and the objectives are being met, but you may find not resistance but a lack of empathy or joint mobilization capacity to get things you cannot do it alone. At times I have had this impression...

Furthermore, the mainly categorization of strategizing handicaps from the point of view of top managers were accordingly elaborated on the following network. As observed in this network, most of the drawbacks were more associated with reflective improvements such was the case of working out clear incentives in order to foster an increasingly involvement of different stakeholders –internal and external- in the strategizing activities, or the need of enhancing a better joint mobilization capacity within the different pro-vice chancellors offices. On the other hand, issues concerning the problematic of the divergences found in the administrative management, due to the scanty homogenization on the different ways administrative operational management could be conducted, were suggested as inhibitors of the achievement of higher management efficiency.

The routine problematic was related to the taken for granted way of setting up the objectives within the action plans, that were more associated with a higher level of concretion, which was suggested as being done by inertia, with scanty amplitude or capacity to take a step back and carry out a strategic reflection upon the process. One relevant issue coming from external aspects



was related to the complicated situation that the Spanish higher education system is undergoing, in great part consequence of the economical crisis, which has led to instability in funding, derived budget cuts, aggravated by the inconstancy of educational related governmental politics. These external contextual factors characterized by a higher uncertainty and vagueness, was suggested to also exert some negative effects inside the institution, which might foster a negative climate, where people start to be more critical on certain initiatives.

When exploring the positive acquaintances of middle managers with different strategizing practices, it was possible to identify several issues such as: identity, feeling of belonging, creation of participatory structures; the university model and organization that allowed a great connection between all units and a fluid communication flow; institutional recognition of culture diversity among the academic units, as well as great autonomy in the practices carried out across the university. These concurrent aspects are illustrated by the following excerpts:

PD98: DPTVC-TM3-RES: Having this opportunity where people can sit together and talk makes everything much easier. And that gives a sense of identity to the university, which is very difficult to find in other institutions. I'm not being naive or arrogant, but I think in this university, as you've seen in your conversations, people here have a sense of belonging ... and it is facilitated by the university structures which were designed aiming to allow people to always know what is happening, fostering that they feel part of the university governance...before taking things to the government council meetings, they are previously discussed in joint meetings. This has greatly improved things. In fact, even on occasions, if you take issues to the government council without for whatever reason, haven't previously explained it in the joint meetings, often people say, "this wasn't talked about in the joint meeting", this happens because there is this establishing feeling that anything is going to be discussed there...

PD99: DPTVC-TM2-RES: ...there is a certain feeling of belonging to a different university, thus if the university asks an effort, most of the people do it. They do it without asking anything in return, thinking that this will have a consequence for the university overall improvement ... Our university model allows us to have a board of directors (9 pro-vice chancellors, one general secretary and one general manager) who are connected with the 8 university departments. Therefore, It allows us to achieve a high level of permeability and very fluid communication ... we know almost everyone and therefore, it allows the build up of a very strong cohesion ... Previously, the themes are worked with middle managers, but sometimes when you put issues on the table with everyone in front of it, we are an university that has studies in humanities, economics, law, engineering, communication, health sciences, that is, there are many cultures to be considered, and for me this is the key aspect of our university...

PD97: DPTVC-TM1-RES: there are advantages and disadvantages. We sometimes have the disadvantages of the size but also we have advantages of being a relative new institution. That is, we are not slaves of a heritage we should correct, so to speak. Then, if the university since its foundation had a clear objective and had taken the right steps forward, thus you have half things done, right? ...this is a small university where everybody knows each other. And also there are many occasions where you can interact... I've the criterion that you must give autonomy to the units, that is, we cannot slow down the ones that work faster but help the ones that are running less. And in this sense it is true that there are departments that have achieved much higher levels of internationalization than others, and I won't stop them. What matters to me is the information flow, that we don't have deviations, and I don't intent to standardize practices across departments. I do work to ensure a minimum standard...people in this university often react promptly...

These aspects supported the elaboration of four main categories of strategizing enablers from the point of view of top managers: i) identity and culture enablers, ii) organizational structure enablers; iii) consensus building enablers and, iv) decision making enablers (see Appendix 11H). According to top managers, since the initial stages of the university creation, the values and the identity promoted by the differentiation model of university were constantly being fostered; this may be suggested as drivers that have led to the creation of an attitude that reflected a shared sense of affiliation.

This aspect was in conjunction with the organizational structure enabler that suggested functioning as a facilitator of an efficient information flow, forthright contacts between top and middle levels management, and different existing platforms of interactions that fostered combined initiatives. Altogether these previous mentioned categories were associated with the emergence of two other categories, on the one hand the *consensus building*, that was closely connected and facilitated by the *identity and attitude enabler*, which on the other hand, suggested to have facilitated the consensus building and decision making process.

Contrasting the previous acquaintances of different top manager's perspectives upon the university strategy making with the narratives of middle managers, it was possible to observe the emergence of diverse themes associated either with aspects that were seen as hindering the strategy developing activities or with contrasting issues seen as enablers of strategizing. Respect to subjects experienced as handicaps, middle managers accounts highlighted issues related to decision making, administrative structures problematic, improved acquaintances with planning activities and results, as well as integration of divergent visions and perspectives, embedded in the restrictive economical environmental context that the country are undergoing. Some of these aspects are delineated in the following quotations:

PD60: DEAN-M2-RES: there is some contamination of the general Spanish university system, which somehow reproduces the way our businesses are run, it is too bureaucratic, there are too much dispersion on the decision levels... however although there is this overall Spanish context, I think we work relatively well if you compare it with others institutions...

PD63: DEAN-M1-RES: ...Despite this flexibility and ability to adapt, there is still the need for greater flexibility in making everyday decisions. There are many decisions that have to follow a long institutional protocol, which are highly unnecessary ... that is, it follows a long turn because at the moment certain processes were designed, generalized rules were considered, which hinders the agility when it comes to be put into practice.

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5: I fully understand that the university has tried to do the best, I think it's quite unique, the possibility to gather all together periodically [joint meetings], but sometimes I've the feeling that there is the top management team, and we are there [middle managers], as a formal thing, to whom they have to explain things, but we aren't part of the university management... So how can I go to discuss a

theme if I've no idea about it, I would like to first consult it with my department team, asking them what they think, what is their view on the subject, but in the end, what you end up doing is taking very personal decisions, which might raise some problems within my department... because I don't know if my colleagues of the department [different areas] are interested on enhancing one issue or another...

Some of the issues emerging from the above narratives gave an account of aspects associated with the process of *decision making handicaps* that in some part were derived from cultural aspects, which even if improved compared to other Spanish institution, it was suggested to be also influenced by the bureaucratic way of functioning that is inherited from the cultural overall national system. This issue might be associated with administrative aspects that were linked with conducting operational and day-to-day management, which were acknowledged to be hindered by the centralization of process that followed standardized institutional procedures. Furthermore, due to the diversity in the specialities and cultures of the university academic units, an aspect being brought forward was the nature of the decision making procedures conducted between top and middle managers, which were suggested to have been done with not sufficient margin from the unit's perspective.

Other categories that were part of this previous aspect were the *resource and structure handicaps* and the *environmental conditions*, which brought attention to the difficulties in assuring a correct balance on the administrative structures of the different units according to their real functioning necessities, the problematic of having to balance the division of the administrative and academic process, as well as the problematic on the malfeasance that may be derived from the generalized form in which the Spanish universities operate.

PD64: HEAD-DEPT-F6-RES: ... maybe it would be ideal to count with a stronger administrative structure, I think the university doesn't consider well the administrative work, the allocations of administrative staff doesn't take into account the dynamics and size of each of the units, that is, there are minimums per unit, without considering the units real dynamics.

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-M4-RES: ...the weaknesses are clear, that is, we have an university structure which is especially at the disposal of the central services of the university, such as supports in general, except in research, even if you've administrative staff, this staff you get based on the university central needs, on what they think must be covered from the department, so you don't have all the facilities when it comes to implement some initiatives, the vast majority is done with voluntarism and this is a very bad way of doing things... I think, projects like e-governance were good, because you can free up some personal and use them to give more substance to the policies carried from the department.

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: ...it has also some flaws such as other Spanish and Catalan public universities, because basically we belong to the same university system; however it has some elements that are very differentiating...

PD58:DEANF1-RES: There is another issue, the double treatment which is one of the consequences of the university duplicity, the division between the academic and administrative parts; you have two circuits that are not well linked. If these two tracks of the circuit don't meet in between, there is a problem. Then, it appears the satellites and generates double circuits. What is the consequence? In order to get a result you can go by different routes, and this is not productive. I want a single route.

Other issues were connected to aspects of *communication, interactive information platforms and organizational climate and attitude* that highlighted concerns regarding the need of implementing specific trainings or other format of transmitting the information related to the objectives expected when assuming management positions, which furthermore can be associated with some aspects of the inappropriate apprehension of the planning benefits visibility in the daily activities. Also the scanty administrative staff internal mobility, may lead to difficulties in managing change concerning the personnel mindsets.

On the perspective of the academic staff, also the resistance to change related to new ways of doing things embedded in an international and modern trend, was also suggested as influencing negatively the unit's climate, yet these drawbacks were acknowledged as presenting an important decreased overtime. Specifically concerning the interactive platforms, it has been suggested that there may be lack of a real deliberative platform, due to the fact that the joint meeting often conducted previously to the university general board council, which counts with the participation of all university managers' representatives, was seen to be confined to top down information with scanty time to carry out discussion and open debate.

PD58:DEANF1-RES: When I assumed this position, the information I had of the university strategy was limited... What would have been great? Well, that the university would have previously informed me about its overall plan... What worries me now is that we have a high percentage of errors in the administration structure. It is still difficult to change the attitude. For example, we've very little internal mobility and I'm in favour of it. If a person spends 15 or 20 years doing the same thing every day, it is very difficult to change.

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: I think there is a lack of a discussion body, which may not even need to count with the vice-chancellor assistance, that it could be organized by areas...the top management team has a weekly meeting on Wednesdays, it is held in the mornings, then they, once a month, use the afternoons to make the presentation of the issues in the joint meetings. Well, I don't know, maybe would be better if on this day, they wouldn't carry out their top management meeting and instead extend the duration of the joint meeting to talk to us...don't know if it would be practical ...

PD63: DEAN-M1-RES: I'm very practical, and I often think that planning is a waste of time... the faculty board has its strategic lines without being formalized in a strategic plan; I believe that formalizing it would be wasting time.

PD95: HEAD-DEPT-F2-RES: the most challenging aspects are often related to people, last year in the department we had certain confrontations, but now no more between areas as before, but between people with different visions of what the department should be... and these different views, on the one hand were associated with what the typical Spanish university has always being and on the other, those visions more associated with a modern and international university profile. Thus, these different visions have clashed a bit... but now overtime things eventually became less problematic.

Therefore, by drawing together these different themes emerging from middle managers views on the relevant strategizing handicaps, it was possible to categorize the following handicaps: i) resources and structure, ii) decision making, iii) environmental external conditions, iv) communication drawbacks and organizational climate and attitudes handicaps (see Appendix 11D). This categorization suggests that most of middle managers acquaintances with the strategizing handicaps were mostly associated with administrative nature process, and the difficulties in aligning people and its divergent way of thinking that were often embedded in a specific organization way of doing things.

On the other hand, having to do with the strategizing enablers, five categories emerged from the middle managers narratives that were concerned with issues of decision making, efficient communication channels, identity and positive climate and attitude, as well as organizational structures and culture (See Appendix 11J). For instance, there were concurrent narratives that stressed the efficient role of the administrative staff and supported services.

PD64: HEAD-DEPT-F6-RES: overall, the university processes perform fine, the administrative and service staffs who give support also work well, and communication with professors is good...

PD55: HEAD-DPT-M1-RES: I've no complaints concerning administrative and services staff, they work very well...

PD65: HEAD-DEPT-M5-RES: the truth is that here in this university, there is one aspect that can be distinguished, and this is the administrative part, which is very efficient, very professional...

Additionally, aspects of adaptability and flexibility that allowed the organizational structure were also suggested as issues enabling and facilitating the strategizing practices, together with the university model structured in single departments and schools.

PD63: DEAN-M1-RES: the manageable structure which greatly facilitates and promotes the university adaptability is a very positive point, also the flexibility and adaptation capacity...

PD64: HEAD-DEPT-F6: the university organization in single departments, I think it is very interesting because it allows a lot of interaction, a lot of synergy to emerge...

PD94: HEAD-DEPT-M3-RES: being a head of department at [this university] is very different from being a head of any other university department in Spain, why? Because here we've single departments, what does it mean? My authority is much smaller than any head of department in a British university, but I do have more power than most of the head of departments in other Spanish universities, for obvious reasons: the department is only one, the budget is also individual, and the faculty positions that are offered are decided by the department...

These aspects of organization structures may suggest the facilitation of the efficiency of the information circuit to take place, with very effective bilateral communication channels and good personal relationships.

PD62: DEAN-F4-RES: if compared to other schools in other universities, one advantage we hold is the size again, then, the size is an advantage because once we take a decision at this table with my team, it is very easy to deliver it and explain it well to all the professors, it is very close, because there is no intermediates...

PD61: HEAD-DET-M8-RES: in the [university] information flows quickly and there is higher transparency that is, you are informed of issues previously to the government council, and in the government council one thing that attracts the attention is that almost everything is approved very quickly. Why? Because all the themes have been previously discussed, worked out in specific committees, talked in the Joint Meetings, and this highly facilitates the internal relationships... Here, the university sets the strategy, the strategic lines, and then you have many favourable inputs, support from the administrative staff, and all of this makes the work to be much easier...

PD55: HEAD-DPT-M1-RES: we have the monthly meeting with all the top and middle managers representatives, which is called "joint meeting" and usually a week after we have the government council meeting, ...thus in this way we've a fairly frequent and fluent contact with the vice-chancellor and his team, so in this sense it is fine.

PD94: HEAD-DEPT-M3-RES: ...surely this is a singularity of [this university], with a limited structure of single departments, it greatly facilitates the flow of information and the participation of middle managers in the university decision-making process.

Altogether these previous categories suggested facilitating the decision making process, due to the fact that decisions were embedded in a framework of transparency, that fostered a commitment on working out consensus previous to decisions being taken.

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-M4: ...by the end, of all the decisions we take, 4% survive along the two years and by the end of the third year maybe less than that. So, in other words, managing all this, it is a bit in a more abstract level, but it is true that when things are discussed and implemented, you see the change right away ... I remember two years ago when I joined the team, it has been raised the issue that a student who had finished his PhD with us couldn't be hired as a professor or postdoc in this [university]... and this was an important change, but it was assumed by everybody without mayor concerns...you can see that important decisions, even if they are hard, when there is a consensus behind it, they are implemented in a very natural way, even if complies a very radical change ...

PD94: HEAD-DEPT-M3-RES: Here, the government council meetings are very short, we've done one last week and it lasted for an hour and a quarter. And we had 15 points in the agenda...the major issues were previously "cooked" by the deans, directors and head of departments. Many of the government council meetings are solved in an hour and half, extending these two hours standard is very exceptional. And I'm convinced that in most other Spanish universities, these meetings by definition at least have duration of a whole afternoon with difficult discussions. Here, this is another of the peculiarities of this university... the consensus is the strength, not unanimity, because that is imaginable, there is consensus on the broad lines... everything is usually the result of large consensus work, not unanimity...

PD61: HEAD-DET-M8-RES: the advantage of carrying out a good preparation of issues and that people don't find unpleasant surprises allows the government Council meetings to be much more uncomplicated, and if in the Joint Meetings there might be an issue that isn't clear, it is no longer presented in the government council, it is re-elaborated, work further to be presented again.

The category of decision making enabling aspects was furthermore suggested to be facilitated by organizational climate and attitude being fostered in the different units, together with the organizational identity and culture.

PD63: DEAN-M1-RES: A differential thing is that the university doesn't have created organizational bad habits, which may often create barriers when you try to change anything ... The positive aspect is that there is a lot of trust with the top management team, another advantage is the size of the university that facilitates this immediate contact with those who are in management positions... Another very positive aspect is that we all follow the same lines, at least the issues concerning the university strategic principles... There is a philosophy of the university founding stage, by which we are all impregnated, regardless of political colour of the top management team that might be in charge. There are clear lines which are followed, and it is untouchable, no one discusses it. Therefore, the strategic basic axes are well assumed, a factor which builds much cohesion in the university community, a fact that perhaps isn't so easy to find in other institutions.

PD64: HEAD-DEPT-F6-RES: ...I would say that in this university we count with very good personnel...and in fact, people that have ended up here are people who really like the work; they are very concerned with the department...

PD61: HEAD-DET-M8-RES: ...I see that there is the culture or the organizational climate, that is, an award given to any one of us is a prize shared by all of us...the university have worked a lot to build this positive working environment... I believe that the joint meeting, where we meet deans, head of departments, directors with the top management team, the vice-chancellor explains us things, how things are progressing, the projects that are going on, the initiatives that will be taken, and then in this meeting you are able to see the climate of the various units and different cultures, which there has been an attempt to unify it... here, the university brand is claimed and used by everybody... because in the end when doctoral students seek the rankings of Universities, they don't look the ranking of the department, therefore, everything that might foster the university to achieve better positions due to the contribution of the individual departments, it is good for the university as a whole. So in this sense, yes, I think there is a feeling of identity rooted throughout the university...

PD66: HEAD-DEPT-M4-RES: ...the elements that differentiates the university, that is...when you incorporate people of much value to a structure that already has good habits, it definitely increases the value...

With respect to the organizational identity and culture, concurrent views suggested that the university “founders-fathers” milestones were assumed and were found to be interlined with the development and consolidation of the university functioning, which was reflected by the clear strategy philosophy, objectives, excellence driven policy as well as the exploitation of the quality and excellence brand as a success collective driven incentive.

PD96: HEAD-SCH-M7-RES: ...the vice-chancellor and his team do know very well the specific realities of each school and each department, so I think we're aligned and we hear and we feel heard... we have a high level of consensus, we do the best we can, where we can influence, we try to do as much as good as possible... the [university] has a number of foundational milestones, which have been assumed and foster by the different leaders... I think this philosophy of emphasis in quality and excellence has continued since the university foundation, and I think this helps, strengthens the structures...And I think this also helps people to assume and accredit the project...

PD64: HEAD-DEPT-F6-RES: ...I think the [university] initial project was launched as a project of trying to design a different university and I think this objective has been achieved, that is, instead of trying to change some ways of functioning of the existing universities, instead the decision taken was the creation of a new university model, breaking down some existing schemes in the Spanish context...

PD94: HEAD-DEPT-M3-RES: ... if you have a strong identity and a well defined profile, and a path that identifies you as an university with departments and centres of excellence... this allows you to access in an advantage position these markets that offer competitive resources, it differentiates you from the rest of your competitors ... another of the strengths is the high level of involvement of the staff implicated in the strategic lines definition, for that reason I've talked about consensus, but they are also involved in the implementation, I would say that most of my colleagues, is identified with the university project...there is something that makes us feel different and therefore, these are values that we agree to preserve.

PD60:DEAN-M2-RES: The University is smaller compared to other universities, you know, also there are specific degrees, which by their strategic interest, when there is a problem, it is promptly solved ... I don't find here those Kafkaesque structures, where you don't know where you are moving...

PD63: DEAN-M1-RES: The core aspects of the university initial project strategy are clearly identified in the University's strategic document (strategy 25). I think the success of the University has been based on its clear philosophy, which has been well transmitted both internally and externally.

Combining both narratives of middle and top managers with reference to their acquaintances with enablers and constraints issues of strategizing practices at the university, it was possible to note analogous views both with reference to enabling or constraining elements, yet higher convergence was placed on strategizing enablers aspects. Essentially, top and middle managers stressed the relevance of issues related to organizational identity and attitude as enduring outright drivers of the university strategizing practices (e.g. sense of belonging; cooperation climate or the university founders-fathers spirit as framework of reference).



Also aspects related to the organizational structure and decision making process facilitators (e.g. reduced size of the institution, direct contact between levels of management, attention to units specificities, flexibility and adaptability of processes as well as participative platforms where decisions were worked out) were suggested as exerting positive influences in the strategizing activities within the university. On the other hand, confluence of viewpoints was found when managers talked about the antagonistic elements that may be constraining the strategy development dynamic. Those concurrent aspects were mainly associated with external environmental conditions (e.g. instability in the political system framework and meeting expectations in time of economical crisis) and also with organizational aspects such as the problematic of counterbalancing academic and administrative management needs.

Drawing together the narratives of academic top and middle managers concerning their apprehensions both related to the functions being attributed to the strategy text, and to the different strategizing behaviours identified, it was possible to develop the following network that illustrates the functions and uses associated with the strategy texts. This network acquaints the outcomes resulting from the association of strategizing behaviours with strategy text functions being attributed by the academic managers. Consequently, two main strategy text uses were suggested: *ambiguous* and *functional* (See Appendix 11K). The ambiguous usage attributed to the strategy text was associated with the generic and broad function that was embedded in the autonomy driven strategizing behaviour. On the other hand, other functions such as providing a roadmap tool, strategic thinking and guidance, valuation, organizational and systematization aspects were more in line with a concrete functional use of the texts.

This latter type was suggested to be guided by the flexibility and open dialogue driven strategizing behaviours, which were part of the core business and differentiation policy strategizing behaviours that were also suggested to be consequence of a highly socialization of the strategic objectives foster within the university.

#### *4.2.3.5. Roles of strategy texts in the university strategizing*

This section deals with the integration of the main findings resulting from the case analysis, which are associated with the research questions of this doctoral dissertation study, mainly related to the role of the strategy text in the strategizing practices. As being done with the previous within-cases, the academic manager's narratives were explored according to their different viewpoints on the distinct strategizing practices. Therefore, the four main themes that emerged from the data analysis were *positive or negative experiences with strategizing*

*practices* (enabling and constraining practices purposes), *drivers of strategizing behaviours*, *types of strategizing behaviours* and *patterns of strategy text usage*.

The case analysis did not evidence a clear differentiation in the positive or negative perceptions concerning the set of the standardized or singularized practices within the institution. Comprehensively, both set of practices put forth its enabling purposes (i.e. build of agreements, information and feedback; build of consensus, deliberation platform and generation of ideas, disconnection from the routine, or cohesion platform). However, it was one type of the standardized practice, the cyclical practices, which have enclosed higher number of antagonistic perspectives, suggesting contrasting narratives that highlighted its restrictive aspect. The particular case of the *joint meetings*, it presented divergent viewpoints comparing to the enabling experiences previously observed (i.e. scanty operational, very informative not deliberative, scanty bottom-up socialization, more useful to the Rectorate team, etc.).

Additionally, prospective views were associated to this particular practice; it was the case of the need to increase the bottom-up socialization of issues, to such a degree this aspect may be connected to the need of putting more emphasis on previous preparation of themes explored in the joint meetings, as well as the need to allow more time to the deliberative aspect of the meeting. In the case of the general board meetings, most of its perceptions were associated with being a very political platform, and a repetition from the joint meeting. The positive aspect was the association of it with a pacific platform of validation of decisions previously discussed (in the joint meetings).

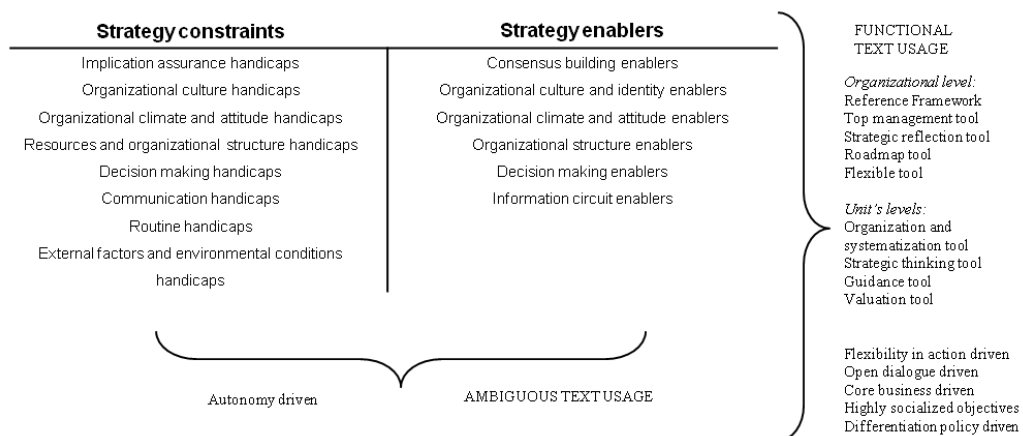
These negative or restrictive acquaintances were suggested to be derived from the different realities that were at place in the academic units, highlighting that units with more potential in attracting competitive revenues suggested to have presented less negative viewpoints. Also, this issue may be related to the distinct impact alignment being suggested by the narratives concerning the institutional strategic initiatives. Thus, the units that were more international resource competitive driven have suggested that the impact of strategic institutional initiatives was quite indifferent. That is, these units considered that they have already integrated the university strategic vision in their cultures, and that what they did was completely aligned with the university strategic direction, as such, what the university might formalize in a short-medium term strategy document (i.e. faculty policy, internationalization policies, etc.) does not seem to exert a direct impact across all the distinct units.

Drawing together the different viewpoints on the university strategy making process, it was possible to elaborate six types of strategizing behaviours. Most of these categories were

associated with the enabling purpose of the practices narrated by both top and middle academic managers. The positive perceptions were related to the: *flexibility in action driven, open dialogue driven, core business driven, highly socialized objectives driven and differentiation policy driven*. One category was concerned with a dubious perspective of the university strategizing practices: *autonomy driven*, which was more related to an ambiguity of the strategy institutional guidelines, which may suggest that it could be interpreted in different ways, as well as having distinct impact in the academic units, according to their own interests and competitive revenue income driven capacity. Furthermore, one interesting aspect emerging from middle managers narratives was the association of their strategizing roles as being “receptors of the institutional strategy”, throughout distinct practices (i.e. meetings, direct face-to-face-contact, committees, and discussion forums) where some different aspects of the strategy were worked out.

When exploring deeply academic manager’s comments on the university strategy text document, it was possible to draw six different functions: *Reference framework, Ambiguous tool, Strategic reflection, Roadmap tool, Flexible tool and Top Management tool*. Furthermore, middle managers also highlighted the utility of the strategy document that were elaborated at the unit’s levels (e.g. action plans, working document derived from the electoral program, etc), attributing to it four different functions: *Organization and systematization, Strategic thinking, Guidance, and Valuation tools*. By exploring the narratives throughout the dynamics that took place during the strategizing process, allowed the identification of distinct elements that were suggested as influencing the process in contrasting ways. Therefore, clustering together the negative and positive components, I have elaborated the main constraining and enabling drivers being suggested by the academic managers, which are illustrated as follows:

**Figure 44. Concurrence of strategizing constraints and enablers (Case 3)**



Source: Own elaboration

As can be observed in the above figure, the set of strategy enablers may be suggested as configuring a platform of descriptors that supported the functional use of the strategy text. There were four categories of enabling aspects that indicated a contiguous relationship: the organizational structure (e.g. institutional size) may have facilitated the information circuit enablers to take place (e.g. scanty barriers in communication flows, high transparency, etc.). This aspect in line with issues of organizational climate, culture, attitude and identity (e.g. sense of belonging, shared successes, cooperation climate...) was suggested to have further facilitated aspects of consensus building and decision making. As observed earlier, these enablers were suggested to drive strategizing behaviours that were associated to flexibility, open dialogue, core business driven, objectives socialization, and differentiation policy.

On the other hand, strategy constraints could not be clearly associated with specific strategizing behaviours or to some concrete text usage acquaintances. Most of the negative or reflective perceptions of top managers were rather related to amendments factors (e.g. more accuracy on incentives for involving internal and external stakeholders; enhancement of more joint mobilization capacity between pro-vice chancellors in the definition of strategic objectives or initiatives, or promoting a better homogenization in the administrative culture). Handicaps were also related to reflective aspects concerned to external factors (e.g. political and economical framework instability) or with difficulties in avoiding the action plan routine-making.

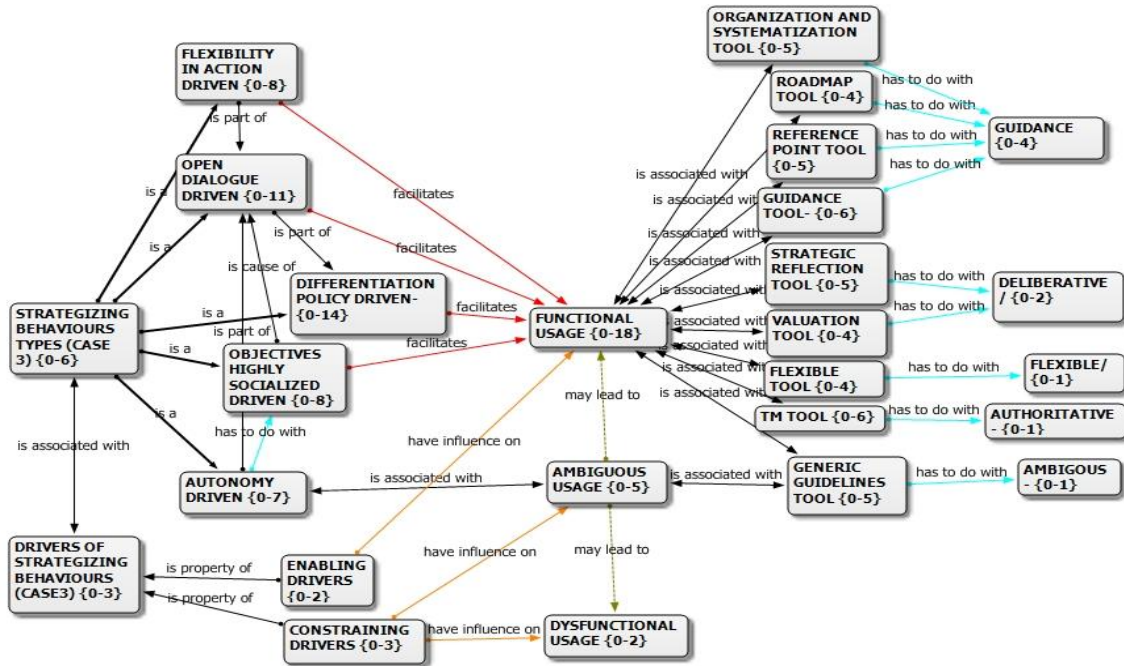
From the perspectives of middle managers, these handicaps were also very concerned with improvement of aspects of administrative process procedures, rather than strategic process itself (e.g. improvement in achieving a balance across the units in relation to their specific administrative and other supporting services needs, avoiding bureaucracy and duplicity of processes, counterbalancing the artificial division between the academic and administrative management, slow management process, civil servant mentality, etc.).

All of these constraints were suggested as being correction reference points that might hinder the efficiency of the unit's day to day activities. Also there were concerns related to the external factors, specifically related to the bureaucracy as a cultural trait, that even if the university tries to avoid, it has been suggested that some reproduction of negative patterns derived from the Spanish system contamination may have taken place.

Therefore, by connecting all the main themes emerging from the case analysis, it was possible to elaborate the following network, which associated the strategizing behaviours types with patterns of strategy text usage, that were further linked with text functions being attributed by academic managers. This arrangement correlation led to suggest the existence of five roles

being assigned to strategy texts in the university strategizing process: i) Guidance, ii) Deliberative, iii) Flexible, iv) Authoritative, and v) Ambiguous. The strategy text roles associated with the functional uses were strictly connected with the positive perceptions of the functions being attributed to the strategy text when managers talked about the text usage.

Figure 45. Roles of strategy texts in strategizing (Case 3)



Source: Own elaboration

Therefore, the above network suggests that most of the strategizing enablers (e.g. identity and attitude; organizational structure and culture; information circuit effectiveness, consensus building and decision making, etc.) have had influence on contributing to a functional use of the strategy document. The network further suggests the merger of the viewpoints of both academic managers at the top and middle levels, and the roles being attributed to the texts made reference to both institutional strategy texts, as well as to the units documents used in their daily management.

Accordingly, the Guidance, Flexible and Deliberative roles were both associated to middle and top manager's perspectives of strategy text in its use at the macro and micro organizational levels. In the case of the Authoritative role, it was more associated with top manager's viewpoint, which stressed out the authorship of the strategy document, specifically, it was not designed as a negotiation mechanism, and indeed it embedded the mayor priorities of the top management team, assuring that strategic issues were prioritized.

This previous role might present an association with the Ambiguous role, particularly; it may present both negative and positive perspectives. As such, due to its association with autonomy driven strategizing behaviour type, in case the strategizing enablers exert more influence rather than the constrainers (e.g. implication assurance, communication drawbacks, external factors, etc.) it may lead to a functional use. Therefore, the Ambiguous role, may lead to either functional or dysfunctional uses. In this case study, the narratives have suggested a higher degree of functional uses being taking place throughout the strategizing process.

### **4.3. Cross-Case Data Analysis**

After analyzing the individual cases, all the codes were grouped in one single set of codes according to their similarity of meanings. Therefore, I compared these results to verify the main themes (elements) appearing across the cases to assert the consistency of the categories based on similar results in order to be able to establish analytical generalizations or whether the differences and variations emerging across the cases would support theoretical replications, corroborating in establishing different theoretical prepositions.

Accordingly, following the integration of the results of the cross-case analysis, this sections focus on the descriptions of the comparison between the individual themes from the within-case analysis, supporting the elaboration of the integrated results of this doctoral dissertation. The comparison description is draw upon the main themes and categories emerging from each case, therefore the integration of the findings is explored in five main parts: I) the official strategy discourse embedded in the universities strategy texts (how strategy texts are like); II) the repertoire of strategy practices and their enabling or constraining attributes; III) drivers of and forms of strategizing behaviours, IV) Functions and forms of strategy text usage, and V) strategy texts roles derived from distinct forms of strategizing behaviours.

#### ***4.3.1. The official strategy discourse embedded in the universities strategy texts***

The main question driving this analysis was *how strategy text is like in each university and how it evolved over time?* This question was aimed at exploring and identifying the main textual and discursive features in order to further examine how and with what consequences the texts were used during strategizing activities across the universities. The main results of the textual and discursive features across the cases are illustrated in Appendix 12A.

It was possible to note the main differences and similarities between the institutions. Not all the documents were written and structured following the typical strategic planning process, therefore, there were a variety of structures formats when formalizing the strategy texts, which in some cases have included partial elements of strategic planning (e.g. mission, vision, etc.), however convergence was found in the inclusion of objectives and proposed strategies as well as actions associated with it.

Concerning the evolution of the texts and the influence previous texts have exerted on the planning continuity, the concept of intertextuality was explored. Accordingly, high degree of variance could be found. In the case of the technological university, it could be only observed between strategy texts authored by the same top management team, however the last two strategy documents that were also authored by the same team, did not present any explicit correlation. The research university also entrusted some variability, nevertheless higher indexations of mentions were found across the texts, reflecting a more distinguished sense of intertextuality and strategy learning and justification from previous documents. It was the regional university that brought forward the high degree of intertextuality across its strategy documents, where clearly citations and contextualization of its contribution or change needed overtime could be identified.

With reference to the texts content structures examination, it was possible to observe that the key areas and concepts were very similar between the texts, emphasising higher convergence on aspects such as research, quality, people or teaching, that were in consonance with the key strategic areas higher education institutions should often attend. The density of the keywords were moreover related to research and quality; however, when observing more in detail each of the texts, it was possible to note that the type of format of the document or the changes in the contextual environmental, have led to changes in the density of the key concepts frequency. For example, in the Technological University, the concept of management was associated with a high degree of density across the texts, which may be due to the type of text (e.g. government and or action plan).

On the other hand, in the case of the regional university, it was interesting to note the higher emphasis upon EHEA (European Higher Education Area) during the year previous to the new curriculum implementation. The research university presented predominance over the triangle of research, quality and learning. When contrasting the frequency of the key concepts with the main strategic areas in which the texts were being structured into, it is interesting to observe that “people” was one aspect that presented higher convergence, however, other aspects of research, teaching, learning, innovation were being addressed with different emphasis across the

universities as well as in the internal continuity of their plans. It was the regional university that have included and elaborated its texts using the main elements of a typical strategic planning process and have kept it overtime.

When looking for the amplitude of the texts, that is, the extent the documents presented concrete actions or more broad guidelines, in this line Giraudeau (2008) talked about strategy documents as implicitly open programme and as explicitly open projects. In the first case, the formal structure of the planning document may be present as closed programme for action, it may be a support for quite open strategic thinking, particularly, and the closed plan may serve as basis for further imagination. In the latter case, documents are presented in a more explicitly way, sketching strategic lines that may be used to justify strategic decisions. In this matter Abdallah and Langley (2013) have addressed this concept as content expansiveness, to which extent the strategy text are open to a broad range of potential actions to be further carried out, which is associated to the potential ambiguity presented by strategy texts.

Several authors have addressed this construct of “strategy ambiguity” in which written texts remain open to alternative interpretation, allowing a variety of stakeholder to accept them (e.g. Eisenberg 1984; Contractor and Ehrlich 1993; Tracy and Ashcraft 2001). Accordingly, the texts across the universities were mostly presented as broad documents; they were structured around overall objectives and strategic lines and actions, being mostly characterized as tentative documents, which is in accordance with the Giraudeau (2008) characterization of strategy text as explicitly open projects. According to Fenton and Langley (2011) the greater the ambiguity expressed in strategic plans, the greater the potential variety in modes of consumption (p.1183), specifically, ways it may be used.

One aspect within the text content was the forecasting of practices across the documents and within the documents in the same university. This aspect was relevant to further understand the extent the plans were to remain open in its usage. Accordingly, the texts did not include an important number of practices, in the case of the technological universities; the most contemplated practices associated with the strategic guidelines were committees and meetings. The regional university emphasised its quality process certification across the units, as well as the dynamic of the planning negotiation cycle. The research university was the case that presented less similarity between the anticipation of practices. Across the texts, it has included an assortment of different practices such as meetings, information charts, alliances, etc. The relationship of these practices with the use of the texts is explored in the next subsection.



Having to do with production process of the plan being described within the documents, it was possible to note that the texts were not very informative of the way they were written. Only some of the texts illustrated the phases of its production. The technological university was the case that presented less informative description of the methodological procedures, and the regional university was the one that presented more information. Overall, the texts were elaborated by top management team and further open to participation in the wide-university community, ending up in being approved by the university government bodies. The processes were mostly convergent in all the cases.

Concerning the actors to be further involved in the production process and in further exploitation of the strategic lines and objectives being set, the documents vary considerably, however most of the actors were implicitly mentioned, which may have to do with the broad character of the documents. The same aspect was associated with the degree the plans set a concrete schedule framing for the proposed actions. Comprehensively, most of the text did not frame their “intentions” under specific timeframes, often this scheduling were more related to the action plans associated with the strategic guidelines.

As regard to the discursive features of the documents, the analysis attention was put on genre (aspects of form and language) and concrete textual discursive characteristics (e.g. intentionality of the documents, justification of its importance, use of specific terminology, etc.). Concerning the use of the language, the documents were overall characterized by the use of passive voice and mostly impersonal presentation of its contexts. The narrative like structure was often employed when the documents included an introduction section signed by the vice-chancellor or responsible of the planning office, that was elaborated following a more storytelling style.

Notwithstanding, the overall texts content across the cases were developed in a form of “list” of objectives and proposals. In this line of enquire, studies have examined whether and to what degree strategy texts are indeed formulated as narratives and how this influenced their persuasiveness for different audiences. For instance, Shaw et al. (1998) contrasted strategic plans presented in the form of “lists” or “bullet points” and those presented as stories, arguing that the narrative form is more powerful in conveying meaning.

The vocabulary driven content varies across the texts, however most of the documents made use of strategy related terms (e.g. objective, indicators, vision, mission, values, actions, etc.). The regional university was the case that overall presented the most technical driven content, including extensively terms such as BSC, SWOT, quality system, critical factors, EFQM model, etc. According to Vaara et al. (2010) the use of specific terminology have implication for

knowledge and authority, due to the fact that this vocabulary may facilitate but also constrain the conventions associated with how to discuss strategies, how to write up strategies and how to interpret the final text of the document. This aspect is also relevant in the context of the universities, where might be the case that some people across the organizational levels, may master the discourse presented in the texts better than others due to their background, education or exposure to strategic management.

The issue of the discourse variability was explored by Vaara et al. (2010) as discourse innovation that may present a strategy text, that is, to what extent the statements of the texts shape key ideas about new priorities. In this regard, the texts comprehensively presented some variance on the elaboration of its new versions, even if sometimes were not possible to identify in the text a self-authorization of changes derived of this asymmetry. However, most of the identified variability was related to different contextual factors framing the documents, as could be the case of the research university stating in its text the consolidation of the university model, the maintenance of structure and dynamic, and the creations of new paths for future actions.

The textual agency, namely the presentation and justification of the text purpose, was a feature that most of the documents have addressed. The technological university was the case where the texts lesser included purpose statements, given the fact that when structured as government plan or action plan, it did not present any introduction section or background development contextual information. This aspect of textual agency was explored by Vaara et al. (2010) as self-authorization, a typical characteristic of strategy genre. This means that the strategy communicated its own importance, through the inclusion of sentences that described and defined the purpose and objectives of the document. Clear patterns on this aspect could not be identified, due to the fact that some of the documents were not self-authorizing in this sense.

As observed, the documents were very broad in presenting strategic lines and objectives, were mostly structured in “list” format, presented overall impersonal style and mostly passive in identifying implicit actors, and the use of grammatical features was associated with the mixture of tentative and affirmative modes (Giraudeau 2008). Specifically, most of the documents describe strategic lines (tentative), in a broad format, from which further activities were draw in a complementary action plan (affirmative). The documents were not always self-authorizing of its purpose, and the discourse variability was not always very clearly justified.

Therefore, after analysing the textual features of the strategy documents, the question to be further explored is, given these specific characteristics of the texts, were they used in the same way across the universities? How and with what consequences they were consumed? The next

section deals with the integration of the use of these texts with the academic manager acquaintances with strategy practices.

#### ***4.3.2. The repertoire of practices of strategy practices and their enabling or constraining attributes***

The concept of strategic practices is related to the identification of formal and informal operating procedures of acting through which strategy activity is constructed. Jarzabkowski (2003) identify not only formal procedures (e.g. direction setting, resource allocation and monitoring and control), but also habitual and social modes that are historically and culturally situated and have a collectively understood status. Hence, as defined by Mantere (2005), strategic practices can be understood as particular recurrent strategizing activities within strategy shaping such as recurring meetings, workshops, process and rituals. As this formal events deal with certain topics, the events determine which participants are to take part, which issues are to be discussed, or what information is to be made available.

From the perspective of strategizing episodes, the formal events can be understood as temporal points at which a switch from the day-to-day operational context into an exceptional strategic context takes place (Hendry and Seidl 2003). Concerning the different sites of interactions between managers, they participate in pre-planned, formal events, but also use informal interactions for changing, confirming or reinforcing strategy (Hoon 2007). Therefore, the strategic context is the result of formal and informal interactions between top and middle managers. The informal interactions are understood as strategic conversations (Gephart 1997) verbal interaction of two or more people in which the interaction can range from a single speech act to an extensive network that constitutes arguments and narratives (e.g. Boje 1991; Ford and Ford 1995).

In the case of this dissertation, the narrative lens used to identify the strategy practices attributes aimed at analyzing which practices served as platform that promoted more interactivity, especially concerned with the strategy alignment between macro and micro organizational levels throughout the strategy text usage. Accordingly, the focus of analysis was down to recognise the formal and informal procedures that were mentioned both by middle and top managers, when constructing and interacting in activities involved with strategy making. The aim here was not only to check list the main strategy practices taking place, but also to draw out their main purposes (constraining or enabling) being attributed by academic managers in order

to further understand modes of strategy text consumption in the university contexts in relation to strategy texts usages.

Henceforth, two main broad categories were determined across the three case studies: standardized and singularized practices. This categorization had to do in some part with the definition of formal and informal practices found in the literature (Jarzabkowski 2003; Hendry and Seidl 2003; Mantere 2005). The main consideration when drawing out this categorization was associated with the influence exerted by the macro discourse in the formal activities. Consequently, the standardized practices were more associated with practices taking place at the macro organizational level, being formalized and recurrent, occurring in specific periods or loosely coupled, as well as presenting a supporting characteristic (e.g. cyclical; episodic and supportive).

On the other hand, the singularized practices were associated with occurring events in micro levels, which could be also formal (i.e. pre-planned, such as the schools board meetings) or completely unruled, as is the case of the direct face-to-face contacts or informal networks (i.e. unruled and regulated). The cross-comparison table of the main identified strategy practices are illustrated in Appendix 12B. Therefore, when exploring the academic manager's perceptions of these practices, it was possible to categorize the set of practices that were associated with either enabling or constraining purposes, expressly, that have had a higher potential of either promoting or restricting engagement in the university strategizing process. Accordingly, the relevance found in this analysis, was the identification of some micro-activities carried out inside these two sets of strategy practices that were providing illustration for their apprehension being more positive or negative. The illustration of the cross-comparison of the practices attributions is found in Appendix 12C.

It could be observed that the association of constraining attributes being assigned to the strategy practices mentioned by the different academic managers across cases did not follow a clear pattern, yet it was possible to note that superior references linked with constraining attributes were more related to standardized practices. It was also interesting to contemplate that in the same university a particular type of practice was seen as being both associated with constraining and enabling attributes, specifically, different experiences have been acquainted to the same practice. The questions here are: why such different perspectives may have risen in the same institution? Why academic managers have had different perceptions when engaging in these practices?

It was the *technological university* that have shown a higher number of codes being attributed to constraining experiences. Focusing on the practices that have embedded both attributes (i.e. committees, units board meetings, planning cycle strategy internal negotiation), it was possible to observe that the strategizing activities were more centralized to top management team, and that enabling experiences were more associated with the kind of personal relationships that were being maintained between top management team and middle managers at different units. When there were more political alignment and more prevalence of direct contacts between the units and the Rectorate, more enabling experiences could be found. Also, most of the enabling attributes associated with the standardized practices were being manifested by top managers. However, the prevailing discourses were more associated with inflexibility, scanty spaces for strategic thinking and a process very restrictive to economic indicators.

On the other hand, when middle managers mentioned more enabling experiences, it could be associated with isolated experiences, emerging initiatives that were not strictly derived from the dynamic of strategy internal planning negotiation. The overall strategizing process at the university may be associated with the Jarzabkowski's procedural strategizing type (2005), yet adapting it to a complex and pluralistic context (universities) rather than corporate management. Procedural strategizing involves an administrative, formalised and hierarchical focus, with scanty interactive bottom up information flow. In the case of the technological university, the interactions in practices when participating in the formulation of the strategy text, or when negotiating internal objectives, seemed to be illustrated as very system dependent and with a high focus on budget distribution.

The *regional university* presented more coherence of academic managers narratives associated with enabling attributes of practices. It was the practice of the planning cycle strategy internal negotiation that held both positive and negative experiences, and as the case of the technological university, it also presented both constraining and enabling attributes. This practice was interesting in providing a more profound understanding of the use and the exploitation of the strategy documents and the supporting materials across the institution during its strategizing process. The university, due to its reduced size, suggested that it did not manifested the relevance of maintaining a political alignment with the Rectorate in order to get the things done, and the standardized practices, such as the general board meetings, or the planning monitoring (catalogue of indicators) were seen as spaces or tools through which was possible to be informed and participate in what was going on in the university and also, in the latter case, allowed to have a common framework of reference.

The problematic with the practice of the strategy internal planning negotiation was down to the narrow economic vision being associated with it. In relation to this problematic, on the one hand, top managers mentioned that the units when setting the stage for negotiating objectives, most of them want to ensure that the objectives were going to be met, therefore the targets were set in very low grades. Consequently, according to top managers, this negotiation interactivity put forward the need of enhancing great energy on building a consensus upon the optimum target grade that would to be met. On the other hand, some middle managers participants stressed out that this negotiation were not really focused on providing space for real strategic thinking, given the fact that the margin for manoeuvre was very limited and budget redistribution was one of the main concern. Therefore, the focus was suggested to rely upon indicators rather than the process that may lead to specific results.

Overall, the strategizing process that can be suggested from the exploration of the strategy practices attributes, may be also associated with a process similar to Jarzabkowski (2005) procedural strategizing, due to the university very systematized and centralized strategic management planning procedures. However, as we could observe in the within-case description, this university has undergone a period of disruption associated with changes needed in the routine driven, in which have turn the planning internal negotiation, and to its lack of communication potential. Historically, the strategy planning responsibility has been in charge of the technical office, which has suggested to have contributed to the formalization of very technical documents that were used and followed as institutionalized routine procedures more than a dynamic interactive process, that is, strategizing became an administrative activity.

For instance, the resource allocation according to the objectives setting were often not linked to the university strategy but rather based on historical patterns embedded in the taken for granted planning routine. Subsequently, top management team tacitly endorsed a new strategy document, framing a time horizon to it and simplifying its technical content driven in order to promote its communication potential. Also, the dynamic of the budget distribution was changed, which drove changes in the way units should address the indicators, forcing a rupture in the routine pattern being followed. On doing this, the suggested intention was to rebuild the strategizing process more in line with a reciprocal process, similar to Jarzabkowski's interactive strategizing (2005), which may be characterized by open and direct communication, persuasion and negotiation in the task of continuously building shared frameworks of meaning.

Respect the *research university*; it presented also higher convergence of narratives that associated enabling attributes to the university strategy practices, similar to the case of the regional university. The technological and the regional universities presented very similar

strategizing procedures concerning the interactivity of the strategy internal activities. Both processes were grounded on planning negotiations framed upon objectives and indicators, which results led to an increase in the unit's budget. As we could see, in both cases this approach led to constraining experiences to emerge. The research university totally differ in its internal strategy interactivity.

In both case 1 and case 2, the units had to present some form of strategy document in order to “negotiate” the initiatives, in alignment with the institutional strategy. In the case of the research university, these dynamics were very contrasting. Internally, the documents that the middle managers talked about were characterized as being a proper strategy document, a working plan, an action plan, yet most of them were not formalized, rather being suggested as working documents with several “notes” on it. A quote from a pro-vice chancellor is very illustrative of this internal dynamic: *“...the alignment is done by trying to persuade, to win them, to be open to listen a lot, trying to write what they said ... that is, set standards, but make sure you give enough room if they can add something...”*

This dynamic was framed under a high degree of autonomy that was associated with a flexible budget system. The unit's budget system was based on diversifying sources procedures, specifically, the confluence between the standard budgets of normal functioning, the budget associated with the teaching plan activities and the budget associated with the research revenue derived from the overall unit's contribution.

The most mentioned practice was the “joint meeting”, a space that gathered together the entire senior and middle management representatives previous to the university general governing council meeting. This space was considered by top manager as a space to talk and to listen, and most of all, on listening, the aim was to test the topics that were to be presented in the governing council to be validated, or the ones that required further work to be consented upon. Most of middle managers have associated enabling attributes to this practice, particularly concerning the feeling of being part of the university management, as well as the important opportunity to carry out corridor informal networks ex ante and ex post. Howbeit, there were some constraining experiences being noted, most of it were associated to the feeling that this practice was becoming too much formal, overly informative and due to its limited time, scanty space for deliberation were being allowed.

Additionally, concern was put upon the need of carrying out a better preparation of this meeting, for instance one middle manager mentioned that some information material of what was going to be discussed should be shared previously, in order to be read and shared in their unit, and be

able to give one's view on something that had been thought before. This was one reason which indicated that the joint meeting served for the socialization of top-down issues rather than bottom-up, which was suggested to be more useful for the top management team. However, this constraining attribute was observed to be more associated with some units with lesser potential capacity in attracting research competitive revenues. This might also suggest that more strong income generating capacity units may be influenced by strategy practices in different ways contrasting to less powerful income generating capacity driven units.

Overall, the strategizing process being suggested by the practices in use in the research university may share similarities with the Jarzabkowski interactive strategizing (2005), where an ongoing social exchanges take place, in which groups (middle and senior management, and other members) argued for its own interpretations of strategic initiatives before reaching collective agreements. This is particular evident in the practices in use such as the joint meetings, the informal networks, direct contacts and reporting.

In order to understand further the questions raised when exploring the enabling and constraining attributes being related to the strategizing practices across the case (e.g. Why academic managers have had different perceptions when engaging in these practices), the contextual elements were being explored in their narratives, aiming to see which elements were more influenced than other in each case, and which aspects could provide illustrative explanations that may suggest different engagement experiences to take place.

#### ***4.3.3. Drivers and forms of strategizing behaviours***

In Appendix 12D is illustrated a summarised table with the comparison of the findings related to the contextual elements driving the different forms of strategizing behaviours across the cases. From this comparison it was possible to determine that there were different forms of strategizing behaviours across the universities, which were being driven by internal and external dynamics. Taking into account these contextual elements and the characteristics of each form of strategizing behaviour observed across the cases, the categories that shared some similarities were thus integrated. For instance, in the case of the technological university, the *problematic* and *ambiguous* types were combined into the *puzzling* strategizing.

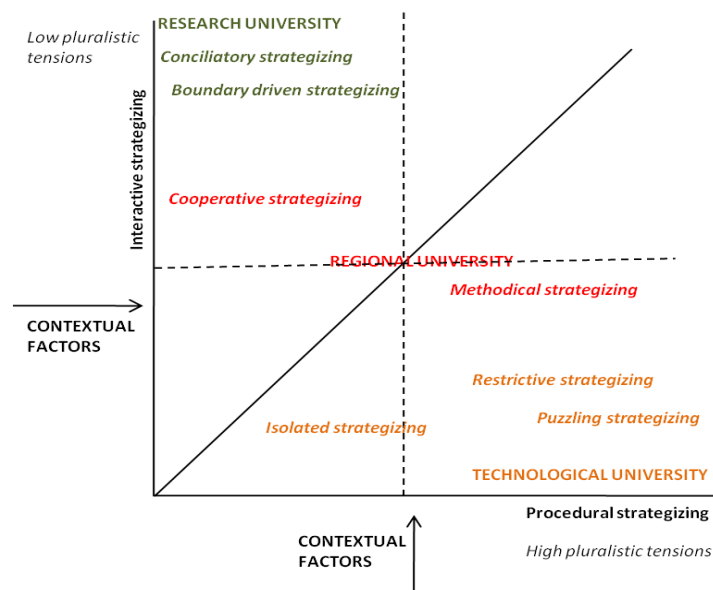
Also the *reactive* was merged with the *political dependent*, to form the *restrictive* strategizing type. In the case of the regional university, the *routine*, *normative* and *technical* were drawn together to form the *methodical* strategizing. And the *participative* and *disruptive* were unified



to articulate the *cooperative* strategizing. In the research university, the *open dialogue*, *flexible*, *objectives highly socialized* and *autonomy driven* were integrated to form the *conciliatory* strategizing behaviour. The core business driven was renamed to *boundary driven* strategizing, in order to illustrate the idea of direction focus upon the excellent boundaries of the institution.

The final categories that have emerged from this integration are illustrated in figure 46, which integrates the identified strategizing behaviours into two separated axis, which were inspired in Jarzabkowski (2005) types of strategizing (procedural and interactive).

**Figure 46. Integration of strategizing behaviours across cases**



Source: Own elaboration

The vertical axis indicates on the one hand higher presence of elements that facilitated building shared frameworks of meaning, and on the other, there are low pluralistic pressures influences, while the horizontal axis indicates that there are higher focus on administrative, formalized and hierarchical procedures and that there are high pluralistic pressures influencing the strategy making process.

The pluralistic pressures concept derives from the works of Jarzabkowski and Fenton (2006) that have explored the interdependence between strategizing and organizing in pluralistic contexts, noting that in some organizations pluralistic tensions are primarily internally motivated, arising from the multiplicity of organizing processes to cope with divergent interests, cultures and identities. In others, in contrast, such tensions are primarily externally motivated, responding to competing environmental demands. Comparing this concept of pluralism with the

patterns of behaviours identified across the three case studies, as can be observed, the three cases are positioning in different points along the axis.

The technological university is placed in the section associated to a higher level of procedural strategizing elements, with its restrictive and puzzling strategizing form being allocated on its extreme part. The university have historically developed a planning cycle and a potent information management system to monitor and build the management by objectives and performance indicators into the University culture, which in great part was derived from the contractual funding demands from the public authorities. There were however, a high level of internal pressures derived from the university structured, large number of units that were the result of a merger of schools with different cultures and identities.

On the other hand, externally, there was the problematic of the funding dynamic and the political policies that were not always stable. Both restrictive and puzzling strategizing behaviours were suggested to have been highly influenced by these pluralistic internal and external contextual pressures. The isolated strategizing was placed on the other extreme of the horizontal axis, which indicates that this is a behaviour directed derived from the internal pluralistic pressures, that is, the units work out its own interests on its own way, due to the fact that the central university governance was suggested to not prioritizing the particularities. These individual and isolated initiatives can also share some similarities with the interactive strategizing, but more at the micro-level.

The two strategizing behaviours (conciliatory and boundary driven) of the research university were placed into the top left of the vertical axis, which indicates that the strategy making process in the university was embedded in an platform of frequent dialogue between top and middle academic managers, where a common ground within which to address different interests and goals was established. This aspect in conjunction with the strong shared culture of excellence and differentiation that was ingrained in the university identity, suggests to have contributed to a very low influence of pluralistic tensions to emerge. The conciliatory strategizing was related to the work being done on building this common ground for strategic actions, based on dialogue, flexibility and autonomy.

Furthermore, the boundary driven strategizing was associated with emphasising the university core priorities. This latter aspect could have led to the emergence of tensions, given the different interest derived from distinct units comprising the university. However, this emphasis on the core business was achieved by working out equilibrium of teaching and research, exploiting a profit-sharing mechanism, that is, the departments gained a share of the total revenue incoming

from research competitive resources, while the top-earning departments gained an adapted share according to its higher contribution, counterbalancing financial and branding benefits.

In this manner, it was possible to note that the discourse that was shared by most of middle managers was associated with the aspect that everyone has its own way of contributing into the university strategy development, and a quotation from one interviewee illustrates this vision derived from this low pluralistic tension: *“I see that here there is the culture or climate where an award given to one of us is a prize shared by all. I’ve been working in another university which awards would lead to more internal competitiveness rather than cooperation... it is true that there is competition, but having a group of people who have many merits, I think that’s what you want to convey, the idea that it favours us all...”*.

Therefore, it was possible to observe that the external contextual factors suggested to have had less influence in the university strategy making; the external policies, the economic restriction, etc., were being mentioned as possible drivers influencing the strategizing behaviour, howbeit some affirmative drivers such as the organizational structure (i.e. reduced size), governance and management style, climate and identity were suggested as counterbalancing those pressures, if comparing to the other cases.

The regional university was placed in the middle position, half way through each of the axis. As can be observed, the university presented the characterization of both procedural and interactive strategizing; on the one hand the cooperative strategizing behaviour was placed alongside the elements of the interactive process, while the methodical strategizing was put beside the procedural type. Historically, the university have developed a documented strategy process, throughout the consolidation of its strategic management system, which was mostly in charge of the technical planning office. Initially, the elaboration of the basis of what had become the university strategic management system have been based on a very interactive and participative process, which resulted in the formalization of the documents that have been analysed in this doctoral dissertation.

Notwithstanding, overtime, the strategizing practices embedded in the university strategic management system, have developed an automatism behaviour procedure, as observed in the emergence of the normative, routine and technical driven strategizing behaviours at the university. This methodical form was subjected to high pressure of the external environment (meeting the contractual funding demands), but was also influenced by the internal management dynamics, specifically, the essential focus of the technical management team seemed to have been put on monitoring the catalogue of indicators and the whole planning system, rather than

collaborative strategy development, even if there was the strategy internal negotiation biannually, the involvement was suggested to have been very limited, formal and episodic.

Nonetheless, the regional university went through a period of disruption associated with the top management team renewal in 2010 and subsequently a deep revision process took place, with special accent being put on exploring what middle managers thought about the strategic management process dynamic. It enhanced the top management recognition that more authority and visibility should be given to the university strategy and strategizing, increasing top management legitimacy over it, which has led to shift the methodical strategizing to a more cooperative form. Still remained procedural aspects, however more autonomy and flexibility were given as incentives to counterbalance the routine driven “form filling” into a more dynamic and flexible practice.

Comprehensively, the understanding of the influences of contrasting drivers in the emergency of different ways managers engage in strategy making, which might result in distinct forms of strategizing, is relevant to further understand the question driving this study: the role of the strategy text in these dynamics. In this line, Hendry et al. (2010) have noted that imbalance of power in organizations (between macro and micro levels) may impede strategizing progress and in combination with disagreements on strategic perspectives derived from contextual factors (internal and external pressures) may frustrate the strategizing process or even make it dysfunctional.

#### ***4.3.4. Functions and forms of strategy text usage***

This section integrates the functions attributed to the strategy text documents in the universities strategizing processes. Thus the focus is upon answering the question of how texts were used across the universities, based on their functions. As observed in the previous section, the strategy text attributes and uses were associated with either dysfunctional or functional patterns, impartial or ambiguous, further integrating them into the strategizing dynamic being discussed previously. In Appendix 12E is illustrated an outline of the different perspectives being attributed to the strategy documents, according to their uses.

Correspondingly, it could be observed that when using the strategy text, academic managers in different organizational levels have presented contrasting discourses. When integrating these initial individual categories found in each case, I have elaborated cross-convergent categories combining them according to shared similarities. Therefore, the matrix beneath illustrates the

association between the form strategy texts were acquainted by academic managers and its usages embedded in a specific strategizing behaviour dynamic.

**Table 10. Convergence of strategy text functions with strategizing behaviours**

<b>Strategy Document seen as</b>	<b>Attributed uses</b>	<b>Strategizing behaviours associated with</b>
<b>Bureaucratic Abstracted Compulsory Restricted</b>	<i>Dysfunctional</i>	Restricted Methodical Puzzling
<b>Point of reference Guidance Legitimacy Authority (TM tool) Strategic thinking Flexible Coordination Persuasion</b>	<i>Functional</i>	Cooperative Boundary driven Conciliatory  Isolated
<b>Budget distribution Political document but useful</b>	<i>Impartial</i>	Methodical
<b>Generic guidelines</b>	<i>Ambiguous</i>	Conciliatory / Restricted

Source: Own elaboration

This table allows us to observe that the strategy documents across the universities have allowed multiple uses. This result goes in line with Giraudeau (2008), who noted that apart from defining the stepping stones that will make it possible to evaluate the way the document is implemented, it may also justify analytically the strategic choices that are to be made or have been made. Also others uses were identified by Giraudeau (2008) such as building synthetic visions of strategies, orientated the imagination in specific directions, provide the readers of strategy with multiple possibilities to act or sketch out peripheral strategies that ought to be thought of. Some of these described uses that were associated to a corporate context can also be identified in a pluralistic context such as universities (e.g. coordination, strategic thinking, and point of reference).

Giraudeau has also found creative roles for strategy plans, contrasting it to the common visions assigned to it as being an inflexible tool, contradictory to innovative strategizing. On exploring the context in which those plans were used, Giraudeau put forward new roles for the plan itself, for the practitioners and for the planning activity from which the text was derived. For instance, planning activity was seen an opportunity for debates across hierarchies, not just aimed at producing a single committing plan, and while plans can convey information about contexts and hence “educate” their audience, planners (practitioners) may use plans as legitimate means.

Therefore, the multiple uses observed across cases, also presented some of these creative roles (Giraudeau 2008) that were associated with plans being seen as tool that allowed strategic

thinking, flexibility in actions, guidance and point of reference for initiatives. Some of this usage patterns could be observed between the cases, for instance, Appendix 12E illustrates this cross-occurrence. It was possible to see that the patterns that have had high occurrence were: point of reference, guidance and strategic thinking tool. This usage was associated to a functional role, that is, the text was seen as practical outputs. One of the roles that were found to be relevant in the context of universities was the text being seen as a legitimacy tool, that is, the possible initiatives that were being made in local levels, may have used the institutional guidelines as a source for justifying it. A narrative from a participant may illustrate this point: “*what we are doing here totally fits with what the university is doing...*” However this role was only being clearly identified in the research university.

On the other hand, these pluralistic sites provided also other types of roles for the strategy documents that were in contraposition to the creative role being previously put forward. Accordingly, the roles which were associated to dysfunctional uses, did not present a clear pattern across the cases. For instance, the bureaucratic feature was the only pattern that could be observed in the regional and technological university respectively. In the case of ambiguous and impartial uses, there were more isolated patterns within cases. In the first case, it derived from the strategy text seen as a generic guideline enclosed in a high autonomy driven dynamic, that may derive to a functional use or not.

Specifically, in the case of the research university, its generic guidelines were interpreted as a vague document, in some participants perspectives it was good due to the fact that it provided a reference point, but on the other hand, other perspectives might interpreted this vagueness as not comprising a practical tool. In the analyzed case, the ambiguous usage suggested to have led to a more creative consumption rather than dysfunctional. This consequence might have being influenced by the contextual elements that were discussed in the previous section dealing with drivers of strategizing behaviours. In the case concerning the impartial use, it was one characteristic identified in the technological university that was derived from the documents being given a very specific aim (budget distribution) and also a political document (linkage with the budget distribution function and normative procedures) that may not clearly result in functional usage.

One interest result of this study was the possibility to carry out the concurrence of strategy text functions with strategizing behaviours identified across the cases. This was particular relevant, due to the fact that in order to adequate understand the role that strategy texts exert in the strategy making interactivity, it is of utterly importance to understand the elements that were influencing in different strategizing behaviours taking place crosswise. This association may

provide a better visualization of the relationship between the strategy document with the planners (practitioners), practices and praxis.

Consequently, it was possible to identify that the dysfunctional uses were more associated with strategizing being characterized as restricted, methodical and puzzling. Also, the methodical strategizing behaviour was seemed to be influencing impartial uses of the strategy document, which may impede the exploitation of the full potential that the strategizing process could provide. On top of that, the restricted strategizing type was also linked with the ambiguous text usage, due to the fact that in the case the vagueness would not be interpreted as a positive aspect (point of reference for creative imagination), it might end up as restricting its full potential.

Additionally, positive perspectives of the generic characteristic of the strategy document might be influenced by a conciliatory strategizing behaviour. Thus, it also suggested that not only how the text may be written that is important to its usage effectiveness, rather the context in which it is derived (different strategizing behaviours) may lead to a better understanding of the text role and its consequence for strategy implementation.

Furthermore, it was possible to determine that the drivers comprising the cooperative, boundary driven and conciliatory strategizing behaviours were being suggested as influencing the functional uses of the strategy documents. Also the isolated strategizing may be associated with the functional usage, however it was observed only in one case, the technological university, and it was particularly related to the use of the documents of the units (i.e. working plan, actions plan, etc.) that were not necessarily associated with the institutional strategy internal planning dynamic. Accordingly, the functional usage did not present a clear correlation across the cases; it was the research and regional university that more clearly conferred a convergence on this aspect. This observation may be consequence of some of the contextual factors, such as organizational culture, management style or organizational structure and size, which were discussed in the section that have dealt with the strategizing behaviours drivers.

The next section deals with integrating the analysis being done so far, in order to overall illustrate the response for the research problem that was investigated during this doctoral dissertation: how strategy texts were used when engaging academic managers in strategizing?, which further derived in the research question of “what is the role of strategy text in strategizing?”

#### *4.3.5. Strategy text roles derived from distinct forms of strategizing behaviours*

In piecing it all together, in order to describe the results concerning the identification of strategy text roles that were suggested as being more effective in engaging academic managers in strategizing, I have connected the practices experiences, the drivers and elements influencing in enabling or constraining acquaintances with strategizing behaviours taking place across the cases.

Correspondingly, in the general analysis of the data, I had noticed that there was a dominance of standardized practices being associated with constraining experiences. However this finding was more evident in the technological and regional university. The singularized practices like informal discussions, direct face-to-face contacts were most often experienced as enabling in almost organizations. Exceptions to the pattern of (standardized= constraining), was found in all the universities, where particular standardized practices were both being experienced as positive and negative respectively. For instance, in the technological university, two contrasting narratives coming from middle managers when they talked about one example of a cyclical practice, may illustrate this exception: “there is scanty flexibility” and “it facilitates to approach to the university vision”.

In this manner, the patterns of constraining or enabling engagement experiences being associated with the strategy practices-in-use across the universities were analyzed in the context of elements that could be influencing these different experiences, in order to understand why such exceptions were occurring. This has led to the identification of drivers that were determining the distinct forms of strategizing behaviours. These drivers were associated with internal and external dynamics, being on the one hand affirmatives, and on the other, undermining. The internal undermining dynamics were associated with power struggles, communications drawbacks, participation and implication assurance, language, routine, organizational culture and climate, management handicaps (e.g. leadership, decision making, style).

On the other hand, the affirmative internal dynamics were related to similar aspects: organizational structure, culture and identity, management style, decision making and leadership, language aspects and communication efficiency, attitude and consensus building. In the case of the external dynamics, it was mostly concerned with governance and policies frameworks and other external factors such as the economic crises, higher education system overall functioning, etc.



When integrating the analysis of the practices-in-use with the different affirmative and or undermining drivers that were observed across the cases, it was possible to explore further why some practices were being more constraining than others in different universities. That is, when the combination of the internal and external undermining drivers was exceeding the affirmative dynamics, it has been suggested that high pluralistic tensions were taking place (see figure 46). On the contrary, when internal affirmative dynamics were overthrowing the undermining aspects, it suggested that the external drivers were also exerting less influence. Therefore, it suggested to have favoured less pluralistic tensions to emerge. These combinations of dynamics outlined the emergence of distinct forms of strategizing behaviours when academic managers engaged in the university strategy making practices and consequently, according to the strategizing form at place, different balance of enabling or constraining experiences with practices-in-use could be noted.

Accordingly, in the technological and regional university, the strategizing behaviours appeared in a more constrained form, which is represented by the restricted, puzzling and methodical forms. In the framework of these strategizing behaviours, the way the academic managers used the strategy texts were associated with contingent, normative and technical tools. Thus, practice like “internal planning cycle strategy negotiation” was the one that had most constraining experiences. Additionally, in both technological and regional universities other forms of strategizing behaviours were also observed.

For instance, in the case of the technological university, a more detached form of strategizing, which was categorized as isolated, was observed in the distinct university units, which suggested a more facultative exploitation of the strategy documents, which were being narrated as deliberative and advisory tools. This was a particular relevant aspect in this case, due to the fact that it stressed out two different perspectives at the macro and micro levels: middle managers when talking about the university institutional strategy text, they were interpreting it as a contingent tool, nevertheless, when talking about the local document, they were advising it as holding deliberative and advisory functions.

In the case of the regional university, it did not present the situation identified in the technological university, due to the fact that there was a higher convergence between the narratives from middle and top managers concerning the functions of the strategy text. Howbeit, the constrained aspect highlighted here was indeed associated with the technical language dominance of the university strategic management process, and the long running methodological practice procedure that evolved the process into an automatism routine follow up. Even if this aspect was mostly stressed by the middle managers, top managers were also

aware of this problematic, which ended up being a driver that has led to a disruption change into this framework planning procedure.

The research university was the case where most enabling forms of strategizing could be identified. The strategy practices-in-use were diverse comparing to case 1 and case 2. For instance in case 3, the implementation of the strategy was not carried out through the internal strategy negotiation as in the previous cases; it was rather conducted in a framework of a higher autonomy driven. Therefore, the top management team conferred an authoritative aspect to the strategy documents, considering it as a top management tool, which has been built based on different bottom-up insights, however it was not considered as an assembly document, often used to negotiate the strategic and also non-strategic issues that are commonly raised when strategic planning procedures are conducted within pluralistic contexts, such as universities.

Accordingly, this authoritative strategy text type was embedded in a boundary driven strategizing behaviour, that was suggested to be strongly influenced by the organizational culture and identity which had evolved overtime, derived from the university initial project. Within this boundary driven and conciliatory strategizing, practices such as the “joint meetings” were being largely experienced as enabling engagement in the university strategizing process, yet constraining aspects were related to improvement issues.

One interesting aspect being observed in this case was the ambiguous strategy text type that was in great part delivered from the autonomous driven culture and the generic characteristics of the texts. This ambiguity was largely suggested as being interpreted in a functional way, however the direct impact of the institutional strategy text in the different units suggested to vary, depending on the context of the departments, specifically, it may suggest that the higher the income generation capacity of strong departments, the lesser seemed to exercise the text a direct influence in these type of units.

As previously described, I had noticed that in some universities middle academic managers reported more enabling experiences than others. Correspondingly, the variety of practices considered enabling was concurrent when associated with singularized practices. On the other hand, it was divergent when associated with the standardized practices, as was the case of the strategy planning internal dynamics. It appeared that the pattern of enabling practices-in-use was related to the framework of the interactive strategizing, with less pluralistic pressures, that is, the number of affirmative meanings given to strategy practices was higher in the universities where the interactive derived forms of strategizing appeared to take place.

Accordingly, piecing together the individual findings enabled me to discover findings concerning the linkages between strategizing behaviours, text functions and experiences of academic managers concerned the practices-in-use. The following table integrates the relationship existent between the strategizing forms and the strategy texts types and roles being derived.

**Table 11. Integration of strategizing forms with strategy text types and roles**

University	Strategizing form	Strategy text types	Derived roles of strategy text
<b>Technological</b>	Isolated	Deliberative	<i>Consultive</i>
	Restrictive	Advisory	<i>Prescriptive</i>
	Puzzling	Contingent Normative	<i>Contingent</i>
<b>Regional</b>	Cooperative Methodical	Technical	<i>Prescriptive</i>
		Normative	<i>Conversational</i>
		Communicative Guidance	<i>Consultive</i>
		Deliberative	
<b>Research</b>	Conciliatory Boundary driven	Guidance	<i>Consultive</i>
		Deliberative	<i>Conversational</i>
		Flexible	<i>Authoritative</i>
		Authoritative	<i>Ambivalent</i>
		Ambiguous	

Source: Own elaboration

As observed, based on those similarities and differences found in the overall analysis, I suggest six roles of strategy texts. Based on findings concerning the perspectives of the practices-in-use, on the one hand, there were roles that were more associated with enabling engagement capacities such as the *consultive*, *conversational* and *authoritative* and on the other, there were roles more related with restricted engagement capacity such as *prescriptive* and *contingent*. Furthermore, there was the *ambivalent role* that may be associated with a neutral role, that is, it might suggest that the functional use of the text may be strongly dependent of the pluralistic pressures influencing strategizing form. In the case of the research university, this role was positively derived in a functional use. Appendix 12F summarises the main characteristics concerning the roles identified.

Correspondingly, it was possible to observe that the roles of strategy texts were strongly associated with the strategizing behaviour that reinforced distinctive strategy practices. Different internal and external dynamics such as the organizational culture, identity, funding pressures, organizational size and management style were influencing in different ways the academic manager's acquaintances with the strategizing practices. The textual features across the cases, did not present very contrasting differences, most of the documents were very broad

in formalizing the institutional strategy. The main asymmetries were related to the extensively use of strategy vocabulary that have turn the documents into a technical document, with lesser communication potentiality.

The relevant aspect into the way the documents were produced (e.g. circumstances of the building mode), conjointly with the internal and external dynamics, led to observe distinct considerations in the dwelling mode of the strategy consumption. Specifically, when the documents presented a broad formalized content, but the strategizing type favoured practices that put forward guidelines and frameworks for building shared meaning, through reinforcing activities of persuasion, communication and informative platforms, it has led to suggest a superior engagement of academic managers embedded in an ongoing social exchange. Correspondingly, this aspect was associated with the main features of the roles related to *Consultive, Conversational and Authoritative* texts.

The *Ambivalent role* of the strategy text shared many features of these previous roles, especially concerned with the broad characteristics of its context and the autonomy driven strategizing form that may open the document for several interpretations. In the analyzed institutions, the findings might suggest that the considerations of the dwelling mode in providing a platform of effective engagement in strategy may be associated with the particular culture that were at place within the university units, particularly, the most socialized the institutional objectives may be, and the lesser power struggles that may take place, it may thus provide an effective engagement platform. On the contrary, when the texts presented a very broad content, but the vocabulary was highly driven by technical strategy concepts, and the strategizing form was highly methodical, the considerations of the dwelling mode were mostly associated with the routine planning driven, which may illustrate the *prescriptive role* of the strategy text.

The *contingent role* also strongly shared many features with the prescriptive role, due to its mechanized procedures, however the confined characteristics being reported were suggested to be strongly influenced by the dependency of the political system and enclosed in an economical restricted driven objectives fulfilling. The problematic emerged here was that these characteristics, added to the internal pressures the university experienced (e.g. power struggles, decision making problematic, organizational size complexity), led to the form filling routine, which mostly emphasized non strategic issues, restricting therefore emergent strategy thinking. This may illustrate the contingent role of the strategy text.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Chapter Structure

This chapter discusses the contributions of my research by summarizing the responses to the research questions, which are addressed by establishing prepositions based on the discussed findings. Furthermore, this final chapter relates the research findings to current knowledge, brings forward the practical implications of the findings, reflects upon the evaluation of the study unfolding its main limitations, as well as presents ideas for further research.

The purpose of this study was to explore how strategy texts were used when engaging academic managers in strategizing practices. The objectives were to gain an increased understanding of the strategy text role in the strategy as practice 3P framework (Whittington 2006) that embeds practices, praxis and practitioners. Therefore, the research questions were:

**1. What is the role of strategy text in strategizing?**

- 1.1. What are the relevant elements, practices and behaviours associated with strategy text usage?
- 1.2. How those elements, practices and behaviours interact among them to promote strategy text usefulness in academic manager's engagement in strategizing?
- 1.3. How the strategy text is used by academic managers?

**1. How can variations in practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy text usage explain better academic manager's engagement and strategizing outcomes?**

The answers are now summarized by establishing theoretical propositions and are followed by a discussion of the contribution of this study in the light of the existent literature.

**1.** This study has identified six roles associated with the strategy texts in the context of different Spanish public universities, namely *Consultive*, *Conversational*, *Authoritative*, *Prescriptive*, *Contingent* and *Ambivalent*. These roles developed distinctive considerations when academic managers engaged in the dwelling mode of strategy. Therefore, according to the circumstances in which the documents were elaborated, and the analogy to how it were acquainted, this study determined three separated categories of texts, which suggested to endow constraining or enabling engagement capacity: enabling, constraining and borderline.

The *consultive, conversational and authoritative roles* were associated with the category that comprehended higher degree of enabling capacity. The emergence of these roles shows how middle academic managers in their activities at local level seek to count with clear autonomy in particularizing the institutional objectives, highlighting the relevance of counting with institutional guidelines (in order to legitimate decisions), the prioritization of strategic issues and the flexibility embedded in an open dialogue, where ongoing social exchange may take place. Also it brought forward the relevance of the top manager's authoritative role in ensuring strategy prioritization and visibility.

The *prescriptive and contingent roles* were clustered in the category of texts that held superior constraining engagement capacity. This result shows that when the building mode of strategy, from which the strategy texts are derived, presents a high degree of centralized procedures, and the interactions across levels are based upon intensive administrative mechanisms, and political relationships, the outcomes in the dwelling consumption mode of strategy will present a higher degree of mechanic tactics, as illustrated by the routine driven aspects of the form filling internal planning dynamic. This centralization and inflexibility might illustrate that the strategizing activities that are to take place may be restrictive to ongoing social exchanges. This finding illustrates how interdependent a strategy document is with the conditions of the strategy building mode and with the internal and external pluralistic pressures.

The *ambivalent role* was clustered within the borderline category that illustrates the ambiguity enclosed in the documents. This result shows that when the strategy texts contemplate very broad content, and foresee very generic strategy guidelines, which are not derived from centralized procedures and standardized implementation mechanisms, and are enclosed in a higher level of individual autonomy, the outcome in the dwelling strategy consumption mode might prompt either a highly affirmative response in aligning initiatives or a detached attitude. This finding illustrates the importance of the contextual elements in favouring either an affirmative or detached tactic responses. In the case of this study, the university in which the ambivalent role was identified presented specific lower contextual pressures that may suggest that the readings of the texts led to affirmative responses. However, this actual result also led to propose that when the contextual elements may present different characteristics, the tactic responses might be more associated with a detached mode, that is, hold a more constrained aspect concerning the strategy engagement and alignment.

The identification of these roles suggests the relationship that existed among the texts, the practices as well as the contextual pressures that drive the academic managers strategizing behaviours. The following propositions are elaborate in order to assert these relationships:

P1: The higher the degree of autonomy in particularizing objectives, framed in clear institutional guidelines, flexibility and open dialogue, the stronger is the strategy text engagement capacity.

P2: The greater the strategy text content breadth, framed in a higher level of individual autonomy, wrapped up by higher influence of pluralistic pressures, the higher is the presence of detached engagement responses.

P3: The greater the strength of centralized procedures framed in thorough administrative mechanisms and stronger the influence of political relationships, the higher is the presence of mechanic tactics.

P4: The stronger the ongoing social exchange in strategizing activities in universities, the lower is the rate of constraining engagement experiences.

The first overall research question is comprised of derived sub-questions that helped on elaborating the explanations of the strategy text roles. The sub-derived research questions 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are discussed together, due to the fact that both hold a close relationship concerning aspects about “*what are the issues influencing in the role of strategy text in strategizing*”, “*how do they interacted*” and “*how the texts are used*”.

This study has identified elements that were associated with the internal and external pressures influencing the building and the dwelling mode of the strategy making in the universities. On the one hand, the study found two main categories of strategy practices: standardized (macro level driven) and singularized (micro level driven). According to its formalization, occurrence in time and framed either at the macro or micro level, the strategy practices were then subcategorized on the first case as being cyclical, supportive and episodic (standardized) and on the latter, unruled and regulated (singularized). Furthermore, the study identified the elements that were influencing in the divergent academic managers experiences with those practices. The main relationships found are illustrated by the following propositions:

P5: The greater the personal relationships between top and middle academic managers, the better the engagement experiences and consensus agreements.

P6: The higher the relevance of political alignment in strategizing activities, the greater the influence of power struggles.

P7: The stronger the standardized internal dynamics framed in a homogenization of a “policies fits for all”, the higher is the presence of isolated initiatives and detached strategy alignment.

P8: The larger the organizational structure size, the higher is the constrained experiences with the standardized practices.

P9: The higher is the presence of interactive strategizing, framed in practices that foster open bilateral dialogue; the stronger is likely the building of the strategy shared meaning to be more effective.

Concerning *behaviours associated with the strategy text usage*, this study identified seven strategizing forms, which were integrated in Jarzabkowski (2005; 2008) procedural and interactive strategizing types correlating it with the pluralistic internal and external pressures. This integration expanded the understanding of the elements influencing in strategizing behaviours and its authority in the strategy text engagement potential and practical utility. The relevance of these findings is based on the association of the functional and dysfunctional strategy text usage enclosed in the dynamics of the strategizing behaviours types. The reciprocal relationships identified are illustrated in the following propositions:

P10: The higher the level of internal pressures derived from the organizational structure framed in heterogeneity of cultures and identities, coupled with higher influence of external policies, the higher the strategizing behaviour is likely to be *restricted and puzzling*.

P11: The lower the particularization of the university unit's specificities, the strongest is likely to emerge the *isolated* strategizing behaviours.

P12: The greater is the platform of frequent dialogue between middle and top academic managers, framed in a content of shared culture and identity, the strongest is likely to emerge the *conciliatory, cooperative and boundary driven* strategizing behaviours.

P13: The stronger the presence of automatism behaviour procedures, the stronger is likely to emerge the *methodical driven* strategizing behaviours.

Concerning *how the strategy text is used* by academic managers, this study identified 15 multiple uses, which were associated with four different attributes: functional, dysfunctional, impartial and ambiguous. Answering this sub-research question was crucial for the acknowledging of the overall research question. Therefore, this study identified that texts which were assigned to the functional use, presented a convergence to the texts creative consumption (e.g. point of reference, guidance, legitimacy, strategic thinking, authority, coordination...), specifically, the narratives illustrated that it had been somewhat useful. On the contrary, the dysfunctional attribute was associated with more obscure aspect of the consumption, illustrated by the strategy text uses associated with being bureaucratic, abstracted, and compulsory or restricted.



The strategy text which were associated with an impartial attribute, were characterized as being specific objective driven such as budget internal assignments, and interpreted as a political driven document. The ambiguous use was neither related with functional nor dysfunctional. Correspondingly, it was suggested that the creative or problematic usage was strongly dependent on the contextual pressures. Therefore, the study identifies that the uses attributed to the strategy documents were suggested to be mutually dependent of the strategizing behaviour form at place. This mutual dependence might be illustrated by the following propositions:

- P14: The larger the presence of restricted, methodical and puzzling forms of strategizing, the higher is likely to promote strategy text dysfunctional uses.
- P15: The larger the presence of cooperative, boundary driven and conciliatory forms of strategizing, the higher is likely to endorse strategy text functional uses.
- P16: The greater the presence of higher pluralistic contextual pressures, the higher is the possibility ambiguous usage may prompt dysfunctional attributes.

## **2. How can variations in practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy text usage explain better academic manager's engagement and strategizing outcomes?**

The strategy text roles in strategizing activities across the universities are considered to result from the combination of the internal and external pluralist dynamics with the strategizing behaviours forms at place across the institutions; these two concepts mostly likely to highly interact within each other. The strategy texts roles may be ascertained in the experiences academic managers reflected for practices-in-use. The identification of a specific functional or dysfunctional strategy text attributes also reflects a particular form of strategizing behaviour. The variations found in the strategizing drivers, strategizing behaviours, text uses and roles also reflected the practices-in-use constraining and enabling purposes.

Therefore, this study found six roles of strategy text in strategizing. The roles differed in terms of their enabling or constraining engagement capacity. The constraining strategy texts roles differed in terms of being framed within higher procedural strategizing aspects, combined with higher pluralistic pressures. Differences were detected in the variety of practices-in-use and the amount of enabling experiences for practices. When strategy documents emerged within a highly interactive form of strategizing, the set of practices-in-use fostered also coherence with it, by setting up more effective dialogue platforms.

The results of this study suggested that for a higher academic management engagement in strategizing and a functional strategy text to emerge, it is of significance how coherent is the practices-in-use with the strategizing behaviour at place and to what degree the strategizing form can counterbalance the internal and external pluralistic pressures and to what degree it may ensure enabling experiences of practices.

## **5.1 Contribution**

By taking a narrative lens into the strategy as practice perspective in this study, I was able to explore strategy text role in the practice of strategy in different types of universities, taking into account both the discursive features of the texts themselves but also the relationship of these texts with practices, practitioners and the context. I would argue that the choice of using this lens, by itself contributes to the strategy literature, by expanding the social view of strategy making, contrasting it to the classical approaches.

Specifically, an empirical study that has taken a narrative approach to strategy as practice field of research also expands the research agenda that foster the need to examine not only the ways in which the narratives within the strategy texts are produced and constructed, but also how they are taken up, understood and subsequently used (Fenton and Langley 2011).

In addition to this general contribution to the strategy literature, and to the strategy as practice field, the study contributes to several issues that are followed discussed. The discussion will be focused in the three main contributions the study has done within the social practice approach to the strategic management field of research: 1) the way specific tools are utilized in strategizing; 2) diversity of strategic practices in pluralistic contexts and its implication for strategy text engagement potential; 3) strategizing and behaviours in different organizational settings and its implications for practices-in-use.

### ***5.1.1. Emphasis on the uses of strategy texts in strategizing activities***

The study broadly contributes to the research agenda on the social practice approach within the strategic management field. Particularly, it expands in the empirical foreground by exploring strategizing methods in different organizational settings (Jarzabkowski 2005; 2003; Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008) and by paying attention to the relationship of formal practices

(e.g. strategic plan) with the discursive text features (Hendry 2000; Vaara et al. 2004) and the way they are utilized in strategizing activities (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2009; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002).

This study wanted to explore the gap for further research found in the literature revision, which foresaw the need of more exploration of the variety of the discursive practices that may enable and or constrain organizational actors as practitioners of strategy as well as more acknowledgements on how and why managers and others engage or not engage in strategy making in specific contexts. This aspect is closely associated with the problems and constraints noticed in previous literature and practice concerning the strategy implementation (Noble 1999; Whittington and Cailluet 2008; Alexander 1985; 1991). Hence, the findings of this study which are associated with enabling roles of strategy texts also enlighten us within this problematic and puts forward practical implications for practitioners, especially at the university context.

Thereupon, this study identified fifteen multiple uses for the strategy documents across the three analysed universities, which were further associated with six different roles attributed to the texts. These uses were related to enabling or constraining experiences. The description of these uses and roles related to these enabling or constraining experiences illustrates the purposeful activities of different academic managers in the dynamic of strategy making at the macro level but also how it was implemented and utilized in the micro level. One key aspect on exploring these dynamics was the focus put upon the narrative and strategy texts relationship (Fenton and Langley 2011). Previous studies have examined whether and to what degree strategy texts are indeed formulated as narratives and how this influences their persuasiveness for different audiences.

In that vein, Martens et al. (2007) have identified the main characteristics of successful business plans, finding that aspects such as resonance with expectations, alignment with cultural norms or grand narratives, the presentation of unambiguous firm identities and the use of the familiar elements to contextually ground unfamiliar ones, were found to be valuable assets in understanding the document persuasiveness effects. Nevertheless, analyses that restrict their attention to the texts themselves are limited in their capacity to develop an understanding of the strategy as social practice, that is, a more powerful analysis would require consideration not only of texts, but also of the contexts for their writing and consumption (Fenton and Langley 2011). This was a key contribution of this study.

By providing empirical evidence of how texts were used across the macro and micro levels, and academic manager's uses and acquaintances with the practices-in-use, framed in different

strategizing forms, was another key contribution of this study. The emergence of the modes of strategy text different usages and the academic managers' distinct perspectives of strategy practices-in-use enlightens us as to how strategy engagement may arise from the combination of coherences between the practices in use in the building and dwelling mode of strategy from which the texts emerged and are transformed (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2009; 2011; Anderson 2004; Vaara et al. 2010; Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009; Giraudeau 2008). This engagement and integration aspect of strategy was explored by previous studies which have shown that depending on who participates as a legitimate practitioners or "author" of strategy, the production of a text building from conversations may become a complex process of negotiation in which emerging narratives must be massaged to enable cohesion (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2009; Anderson 2004; Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009).

For enhancing engagement, these studies put forward the need of the "translation" of strategy, that is, the actual content of strategy texts will be influenced by micro-level translation process itself. Therefore, studies have suggested that difficulties in translation may be resolved by a form of "strategy ambiguity" (Eisenberg 1984) in which written texts remain open to alternative interpretations, allowing a variety of stakeholders to accept them (Giraudeau 2008; Abdallah and Langley 2011; MacCabe 2010). Accordingly, this study also contributed to illustrate that not only ambiguity may present potential variety in modes of strategy consumption; other "drivers" also may interfere in this aspect, which were not extensively being investigate in the strategy literature.

Giraudeau (2008) when exploring the text ambiguity and the effectiveness of its use, have reconceived roles for the planning process, the planners and the plans itself, attributing to it a creative role in the strategizing process. The planning process should be foreseen as an opportunity for debate across hierarchies, while plans could convey information about contexts and hence "educate" their audience. The planners may choose to read or to write plans openly or not, and can use plans as basis or justification for decisions. Giraudeau identified roles for the plans, such as cognitive supports, tool for the programming of predefined strategy or inclusion or peripheral strategies as well as coordination function, which were attributed higher creative roles.

Correspondingly, this study has also identified creative roles to the strategy texts uses that were associated with functional usage (persuasion, coordination, legitimacy, strategic thinking...) across the universities, however, the key aspect here was the integration of the strategizing form, the practices-in-use and the contextual drivers influencing on these relationships. The pluralistic contexts that comprised the three university case studies, also allowed for the

identification of divergent roles contrasting it to the creative aspect. The exploration of the plans therefore, could not be done in isolation from the exploration of the whole strategizing process and the pluralistic pressures from where the consumption variability of the texts had emerged.

Considering the emergence of strategy text functions and roles closely dependent of the strategizing forms that framed distinctive practices in use, two issues suggested to be significant for this study.

Firstly, as illustrated by the propositions 1 to 4, *the range of the constraining or enabling strategy text engagement capacity was related to the emergence of different forms of strategizing that were dependent of contextual pluralistic pressures.*

Secondly, as illustrated by propositions 14 to 16, which were strictly related to the propositions 1 to 4, *the degree of the creative or problematic strategy text usage were strongly dependent of the contextual pressures, which fuels distinct forms of strategizing behaviours.*

The text engagement capacity was closely associated with the readings of the strategy. Several issues were analyzed when exploring the consumption of strategy and its derived forms of reading and interpretation, such as ambiguity (Abdallah and Langley 2013; McCabe 2010), power effects (Vaara et al 2010) or discursive influences in consumption tactics (Suominen and Mantere 2010). Both of these previous studies put forward the need of not only understanding the strategy text per se, but also the conventions in the building and dwelling mode of strategy making, and the various ways in which boundaries effects, ideological struggles and power effects, ambiguity issues, or policies and contextual frameworks may be played out in and through these texts and their derived uses and roles. Hence, this study provides the illustration of different concerns about the problematic of text usage: how interactions among multiple practitioners around strategy text influence the way they are written and read, in this case in terms of coherence of narratives (Fenton and Langley 2011).

Consequently, this study have illustrated that aspects such as autonomy in adapting specific objectives, organization size, culture and identity, decentralized participation procedures in strategic and non strategic issues, mechanisms that foresee higher social exchange as well as lesser dependence on political relationships, were identified as providing a platform for the emergence of texts with higher engagement potential. These issues were identified within a coherence of academic manager's narratives about the circumstances of the strategy formulation, from which the texts were derived, and further used.

The study results have identified three types of strategy texts roles that were more related to this higher engagement potential: the consultive, conversational and authoritative roles. Abdallah and Langley (2013) have also found different readings of a strategic plan, which were associated with different groups of employees in a specific organization. In the case of this study, the relationship around the strategy documents is not only explored from the perspective of reading (consumption) from the viewpoint of middle academic managers, but also, it involves the uses that top managers gave to the documents, and its embedded intentions. Abdallah and Langley (2013) found four forms of readings of strategic plans: interpretive, instrumental, value-based and detached, associating it to different consequences of the strategy plan ambiguity. The interpretative mode is likely to be common among corporate staff everywhere; the instrumental seems to be associated with managerial functions, value-based seems likely to fit professionals in many settings, while the detached reading seems to be prevalent wherever strategic planning is imposed (Mantere and Vaara 2008).

The roles associated with the strategy texts being identified in this study, may extend the understanding of the reading and writing relationship among practitioners. For instance, some elements of the Abdallah and Langley (2013) “instrumental reading” can be associated with the “consultive and conversational” roles identified by this study. As well as some elements of the “detached reading” may be found in the “prescriptive and contingent roles” of the strategy texts which were identified by this dissertation.

One relevant aspect to be highlighted among these findings was the illustration of the different dynamics involved in the writing and reading of the strategy texts. The roles more associated with top managers were the authoritative (visibility and emphasis) and conversational (effort of persuasion). Yet, the latter aspect was seemed also to be shared by middle academic managers. On the other hand, the roles associated with more constraining experiences were seemed to be associated with the readings of the middle managers (e.g. restricted and form filling).

In exploring these strategy consumption modes, Abdallah and Langley (2013) examined the ambiguity influence reflected in the content of the plans itself; yet other contextual internal and external dynamics however were not further analyzed. Therefore, Suominen and Mantere (2010) analysis of consuming strategy in three different organizations was more similar to the findings of this study, particularly concerned to the aspect of the writing and reading of strategy, that is, the consumption was down to explore middle and top managers discursive practices when using strategy.

Consequently, their study identified 3 usage tactics: instrumental, playful and intimate. The elements of the instrumental usage tactic (e.g. managers use strategy to build commitment and involvement) is similar to the “instrumental reading” mode identified by Abdallah and Langley (2013), which can also share some equivalent aspects with the “consultive, authoritative and conversational” strategy texts roles identified by this study. On the other hand, Suominen and Mantere (2010) “playful and intimate usage tactics” (e.g. managers ignore the strategy guiding effects in their work; managers ignore the strategy when they consider it unsuitable for themselves; managers use prohibited tricks in order to cope and manoeuvre with the university strategy in their work), which also shared analogous elements with Abdallah and Langley (2013) “detached reading”, can be compared to the contingent and prescriptive strategy roles determined by this study.

In the study of Abdallah and Langley (2013), they have shown the relevance of the ambiguity as a positive aspect for the readings of strategy texts, similar to the productive consequences of strategy ambiguity identified by McCabe (2009), and in the Suominen and Mantere (2010) they have analysed the relationship between the micro and macro discourses dynamics, showing that some kinds of strategy consumption may stress the relationship between power and discourse (Hardy 2004), as well as by describing the different tactics, they have shown issues of resistance, providing illustration on how managers resist strategy (playful and intimate tactics). However both studies did not explore further what other contextual elements provokes and fuels resistances or engagement towards the strategy usage, particularly concerning the text as artifact. Consequently, this was other relevant contribution of this study when determining the different strategy texts roles in strategizing activities and with what utility texts were used.

In addition, support for the findings concerning the multiple uses and roles of the strategy text in strategizing can be found in the work of Spee and Jarzabkowski (2009) conceptualization of strategy tools as boundary objects, which may enable or constrain interactions about strategy across organizational boundaries. They argue that strategy tools are not necessarily applied instrumentally, may be flexible interpreted and are shaped by the social and political context of their use. Therefore, this conceptualization puts forward that boundary objects used effectively, enable integration of knowledge across boundaries. Flexibility permits multiple interpretations as the same tool may be attributed different meanings by different groups (enabled or constrained). The different roles attributed to the strategy texts (functional, dysfunctional, impartial or ambivalent) across the analyzed universities, have shed extensive light on this aspect.

Furthermore, boundary objects are not always effective at generating shared understanding but may actually highlight the extent to which semantic (meaning) and pragmatic (political) boundaries constrain shared meaning and action in organizations (Carlile 2004). These boundaries explain why strategy tools do not always enable strategic integration and, indeed, why strategic planning process may experience communication breakdowns (Beer and Eisenstat 2000). The interest aspect of the strategy tool boundary conceptualization is the need of identifying whether strategic integration attempted across semantic boundaries, where it is necessary to generate common meanings, or pragmatic boundaries, where it is necessary to align different political interest. The exploration of the particular uses of the strategy text in the three universities had also expanded some explanations on the complexities involved in bridging the diverse interests that comprised pluralistic contexts.

### ***5.1.2. Emphasis on practices-in-use and implications for strategy text functions***

With this study, I seek to contribute to the questions raised by the practice perspective of strategy, particularly emphasizing the relationship of the strategy texts and the practices in day-to-day strategizing (Fenton and Langley 2011; De la Ville and Mounoud 2010). My study contributes to interests of strategy as practice by increasing our understanding of the strategic practices in pluralistic contexts and the effectiveness of these practices according to a group of practitioners: top and middle academic managers that have acquainted different experiences when engaging in the set of strategy practices in their organizations.

In this manner, the major contribution of my study is, not only identifying the practices and their effectiveness in different contexts, but also by the identification of the contextual aspects that were influencing in the way the same practices have been experienced to be either constraining and enabling. The results of this study illustrated that the practices provided strategizing with specific structures, which were framed according to the universities specific contextual characteristics. The study identified that the practices varied across the organizations, and were categorized according to its occurrence in macro and micro levels, aspects of time and space, properties of rules and formalization aspects, as well as their flexibility.

According to these aspects, practices across the universities have created different platforms for strategy engagement. Some practices have provided more effective platforms than others, aspect which has been suggested to be influenced by traits of power struggle, political alignment pressures, internal policies that do or do not fit the heterogeneity of interests, issues that might fit the pragmatic boundaries conceptualized by Spee and Jarzabkowski (2009), as well as



structural size, culture and communications mechanisms issues. The relationship between these issues identified by this study may be illustrated in the propositions 5 to 9. Hence, this study increases the understanding on the patterns of interactions between managers when dealing with strategy, and particularly shed additional lights on how strategy implementation evolves in public universities (acquaintances with practices-in-use) putting forward the implication it might have for the functional uses of the strategy texts.

Several studies have dealt with strategy practices concerning definitions and implications. For instance, Hoon (2007) have explored the strategy committees as strategic practices in a public organization, identifying that the interaction between middle management levels is not only organized in formal practices such as committees, but also senior management and middle managers organize the discussion on strategic issues in informal interactions that are maintained around the committees. Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002) have also explored practices in a university, focusing into management actions in the practice of strategy, exploring it in relation to the characteristics of the organizational context and the practices which arise from it, that also shape the interplay between the top management and the organizational context.

Particular relevant for this study is the Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002) exploration of the organizational context. They have defined it as structures and processes, which are socially produced and reproduced, these, may be both material and social in nature. Through multiple iterations, for instance formal operating procedures, history, culture and localized routines have emerged as main organizational contexts constraining or enabling strategy. They have noted that the specific practices which comprised the strategy process at the university, distributed across top managers (e.g. direction setting, resource allocation, face to face interactions), the organizational context and the actions taken, served to render meaning shared, reinforcing the interpretative framework in which strategy was put into practice.

My study expands on the exploration of the strategy practices in the strategy making process, illustrating other elements of the organizational context (e.g. relevance of the organizational size, the heterogeneity across strong and not strong departments, bilateral communications or the relevance around political alignments, etc.) that influence in the practitioners actions, but importantly, explores both the perspectives of top and middle managers concerning their acquaintances with those practices and contextual elements that were functioning as constrainers and or enablers assets. Yet, mostly important, this study brings in to the fore the function of the strategy text in this dynamic, specifically, how the strategy texts were being fostered within those practices (functional, dysfunctional, impartial or ambiguous).

In this line, I would argue that the coherence of different kinds of strategy practices that foster arenas for the integration of the pragmatic (political) and semantic (meaning) boundaries (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2009) with its divergent interests would appear to be most usable and effective for fostering functional uses of the strategy text. Therefore the findings of this study agree and are supported by previous arguments (Wilson and Jarzabkowski 2004) that stated that the strategizing is situated and bounded to its context (i.e. type of organization; cultural differences), that is, the diversity of practices and its enabling or constraining experiences that are to be foster are likely to be associated with context-related issues. Consequently, the texts usages are also likely to be bounded by this relationship, as previously illustrated by the prepositions.

### *5.1.3. Emphasis on strategizing behaviours and contextual drivers as implications for strategy text derived roles*

In trying to understand how and what elements, practices and behaviours influence in promoting strategy text usefulness in the context of strategizing process at the distinct universities, my study examined how the internal context and the external elements affected both the top management level strategizing activities, but also, tried to explore the micro level perspectives on how different academic middle managers see strategizing, and what implications could be determined for the role of the strategy text. Strategizing in universities was a theme, which has not been extensively explored in the strategy as practice field; yet there exist some compelling studies that have tried to shed some insights into how this process occurs in this type of professional organizations.

Essentially, Paula Jarzabkowski (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Jarzabkowski and Sillince 2007; Jarzabkowski and Fenton 2006) is a referential author in this subject. She with her colleagues has explored different perspectives with distinctive theoretical lens in trying to deeply understand the strategizing process in universities. Specifically, Jarzabkowski (2008) had explored top managers strategizing behaviours in one UK University, addressing how they shaped either the structural context or the interpretations of the organizational members.

This analysis of behaviours led to the identification of three types of strategizing behaviour: interactive (face to face interactions to persuade and convince), procedural (administrative procedures generating recurrent processes which are remote from interactions) and integrative (ongoing behaviour). Her findings supported that the combination of strong institutionalized

strategies, strategizing behaviours that exhibit a simultaneous action and institutional pattern is likely to be more successful at shaping change in strategy.

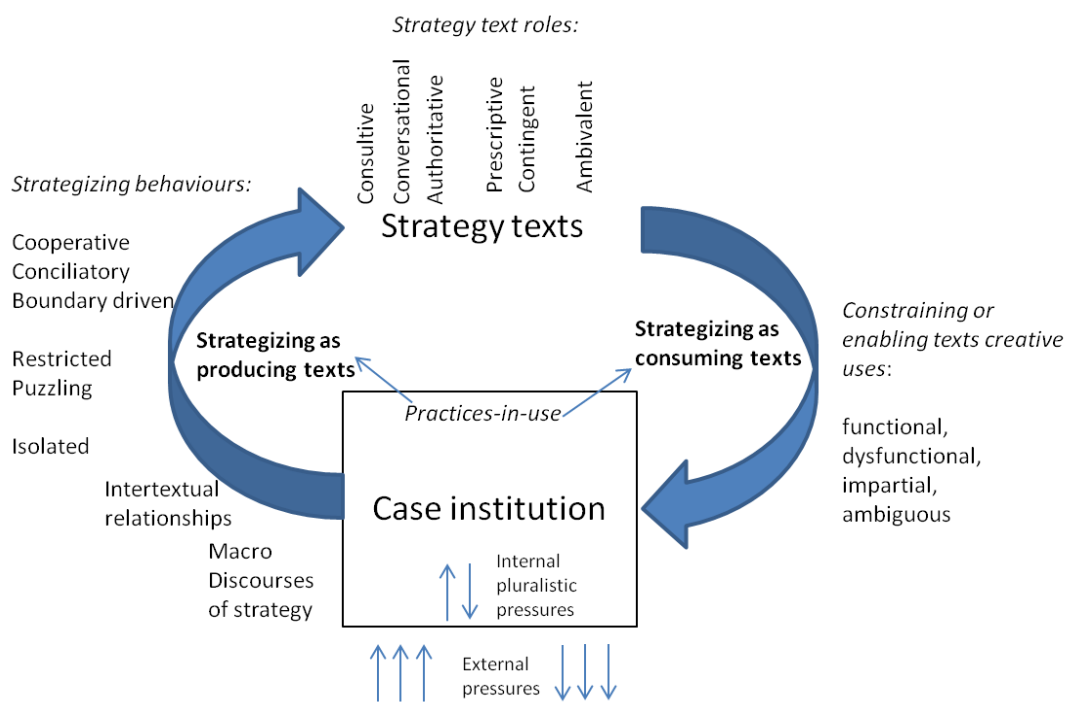
Accordingly, my study has expanded the understanding of the strategizing behaviours in universities, however extending the perspective to middle academic managers. Using the constructs of Jarzabkowski interactive and procedural strategizing types, my study has identified seven strategizing forms, which were integrated in those two constructs of interactive and procedural types. Into this integration it was also added the internal and external contextual elements that were narrated as being influencing in the different strategizing behaviours from both perspectives of top and middle managers and their respectively iterations. The relevance contribution of my study in this aspect was the association of the elements that were driven different strategizing forms, further associating the role of the functional or dysfunctional usage of the strategy text within this strategizing dynamics. This integration and association are illustrated in the propositions 10 to 13.

More specifically, there has been calls for research to provide a more advanced understanding of forms of how top and middle managers strategize and its linkage with key internal and external conditions, which may provide a platform for top and middle board's levels to discuss, agree and modify their engagement in strategy in the context of their internal and external environment. This study has paid a particular attention to this aspect, yet adding to it the role of the texts in this dynamic. Furthermore, another key specific contribution was the provision of empirical elements of strategizing in Spanish universities, due to the fact that previously, studies have mostly focused on the Anglo-Saxon countries, especially in the UK. Hence, the relevance of this study also lies in expanding the understanding of contextual differences, such as geographic location, the influence of different governance models, or external policies frameworks, which might drive different forms of strategizing to take place and consequently to determine distinct roles to the strategy document.

This study contributes to the narrative approach to strategy as practice in exploring the interactions of strategy text in strategizing at universities, expanding the understanding of the role of the strategy texts, the characteristics of the practices in use and how different practitioners at both top and middle levels use the strategy text while engage in strategy making. Few studies have provided this overview integration (Fenton and Langley 2011; De la Ville and Mounoud 2010). The integration of the main results and contributions of this study has led to propose a dynamic framework which links strategy practices, patterns of strategizing behaviours, contextual internal and external dynamics with strategy texts roles, as illustrated in figure 76, and I hope to have answered the research questions.

As a conclusion, we could argue that different academic managers engage in strategy and use the strategy text in different ways (more creative or more restrictive), however these differences are strongly context specific of the internal and external practices that frame strategizing behaviours, which consequently derive into constraining or enabling text creative uses. This finding is highly relevant for the ongoing research into the problematic of the strategy implementation in higher education institutions (Hollowell et al. 2006; Middaugh 2010; Gregory 2008).

**Figure 47. Dynamic framework linking strategy text roles with practices-in-use, strategizing behaviours and context**



Source: Own elaboration

After discussing the theoretical relevance of this study results, in the following remaining parts of this chapter, some practical implications are discussed. Finally, at the end of the chapter, the limitations of this study are addressed and some further research questions are proposed.

## 5.2 Practical Implications

This study has provided a framework for understanding the different roles attributed to strategy text in strategizing activities. Also, it has illustrated the practices in use that were probed to be more compelling in promoting engagement into strategy, where more effective text usage could

be enhanced. The empirical illustrations were based on a narrative approach to manager's experiences in the university strategizing, facilitating the identification of macro and micro activities, and their perspectives upon internal and external elements that were influencing on several strategy making aspects.

Therefore, the findings from this study have implications from practice. As previously discussed, taking into account that this study was conducted in pluralistic contexts such as universities, which typically have diffused power relationships and multiple and ambiguous goals, academic managers in this contexts are under increasing internal and external pressures to give more effective responses in the management of their institutions whilst at the same time being constrained to the typical management governance and structures models that may slow down and interfere in their strategizing activities.

Accordingly, due to the fact that this study provide practitioners with empirical data that illustrates the internal dynamics with the elements and behaviours variance according to institutions context-specific aspects, information that are rarely find in the Spanish context, therefore, academic managers in such contexts might use this findings to reflect upon their universities practices-in-use, their position in relation to the strategy text and elements that could be reinforced, changed and or withdrawn in promoting the interactive strategizing behaviours and text creative consumption.

Also, this study could be useful for policy makers in counting with an overview of the university internal strategizing dynamics, which might be used for reflection on the impact of certain policies in the universities individual strategy making.

For higher education institutions, the study provides tools and concepts for understanding their strategizing process as interaction between contextual drivers (internal and external pressures), structure, practitioners, practices-in-use and the roles and uses they made of the strategy texts that are derived from this dynamic. I hope that the study gives them (individual academic managers or group of board managers) support in evaluating the current state of their strategizing process and possibilities and implications of enhancing a more creative use of strategy texts in the implementation of strategy.

A further practical implication is to apply the dynamic framework proposed by this study in academic managers training programs in order for them to develop their strategizing behaviours taking into account the creation of new practices, supporting old-effective practices, reinforcing some discursive practices and textual rhetorical features, in order to advance in strategizing

implementation enhanced outcomes. For persons responsible for strategy and strategic management development or those who are in charge of organizing training for different academic manager's profile, this study might give some insights for their practice.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

This was a study realized in three Spanish public universities, which has tried to select representative cases in the Spanish higher education system. Due to the similarities in the governance models of the public universities in Spain, there is likely to find some correlations operating in others public Spanish universities. However, given the fact that these three universities were located in two autonomous communities, there may be the case that the results could not be transferable to institutions that are located in different communities.

Therefore, one limitation of this study lies in the scope of the sector (public universities), which has not comprised private sample cases, as well as another limitation has to do with the geographic scope of the study, the cases studies were from two specific communities, and in consequence, the results may hold a limitation in relation to the geographically circumscription.

The use of qualitative approach to the study seems to have been very relevant in gaining insight and understanding of the phenomenon, as well as in establishing a basis for further investigation. However, being a qualitative study it cannot avoid the researcher bias and the lack of generalizability. Although the study has followed the steps towards objectivity, there could be various other ways of interpretation of the data. Concerning generalizability, while the study cannot claim generalizability in the traditional sense of the word, partial generalization may be possible to similar populations (Myers 2000, p.1). Nevertheless, generalizability was neither one of the objectives of the study nor its primary concern.

### **5.4 Further research**

A number of implications for further research flow from this study. First, I set out to explore the role of strategy texts in strategizing through a Strategy as Practice lens, implying a narrative approach. The cases and the informants were chosen with an exploratory aim in mind. Hence, it is important that as this study was developed within the public university sector, future research should focus on other range of organizations including private, and contexts other than Spain, in order to test the replication of the study.

Second, this study has proposed a dynamic framework for understanding the different roles attributed to strategy text in strategizing activities and the elements influencing in this dynamic. This provided a “window” into the universities strategizing behaviours, practices-in-use and their internal and external contexts. Future studies should explore further and deeply the elements uncovered by the framework proposed by this study, as to further understand the specific weight each element purports to the specific roles being attributed to the texts and its enabling and or constraining functions.

A third aspect, the involvement of other organizational members, other than top and middle managers could be an important area for further study. For example, do consults or other external members, such as the social council members contribute to different strategy text roles to emerge, and if so, why?

Fourth, the qualitative description of the strategizing behaviours put forward in this study could form the basis for the development of multiple items constructs to quantitatively measure the top and middle manager strategizing. These constructs could then be linked to other elements not addressed in this study, such as the influence of leadership or the manager’s rhetorical practices in the effectiveness of the strategizing types and strategy text potential engagement.

Sixth, studies could further explore the relationship between the strategy texts roles and strategizing behaviours with strategizing outcomes. What kind of superior strategizing outcomes could be observe in organizations that presented a higher level of cooperative and boundary driving strategizing behaviours coupled with deliberative and authoritative strategy texts? What links between the governance models, management and leadership styles with financial performance could be determined?

Seventh, this study has tried to establish a linkage between the strategy texts contents and their uses. However, further study should deepen the exploration of the textual features of the strategy text in university strategizing, in terms of how they promote flexibility in contribution to novel strategy, and how in their praxis, middle and top managers strongly support their strategic decisions, counterbalancing between policies and multiple interests.

Finally, the emphasis in the role of the strategy texts as boundary objects in the Strategy as practice traditional 3P framework is by itself, an extensive roadmap for further researches. While in this study I have focused in the association of strategy texts, their contents, the elements and practices that could be influencing in their uses, applying a narrative approach, further studies could apply different theoretical or methodological perspectives into the

relationship of the texts with praxis, practitioners, practices and context and what theoretical and practical implications it might bring for the further understanding of the strategy implementation problematic.



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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1

### Contribution of the literature on the social practice of strategic management

Some referential Works	Contributions	Potential gaps of interest for this study
Taylor 1993; Walsh 1995	Process field research, step forward on understanding of managerial cognition	<p>To dig into how activities are embedded in broader societal or macro-institutional contexts, reveals a need for more epistemological and theoretical depth.</p> <p>Need to develop a nuanced understanding of strategic agency as taking place in a web of practices.</p> <p>More exploration on the diversity of strategic practices and the polyphony that they produce in and around strategy making.</p> <p>More studies of a longitudinal character to explore the processes of strategic decision-making and change.</p> <p>More exploration of the variety of discursive practices that enable and constrain organizational actors as practitioners of strategy.</p> <p>More acknowledgment on how and why managers and others engage or not engage in strategy making in specific contexts.</p>
Ferraro et al. 2005; Lovallo and Kahneman 2003; Hambrick et al. 2005; Simsek et al. 2005; Doz et al. 2001	Connecting people to strategy making and performance	
Whittington 1996; 1993; 2006; 2007; Floyd and Wooldridge 2000; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Oakes et al. 1998; Johnson et al. 2003; Whittington and Cailluet 2008; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007, Hardy et al. 2000; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Maitlis and Lawrence 2003; Inkpen and Choudhury 1995; Knights and Morgan 1991; Shrivastava 1986; Suominen and Mantere 2010; Lilley 2001; Golsorkhi et al 2010; Vaara and Whittington 2012.	<p>Managerial activities seen as a social practice, bringing in different conceptions for strategy performance.</p> <p>Connecting contemporary strategic management research with practice-orientated organizational studies</p> <p>Better understanding of the way strategy work (strategizing) takes place drawing on social theories more than economic focus theories</p> <p>A broader understanding of organizational performance by extending the range of the outcomes.</p> <p>Methodological shifts to strategic management research, introducing a more qualitative perspective</p> <p>Insights on strategy usability - Managers as users of strategy and the dominant discourse</p>	

Source: Own elaboration

## APPENDIX 2

### Contribution of literature on strategy planning practices

Some referential Works	Contributions	Potential gaps of interest for this study
Armstrong 1982; Brews and Hunt 1999; Grant 2003; Reid 1989.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formal planning process is valuable to gain commitment.</li> <li>- Explicit objective setting and monitoring results have been considered the most valuable aspects of strategic planning.</li> <li>- Representation of the intended strategy.</li> <li>- Mechanism for coordination and control, context for strategic decision-making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Much of the literature of strategic planning processes focuses on strategy formulation, on top management level and in the use of mainly questionnaire data.</li> </ul>
Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011; Sillence et al. 2011; Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Narayanan and Fahey 1982; Mantere and Vaara 2008; Hardy and Clegg 1996; Mantere 2008; Bartkus et al. 2000; Beer and Eisenstat 2000, Ketokivi and Castañer 2003; Jarzabkowski 2003; Hendry et al. 2010; Giraudeau 2008; Kornenberg and Clegg 2011; Vaara et al. 2010; Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009; Balogun et. al 2011; Aggerholm et al. 2012; Ezzamel and Willmott 2008; Laine and Vaara, 2007; MacCabe 2010; Vaara and Whittington 2012.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Power relations are inherent in planning activities.</li> <li>- Strategic planning: descontextualization is a political process that enables the influence of some at the expense of others.</li> <li>- Strategic planning valuable for communicating an organization's strategy internally and externally.</li> <li>- Communication is important during the formation of the plan, not only in the implementation phase.</li> <li>- Strategic planning as a communicative process, where the recursive interplay between planning text and talk enables agreement and the minimization of competing interpretations.</li> <li>- Strategic planning acts as mediator of organizational contradictions.</li> <li>- Senior managers in order to block strategic change, rather than promote it can use formal budgets and planning processes deliberatively.</li> <li>- Strategic planning can also be a source of flexibility, not just rigidity.</li> <li>- Discursive practices of strategy planning can prioritize some interests while marginalizing others.</li> <li>- Participation in the planning activities is part of the communicative process, however few key players construct the strategy text content.</li> <li>- Different planning experience and relative power within business units create different experiences of inclusion or exclusion and dominant or subordinate roles in strategy making and therefore different responses to communication and participation activities within strategic planning process.</li> <li>- Changes in strategic planning may evoke selling, resistance and reconciliation discourses.</li> <li>- Strategy text and talk are liable to be interpreted in multiple ways over time, thus leading to ambiguity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need of further understanding of how conventional practices of strategic planning may legitimate and naturalize short-term profit-orientation or instrumentalism in how people are treated.</li> <li>- Further exploration of the ways in which strategy planning practices can be resisted locally or more widely, exploring how people deal with practices imposed upon them.</li> <li>- The study of strategizing in universities from the practice perspective has been mainly focused on top management level.</li> <li>- Scanty published examples in the academic sector of attempts to assess the institutional consequences of management fads, such as strategic planning tool, through data that provide evidence either of organizational outcomes or of the satisfaction of users.</li> </ul>
Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Denman 2005; Barlett 2007, Asklung and Christensen 2000; Tavernier 2005; Kolsaker 2008; Etzkowitz 2000; Clark 1998; 2003; Sporn 1999; Bryson 1995; Van Vught 2003; Davies 2004; Brennan and Shah 1997.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The development of strategic planning in European higher education is closely related to the development of new public management, more autonomy and self-regulation.</li> <li>- University strategic management should be done with a permanent eye on their specific organizational environment.</li> <li>- Management needs focus on a more entrepreneurial manner.</li> <li>- Most new management innovations have tried to improve government decision-making and operations by imposing a formal rationality on systems that are not rational.</li> <li>- Higher education's biggest challenges arise at institutional governance and managerial levels.</li> <li>- Strategic planning and quality management culture in HE most influenced by external stimulus.</li> </ul>	

Some referential Works	Contributions	Potential gaps of interest for this study
<p>Lillis 2006; Sallinen et al. 1994; Taylor et al. 2007; Birnbaum 1988; Taylor and Miroiu 2002; Rowley and Sherman 2001; Bayenet et al. 2000; Davies 2004; Buckland 2009; Shullock and Harrison 1998; Dyson 2004; Gill and Lashine 2003, Llinàs et al 2011, Birnbaum 2001; 2000; Sevier 2003.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not a generally accepted or standardized methodology for determining the effectiveness of strategic planning or for capturing organizational learning in a higher education context.</li> <li>- Fundamental mismatch between the higher education environment and the assumption made by the rational strategic planning model.</li> <li>- Strategic plans do not always provide a basis for changing and restructuring activities.</li> <li>- Institutional strategic planning had considerably more impact on non-academic areas than in the academic departments.</li> <li>- Models for strategy planning in HE are generally valid, but mayor problems rely on implementation.</li> <li>- Problems with strategy planning were overall related to lack of leadership, failure to communicate, and insufficient participation and shared governance, lack of resources, resistance to change, and inadequate understanding of the process.</li> <li>- Top-down approaches are inappropriate, requiring a more participatory approach, based on consensus building.</li> <li>- Lack of objective and universally accepted performance measures in HE is at odds with the measurable targets required in the objectives of a strategic plan.</li> <li>- Strategy making of universities reflected on “Cell structure” of very independent experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further exploration of the connectedness and disconnectedness of academics from and within strategic planning process.</li> <li>- Broader investigation into how strategy text affords agency to particular types of actors who participate in strategic planning or have formal roles (further exploration on power relations, social order and agency of strategy texts).</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration



## APPENDIX 3

### Contribution of literature on strategy implementation issues

Some referential Works	Contributions	Potential gaps of interest for this study
Alexander 1985; 1991, Noble 1999; Hrebiniak 2006; Lehner 2004, Harrington 2006; Schaap 2006; Argenti 2005; Rapert et al. 2002; Heide et al. 2002; Heracleous 2000; Homburg et al. 2004.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not a universally accepted definition of strategy implementation (different perspectives according to process, behavioural, cognitive, hybrid approaches).</li> <li>- Implementation is seen as an essential part of strategy-making, yet the difficult part is how to put it into action.</li> <li>- Most strategy study definitions stress the role of top management.</li> <li>- Identification of recurring individual factors that influence strategy implementation: strategy formulation process, strategy executors; organizational structure, communication activities, level of commitment and consensus regarding the strategy, relationships among different units/departments and different strategy levels, implementation tactics, and or administrative system in place.</li> <li>- Vertical communication linkages as a means by which strategic consensus and performance can be enhanced.</li> <li>- Shared understanding of middle management and those at the operational level to the top management team's strategic goals is of critical importance to effective implementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scanty studies exploring (non-managerial) employees and their crucial role in turning strategic plans into results, as well as further exploration of the top management role in the implementation effectiveness.</li> <li>- Little attention has been given to the links between communication and strategy in strategy implementation.</li> <li>- Factors as culture; external environment; implementation stages; internal guidelines; power structures, material resources; market orientations or incentives have been less analyzed as influencing implementation outcomes.</li> <li>- Questionnaire is a method that is frequently used by researchers in this domain; SAP scholars have applied more qualitative approaches to this issue.</li> </ul>
Whittington 2001; Whittington and Cailluet 2008; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Jarzabkowski 2003; Stensaker and Falkenberg 2007; Rouleau 2005; Laine and Vaara 2007; Mantere and Vaara 2008; Samra-Frederics 2005; Seidl 2007.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategy implementation issues have been of interest of studies related to more classical approaches to strategy.</li> <li>- Strategy implementation issues from a practice approach have been more associated with how strategy decisions made by others are put into practice.</li> <li>- Issues of role of sensemaking, formal practices, materiality, issues of power, role and identity of participants in strategy process; tools and techniques used in strategizing as well as discursive aspects of strategy have been explored as factors influencing when putting strategy into practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of studies about the actual use of practices in implementation.</li> <li>- Further exploration of engagement and involvement issues in strategy, connecting it to constraints and enhancements of strategy process.</li> <li>- Further exploration of the social nature of strategy formation and implementation.</li> </ul>
Hollowell et al. 2006; Middaugh 2010; Gregory 2008.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alignment as a relevant issue when exploring the concept of strategy implementation effectiveness.</li> <li>- Ontological assumptions and critical reflections on the societal and organizational 'climate' within which strategic planning is being undertaken.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further exploration of participation and alignment issues in strategy implementation.</li> <li>- More reflection on practice.</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration

## APPENDIX 4

### Summary of relevant literature taking narrative and discursive perspectives to strategy research

Work	What was analyzed	Relevancy for this study
<b>EMPIRICAL</b>		
<b>Vaara et al. 2004</b>	Discursive practices of strategy legitimation, using critical discourse theory of cross industry interviews and published texts.	It illustrates how strategies are constructed through discursive practices that can be legitimated or delegitimated. Particularly relevant is the analysis of interviews and texts, to identify the use of practices in strategy construction.
<b>Ezzamel and Willmott 2008</b>	Applying a Foucauldian discourse analysis, they examined the accounting practices in strategy through longitudinal interviews.	Findings suggest how accounting practices can become discursively impregnated with strategic significance with major implications for the organization.
<b>Vaara et al. 2010</b>	Applying a critical discourse analysis in strategic plan texts and interviews in one non profit organization, explored the discursive practices in strategic plans.	Identification of discursive practices (self-authorization, forced consensus and discursive innovation) which reflect important power effects of strategic plans.
<b>Kornberger and Clegg 2011</b>	Applying a Foucauldian discourse analysis, explore a textual analysis, interviews and observations of the power effects of strategic plans	It illustrated that strategy as text is 'performative' in redefining and disciplining the organization.
<b>Maitlis and Lawrence 2003</b>	Through observation, interviews and documentary analysis, applying a discourse and political theories, explored failures in strategizing in a not for profit organization.	Results put forward that the lack of shared discourse can lead to strategizing failure.
<b>Balogun et al. 2011</b>	Using critical discourse analysis of interviews explores the evolution of subsidiary roles.	Suggest that changes in strategic planning may evoke different discourses of selling, resistance or reconciliation.
<b>Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011</b>	Using Ricoeur and Communication theory, through observation and interviews, explored in a university the strategic planning as a communicative process.	Note that the recursive interplay between planning, text and talk enables agreement and minimizes competing interpretations.
<b>Laine and Vaara 2007</b>	Throughout participant observation and interviews, applying a critical discourse analysis, explores the discursive construction of subjectivity.	Note that strategy discourse is central to struggles over control and resistance between top management, middle managers and other organizational members.
<b>Mantere and Vaara 2008</b>	Applying discourse theory on interviews and other data, explores the discursive practices and strategy participation.	Identification of which discursive practices inhibit or facilitate participation in strategy.
<b>Suominen and Mantere 2010</b>	Using De Certeau: practice theory, though interviews, observations and document analysis examine the role of middle managers in strategizing.	Illustrate that middle managers creatively 'consume' strategies, either instrumentally, playfully or intimately.
<b>O'Connor 2002</b>	Using ethnographic and grounded theory methodologies explore narratives in entrepreneurship.	Although this study do not exclusively use discursive approaches, the interest of the study relies on the identification of categories of narratives and their relationships through intertextuality as essential in the governing of organizations.

<b>Work</b>	<b>What was analyzed</b>	<b>Relevancy for this study</b>
<b>EMPIRICAL</b>		
<b>Anderson 2004</b>	Explores through the investigation of conversation and writing practices used by members of a project team, the role of writing during and attempt of organizational change.	Specifically interesting is the exploration of concepts of conversation, writing and textualization in translating discourses into narrative form, it shows how shared understanding is constructed, in a context of organizational change.
<b>Vaara 2002</b>	Explores throughout interview material, the discursive construction of success and failure in narratives of post-merger integration.	Particularly relevant is the identification and draw of categories of discourses, constructing success and failures narratives and the detailed description of the narrative analysis upon interview material.
<b>CONCEPTUAL</b>		
<b>Fenton and Langley 2011</b>	Explore application of narrative approaches to strategy praxis, practices, practitioners and text and interaction among them.	Offers a novel and coherent theoretical perspective for the analysis of strategy as practice and proposes an agenda for an integrative narrative-based perspective on strategy as practice with different analysis focus (Praxis, practices, practitioners, texts, narrative infrastructure, metaconversation and narrative diversity).
<b>De la Ville and Mounoud 2010</b>	Drawing on Ricouer and de Certeau, elucidate the various narrative practices that constitute an inherent part of strategy and strategizing.	Offers a model that focuses on the writing and reading of texts and narratives as ongoing activities in organizations. This perspective allows the understanding of the crucial role of strategy texts and ongoing interpretations in strategizing.

Source: Own elaboration

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Case Study Protocol**

#### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this protocol is to guide the data collection in a multiple case study research. The study will explore the engagement of academic manager's in strategy practices and the role of strategic documents in strategizing process in different typologies of higher education institutions. In this manner, the protocol will be used to collect information on the strategy process, types of strategy texts, as well as narratives of academic managers in middle and top management position about the use and functions of the strategy texts, in addition to elements and practices of strategy formulation and implementation.

The multiple case studies will be comprised of 3 cases. The goal of each case study is to provide information that gives a deeper insight into the role of strategy texts regarding an effective strategy implementation and academic manager's engagement, providing a better understand of strategic management practices and strategy texts different uses in practice. Therefore, the multiple case study analysis is focused on a first stage in the examination of the universities different strategy texts and its process evolution overtime. Furthermore, it concentrates in collecting narratives of academic managers about their perceptions of the university strategy, the function and uses of the strategy documents, as well as their experiences about the practices involved in strategy development, engagement and implementation.

#### **2. Background of Case Study Research**

This protocol pursues recommendations by Yin (2003) and it comprehends the methodology and analysis components of the research project being carried out. The main role of the protocol is to ensure consistency within the research by providing guidance throughout its various stages, serving as a quick reference document on the research concepts.

##### *2.1. Research Questions being addressed by this study*

De la Ville and Mounoud (2010) proposed a model for strategy formation that states how strategy texts are created recursively, starting from the mundane narratives, which influence daily practices. This framework highlights the mediation role of strategy texts between institutional contexts and organizational situations, presenting the role of strategy text as an intermediate point of connection between the institutional discourses and the organizational member's actual practices. In that line of thinking and within the context of the strategy texts uses in public higher education institutions, this study intend to answer the following questions:

- RQ1. What is the role of strategy text in strategizing?
  - RQ1.1. What are the relevant elements, practices and behaviours associated with strategy text usage?
  - RQ1.2. How those elements, practices and behaviours interact among them to promote strategy text usefulness in academic manager engagement in strategizing?
  - RQ1.3. How the strategy text is used by academic managers?
- RQ2. How can variations in practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy text usage explain better academic manager's engagement and superior strategizing outcomes?

### 3. Case Research Design

A holistic multiple-case study design will be used. The unit of analysis will be the strategy texts and its process evolution over time, being explored from two perspectives: on the one hand a content analysis and cross-text comparison within and across institutions, and on the other, the academic manager's narratives about practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy texts production, engagement and implementation. Accordingly, the elements to be study within the strategy text production and implementation practices in each university will comprehend the following:

- 1) Institutional strategy texts (embracing at least three cycles of production, in order to be able to track its evolution over time).
- 2) Individual narratives (top management team) about the university strategy, their use and view of strategy texts functions and roles, as well as practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy text production, implementation and engagement.
- 3) Individual narratives (middle management) about their perception of the university strategy, use and function of strategy texts in their daily activities, along with perceptions of practices and elements that drive engagement or constraints in strategy engagement.

Multiple cases will be explored because they provide more evidence than a single case and at the same time, they produce a more compelling study and add more confidence to the findings (Yin 2003; Milles and Hubberman 1994). In addition, multiple case studies are desirable when the goal of the research is theory building because they allow for cross-case analysis and the extension of the theory.

As follows, the study is comprised of three case studies comprehending public institutions of higher education, which have produced a strategy text in the framework of a strategic management system. The three case studies are carried out in the Spanish context, and the chosen institutions are located within two different autonomous communities. Three basic requirements were taken into account when selecting the case studies sites:

1. Comprehensive travel distances to facilitate the research mobility, taking into account the recognition of the institutions within the Spanish higher education system.
2. Some experience with strategy texts development and availability to access documentary and interview data.
3. Different profile of universities: more focus on research, more regional driven, more technological driven. This requirement is taken into account in order to explore strategy texts uses in different contexts.

In this manner, the selected universities for this study comply with the following criteria:

- A public institution which have produced and implemented strategy texts in the past and have a current strategy document alive, in order to be possible to assess their evolvement along the different periods.
- Academic managers in top and middle management positions available to be interviewed. They must have being working within the institution for a minimum period of five years.
- Different typologies of universities to explore context variable.

## 4. Overview of the process to be carried out in the periods of Data Collection and Data Analysis

### 4.1 Data Collection

Case study research usually makes use of multiple data collection methods. In the case of this project, data will be collected through interviews with individuals occupying positions in the top and middle management of the three chosen universities. Also documentary data will be collected (different types of strategy documents: strategic plans, governments plans, lines of government, etc.) as well as related documents such as annual reports, action plans, units plans etc.). These data will provide the convergence of multiple sources of evidence in a process of triangulation (Yin 1994; Eisenhardt 1989). Also, during the visits, observation and formal conversation will take place and will be elaborated throughout research notes in site, complementing the contextual data for further convergence in the analysis interpretation process. Along these lines, the different sources of data to be collected will be followed described.

#### 4.1.1 Documentary DATA

As previously contended, the documentary data gathering process will be focused on identifying the strategy documents that the different institutions have produced and implemented over time. The identification of more than one strategy document being produced and implemented will allow for the comparison between them and will also support the researcher in the understanding of the university strategy history, for further exploration during the interview period. Throughout the identification of these documents, the universities webpage's will be looked at, and the contact person from each institution will be also asked to point out the main strategy documents that the university has produced in the past 10 years (normally the documents have a plan horizon from being biennial or quinquennial). Additionally, taking into account that the contextual elements are also important in the task of elaborating a scheme of each university strategy story, other associated documentary data will be looked at. Table A. shows the potential documentary data to be selected per each case study.

Table A. Documentary data selected per case

Type of document	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Total
<b>Institutional Strategy texts</b>	Strategic plans, Strategy vision documents, Government plans, Lines of Government, etc.			(Minimum of 3 institutional strategy texts representing different period cycles over time)
<b>Other related documentary data</b>	Government funding procedures, annual reports, university unit's strategy documents, actions plans, etc.			It will depend of each university contextual organization.

Source: Own elaboration

#### 4.1.2 Interviews

Interviews will be conducted with a selected group of key individuals in top and in middle management positions within each case. The contact person from each university will help out in the selection and in contacting with these groups of key individuals. The criteria for the selection of the potential interviewees are based in their years of experience in working within the institution, which will provide for the exploration of their knowledge, involvement and perceptions of the university strategy story. Table B. shows the potential number of interviews to be conducted in each case. Case two and case 3 represents a lower number of potential interviewees due to their smaller structure size.

Table B. Potential number of interviewees per case

<b>Academic managers</b>	<b>Case 1 Technological</b>	<b>Case 2 Regional</b>	<b>Case 3 Research</b>	<b>Total (estimated)</b>
<b>Within top positions</b>	4	3	3	10
<b>Within middle positions</b>	15	10	10	35
<b>Total interviewees</b>	19	13	13	<b>45</b>

Source: Own elaboration

Given the fact that this doctoral dissertation comprehends an exploratory study, the interviews will not be completely structured in order to allow for a more flexible questioning of their perceptions upon the university strategy, strategy texts roles and functions, as well as viewpoints concerning practices, elements and attitudes associated with strategy texts production and uses.

The interviews will focus on exploring the narratives of the two groups of key individuals (top and middle managers) regarding the following topics:

- Background of the interviewee and their relationship with the university.
- Their view and perceptions concerning specific aspects related to the strategy of the University.
- Their view and perceptions concerning specific aspects of the strategy at the units and strategy alignment.
- Their view and perceptions concerning the role and functions of the strategy text, practices, elements and behaviours associated with strategy production and implementation over time.

Hence a protocol draft will be developed to guide the interview process. Two interview guides will be elaborated in order to support the interview with the two different groups of key individuals: one directed to the top management group and the other to the middle managers. Appendix B1 and B2 describe these two interviews protocol guides being developed. It is important to note that these guides are only overall supportive, thus can be adapted to the cases according to specific needs and can be improved as the interviews are advancing.

The interview protocol is not designed in order to the time spent with the interviews to fit with a period that range from 45 to 75 minutes, given the fact that it is a exploratory research design some interviews can take longer than other, depending on the interviewee background, his time availability to expand on the topics. The protocol guide is supportive on introducing topics for exploring their narratives about it; however the narratives, when needed should be directed toward the topics needed for the exploratory study.

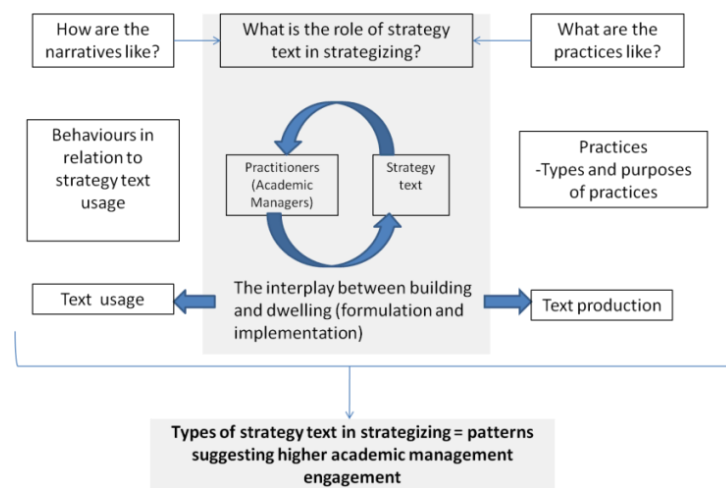
#### *4.1.3. Access to the research sites*

Once cases are identified, they are to be contacted to confirm support of the research project. The potential document list of the documentary data (Table A) to be analysed will be used once the contact is formalized as well as the potential list of interviewees will be discussed with the contact person. A standard letter to be provided to prospective case study institutions is to be elaborated, as well as a standard letter to be sent to potential informants within each case. Both samples of these letters are attached in Appendix C1 and C2. In addition to, a consent form is going to be elaborated explained the confidentiality of the information to be provided, which is going to be signed by the interviewee. A sample of this form is found in Appendix C3.

#### 4.2. Data Analysis

The main issue of studies performed using case-based qualitative research is determining prior to start of data collection, how much data to collect (Leavy 1994). In order to deal with this problematic an outlined multiple-case approach was contemplated (previously pointed out in point 4.1 of this protocol) aiming at helping with the collection of similar data for further interaction within the analysis process. Concerning the data analysis approach, a framework to support the research design and analysis was elaborated, as shown in Figure A, which exposes the main elements to be studied.

Figure A. Framework to support the research design and analysis



Data analysis is supported by the use of the software for qualitative data analysis *Atlas.ti* version 7 in order to manage the amount of data. All the interviews are to be recorded and transcribed verbatim and uploaded in a HU file (hermeneutic unit) in *Atlas.ti*. The transcription process will follow the orientations provided by Mclellan et al. (2003). Also the documentary data will be uploaded and stored in a single HU. Family documents will be created in order to facilitate the coding process. The coding process will follow a procedure, especially in the earlier stages, focusing at first hand on establishing a system of codes, families and categories.

The data analysis will follow two separate stages. Within the first one, the individual case analysis is carried out, followed by a second stage in which the cross-case analysis takes place. Concerning the within case analysis, the process involves writing individual case reports. These reports will follow a specific structure as specified:

1. Description of the university strategy story outline.
2. Description of the strategy text formats and official discourses.
3. Description of the repertoire of elements and practices of strategy text production, implementation and alignment.
4. Description of practices experienced as enablers or constraints in strategy engagement.
5. Description of behaviours in the use of strategy texts.
6. Description of types of strategy texts in practices associated to types of practices and different text usage.

Cross-case analysis can be written up by considering the following items:

1. Compare description of cases.
2. Consider each individual element across the cases.



3. Compare overall strategy program process across cases.
4. Comparing group of elements and specific issues (practices, types and formats of strategy texts, strategy texts content, elements and behaviours narrated by the managers, etc.).
5. Conclude:
  - a. Describe key similarities and differences across cases.
  - b. Address the research questions.
  - c. What questions remain and could be answered by future research?

#### *4.3. Criteria for Evaluation*

Yin (1994) identifies four tests that can be used to evaluate the quality of a research design and determine the rigour of the study. As follows, these tests are specified and also it is outlined the way they are to be addressed throughout the application of this study:

- Construct validity: refers to whether the operational set of measures for the construct are sufficient for measuring the specific issues being investigated and do actually measure them. This issue will be addressed by collecting data through multiple sources (documentary data, different managers profile narratives, other contextual document data, as well as observation notes). Also the elaboration of this protocol will help with the challenge of maintaining a chain of evidence during the data collection period.
- Internal validity: establishment of causal relationships between the issues investigated and that a change in the condition of one leads to a change in conditions in the other. This will be taken into account by the use of pattern-techniques of data analysis.
- External validity: establishing the domain to which the finding of the study can be generalized. It is to be addressed by the use of the multiple-case design, approaching it as replication logic in order to generate the findings into a theory.
- Reliability: providing a structure and process for the study so that another researcher can use the procedures to conduct the same study arriving at the same or similar results. This will be addressed by the development of a research framework to support the research design and analysis, a case study protocol to define the steps along the preparation and application of the multiple-case studies, as well as a description of the analytical process conducted in the framework of the within and across cases analysis.

## APPENDIX 6A

### Interview Guide (Group of top manager's members)

#### *General topics covered in the interview*

<i>Introduction of the general aspects of the investigation by the researcher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief explanation of the study, the purpose of the interview and the potential use of the results.</li> <li>• Ensure the confidentiality of the information provided.</li> <li>• Signing the consent form.</li> </ul>
<i>Background of the interviewee and his/her career experiences within the university</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering of information about the interviewee and his/her relationship with the university.</li> <li>• Gathering of information respect the interviewee management positions experiences.</li> <li>• Gathering information regarding motivation for assuming a management position.</li> <li>• Gathering information about specific training in management subjects, previously assuming the position or during holding the position.</li> </ul>
<i>Specific aspects related to the strategy of the University</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewee <u>knowledge of the university's strategy</u> and how is his/her <u>vision about it</u>.</li> <li>• <u>Roles of interviewee in the process of developing the strategy</u> of the university and its strategy document (across the university planning different cycles, depending on the interviewee relationship with the university).</li> <li>• Information on <u>practices at place</u> in the development of the strategy and the formalization of a strategy document.</li> <li>• How is the <u>job of the management team</u>, especially of each pro-vice chancellor's office on <u>identifying specific strategic priorities and agreeing upon them</u>.</li> <li>• What <u>functions and utility</u> are associated with the <u>strategy document</u>.</li> <li>• <u>Key aspects that have contributed to the development of strategy culture</u> in the university, which have driven its strategic direction - (key aspects of success, and negative constraints).</li> </ul>
<i>Specific aspects related to the strategy implementation and strategy alignment with the units</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main <u>channels used to communicate</u> the institutional strategy, and which ones are perceived as being more effective.</li> <li>• <u>Mechanisms used to ensure the implementation</u> of the strategy in the units and its subsequent monitoring.</li> <li>• The strategy / <u>strategy texts are known by most people</u> within the university. Socialization of the results.</li> <li>• <u>Actors defining the strategy at the unit's levels</u> (content and activities) and role of middle managers in strategy implementation.</li> <li>• <u>Linking strategy top-down and bottom-up</u> (role of the institutional strategy document).</li> <li>• <u>Practices which facilitate higher participation and alignment</u> of institutional strategy with the activities of the units.</li> <li>• Perceptions about <u>potential problems associated with the implementation and alignment of strategy</u>.</li> <li>• <u>Aspects associated with increasingly efficiency in the implementation</u> of the strategy in the units.</li> <li>• <u>Funding mechanisms</u> (changes and challenges arising from the economic crisis and cuts in the continuity of the model)</li> </ul>

*Aspects of governance,  
funding and rankings*

- Influence / Impact of university rankings league tables in the university strategy. Introductions of aspects / modifications in the formulation of the strategy of universities (specific measures are taken for better visibility).
- Assessment of university governance - possible changes in the current government: (positive and negative aspects in the development of the strategy and strategy text) and its impact in the strategy making process.

## APPENDIX 6B

### Interview Guide (Group of middle managers members)

#### *General topics covered in the interview*

<i>Introduction of the general aspects of the investigation by the researcher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief explanation of the study, the purpose of the interview and the potential use of the results.</li> <li>• Ensure the confidentiality of the information provided.</li> <li>• Signing the consent form.</li> </ul>
<i>Background of the interviewee and his/her career experiences within the university</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering of information about the interviewee and his/her relationship with the university.</li> <li>• Gathering of information respect the interviewee management positions experiences.</li> <li>• Gathering information regarding motivation for assuming a management position.</li> <li>• Gathering information about specific training in management subjects, previously assuming the position or during holding the position.</li> </ul>
<i>Specific aspects related to the strategy of the University</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewee <u>knowledge of the university's strategy</u> and how is his/her vision about it.</li> <li>• <u>Participatory role at some point in the development process of the strategy of the university</u>. Main channels allowing participation in the university strategy.</li> <li>• <u>Vision on the implementation of the strategy of the university</u>. Highlighting some aspects (key success factors / negative / improvement).</li> <li>• The strategy / <u>strategy text are known by most people</u> in the university (in the unit).</li> </ul>
<i>Specific aspects related to the strategy implementation and strategy alignment with the units</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Organizational structure and practices</u> at place for formulating the strategy/strategy text of the unit.</li> <li>• <u>Resources associated to it</u>.</li> <li>• <u>Who defines (and how) the strategy locally</u>, in terms of content and activities?</li> <li>• <u>Functions and roles attributed to the university institutional strategy text</u> in the activities of the unit. How is it used and perceptions of its usefulness?</li> <li>• <u>Linking the university strategy with management practices in the unit</u>. Main channels.</li> <li>• The <u>strengths and weaknesses when it comes to implementing the strategies</u> / strategy document in their unit.</li> <li>• What <u>elements and practices facilitate higher alignment</u> and engagement between institutional strategy and local strategy (units).</li> </ul>
<i>Aspects of governance, funding and rankings</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence / Impact of university rankings league tables in the university strategy. Introductions of aspects / modifications in the formulation of the strategy of universities (specific measures are taken for better visibility).</li> <li>• Assessment of university governance - possible changes in the current government: (positive and negative aspects in the development of the strategy and strategy text) and its impact in the strategy making process.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 7A

### Standard letters sample used in approaching research case sites and informants



**Date**

**University details**

Dear...

**RE: Request for assistance with the implementation of a case study research**

In the framework of the UNESCO Chair of Higher Education Management based at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, I am preparing a doctoral thesis on the subject of strategy formulation and implementation in Spanish universities, using a qualitative approach throughout document and narrative analysis.

The purpose of my study is to contribute to the problematic of strategy implementation in higher education institutions. This study has an exploratory character and it expect to:

- Assist higher education institutions to understand what different practices and behaviours of producing, implementing and using strategy documents are at play in different typologies of universities and what effects these practices and behaviours are thought to have on strategy implementation outcomes.
- Examine how relevant is the role of strategy text in promoting the middle manager engagement within the university strategy.

Consequently, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of the strategy as practice in universities, by identifying individual and organizational narratives. On the other hand, the study also aims to provide a better understanding on the identification of who are the strategists in universities, which practices are used in strategy making, who are the actors involved and how these concepts are interrelated when producing strategy documents and implement it. Consequently, the relation of these aspects during the strategizing process leads to different results, which can be perceived from different points of views. Furthermore, the study aims to explore, through the creation of patterns, how, by identifying certain aspects from the relationships between actors, practices and strategy text usage in strategizing, can help universities to improve the participation of different actors in the production and implementation of their strategy and strategy documents.

The study methodology involves conducting comparative case studies on strategy texts production and usage in different types of Spanish public universities. The comparative case would apply three types of universities: Technological, regional and research.

I would like to undertake an individual case study on the strategy process development and strategy text usage in your institution and I am seeking your support. The conduct of an individual case in your university will involve the following tasks:

- A general description of the external context and the internal organization (size, structure, attributes).
- Interview with some members of the top management team, including yourself and middle managers levels (interviews should expect to range approximately from 60 to 70 minutes duration).
- Access to review relevant documents associated with the strategy development process (such as institutional official strategic plans, government plans, unit strategy documents, annual reports, action plans, etc.).
- Preparation of the case report that describes the practices of strategy text production and implementation and which behaviours are associated when using these documents.
- Comparison with other typologies of universities in order to identify similarities and differences (in the Spanish Context).
- Conclusions about the elements that might relate positively or negatively, to promote or limit strategy engagement.

Besides indicating your support you may be able to assist me by identifying potential interviewees and documents related to the university strategy process that are not publicly available.

I am aware of the need to treat findings with the utmost confidentiality. No source, individual or organizational, will be identified or comment attributed without the express permission of the originator. The intended output of my study will be a thesis and conference and journal publications to explain my findings.

Please consider my project and indicate whether you support the exploration of the case study in your institution. I look forward to hearing from you and if you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Michele Girotto  
[michele.girotto@upc.edu](mailto:michele.girotto@upc.edu)

## APPENDIX 7B Information sheet



### **RE: Request for interviewing on strategy process of the university: Information sheet**

Dear...

Thanking you for taking the time to consider participating in my research project. My name is Michele Giroto and I am a doctoral candidate at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain.

The purpose of my study is to contribute to the problematic of strategy implementation in higher education institutions by looking at the strategy text production and implementation practices and behaviours when comes to use it.

This exploratory study is expected to:

- Assist higher education institutions to understand what different practices and behaviours of producing, implementing and using strategy documents are at play in different typologies of universities and what effects these practices and behaviours are thought to have on strategy implementation outcomes.
- Examine how relevant is the role of strategy text in promoting the middle manager engagement within the university strategy.

I am aware of the need to treat findings with the utmost confidentiality. You will be anonymous and will not be identified in any study publications. Further, no source, individual or organizational, will be identified or comment attributed without the express permission of the originator. The intended output of my study will be a thesis, conferences and journal publications explaining my findings.

I would be grateful if you could spend approximately 60 to 70 minutes in an interview with me. I hope you are able to help me and if you are willing to participate, please complete the attached consent form, which I will collect at the interview.

I look forward to meeting you and if you require any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Michele Giroto  
[michele.giroto@upc.edu](mailto:michele.giroto@upc.edu)

## APPENDIX 7C

### Interviewees consent form



#### *Interviewing on strategy process of the university Consent form*

I consent to participate in this research project and agree that:

1. An Information Sheet has been provided to me via email message.
2. I understand the research findings will be included in the researcher's publications(s) on the project and this may include conferences and articles written for journals and other methods of dissemination.
3. I understand that the transcription of the recorded interview will be used confidentially, only for the research empirical purposes.
4. I understand that to preserve my anonymity and maintain confidentiality of participants, any names will not be mentioned or used in any publication(s).

Name of the interviewee:

Interview time:

Interview date:

Interview venue:

Interviewee Signature:

Researcher contact details  
Michele Girotto  
[Michele.girotto@upc.edu](mailto:Michele.girotto@upc.edu)



## APPENDIX 8

### Transcription guide

The audio taped recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. It is important to note that for each transcribed file, it has been attached a memo with comments about the notes taken during the interview. These notes are related to the non-linguistic observations (facial expressions, body language, setting descriptions, etc.). Poland and Pederson (1998) reasoned that what is not said is just as important as what is said. Hence, when carrying out the transcripts efforts were made to include contextual information also. The guidelines provided by Mclellan et al. (2003) helped with the preparation and implementation of the transcription tasks foreseen its further analysis according to the analysis framework of the study. As follows an adaptation from Mclellan et al. (2003) protocol for sample qualitative data preparation and transcription is presented.

<b>General instruction for text formatting</b>	<p>All the individuals interviews shall be transcribed using a specific formatting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arial 10-point face-font</li> <li>• One-inch top, bottom, right, and left margins</li> <li>• All text shall begin at the left-hand margin (no indents)</li> <li>• Entire document shall be left justified</li> </ul>
<b>Labelling for individual interview transcripts</b>	<p>Individual interview transcript shall include the following labelling information left justified at the top of the document:</p> <p><i>Example:</i>  Participant ID:  Interview Name:  Interviewee Category/Subgroup:  Site/Location:  Date of Interview:  Interviewer ID:</p> <p>The transcribers shall insert a single blank line between the file labelling information and the actual interview transcription. A double pound sign (##) shall precede and follow each participant identification label (i.e., Source ID).</p> <p>A single hard return shall be inserted immediately after the Source ID. The individual's comment/response shall begin on the next line.</p> <p><u>Example:</u>  Participant ID: HEAD-DEPT-M3  Interview Name: Head of department interview  Interviewee Subgroup #: Middle managers narratives  Site: Case 3 – research university  Date of Interview: 02/23/12  Transcriber: MG  ##MG##  OK, before we begin the interview itself, I'd like to confirm that you have read and signed the informed consent form, that you understand that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Do you have questions before we proceed?  ## HEAD-DEPT-M3##  No.  ##MG##  Ok, so...</p>
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audiotapes shall be transcribed verbatim (i.e., recorded word for word, exactly as said), including any nonverbal or background sounds (e.g., laughter, police siren in background, etc.).</li> <li>• Nonverbal sounds shall be typed in parentheses, for example, (short sharp laugh).</li> <li>• If interviewers or interviewees mispronounce words, these words shall be transcribed as the individual said them. If an incorrect or unexpected pronunciation results in difficulties with comprehension of the text, the correct word shall be typed in square brackets. A forward slash shall be placed immediately behind the open square bracket and another in</li> </ul>

front of the closed square bracket. *Example:* I thought that was pretty pacific [/specific/], but they disagreed.

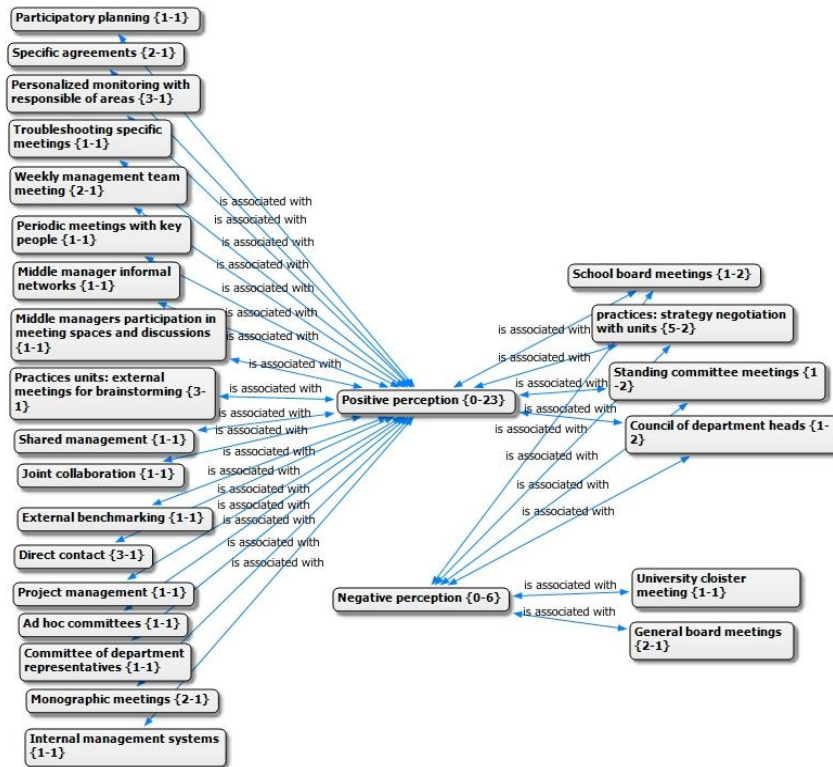
- Filler words such as *hm, huh, mm, mhm, uh huh, um, mkay, yeah, yuhuh, nah huh, ugh, whoa, uh oh, ah,* and *ahah* shall be transcribed.
- Word or phrase repetitions shall be transcribed. If a word is cut off or truncated, a hyphen shall be inserted at the end of the last letter or audible sound (e.g., he wen- he went and did what I told him he shouldn't ve).
- The transcriber shall identify portions of the audiotape that are inaudible or difficult to decipher. If a relatively small segment of the tape (a word or short sentence) is partially unintelligible, the transcriber shall type the phrase "inaudible segment." This information shall appear in square brackets. *Example:* The process of identifying missing words in an audiotaped interview of poor quality is [inaudible segment].
- If an individual pauses briefly between statements or trails off at the end of a statement, the transcriber shall use three ellipses. A brief pause is defined as a two- to five second break in speech. *Example:* Sometimes, a participant briefly loses . . . a train of thought or . . . pauses after making a poignant remark. Other times, they end their statements with a clause such as but then . . .
- If the transcriber is unsure of the accuracy of a statement made by a speaker, this statement shall be placed inside parentheses and a question mark is placed in front of the open parenthesis and behind the close parenthesis. *Example:* ## HEAD-DEPT-M3## I went over to the ?(club on Avalon)? to meet with the street outreach team to talk about joining up for the study.

**Reviewing for accuracy**

All transcripts shall be audited for accuracy by the interviewer who conducted the interview.

## APPENDIX 9 (Within-case analysis networks: Case 1)

### Appendix 9A: Convergence network of positive and negative perceptions of practices (Case 1)

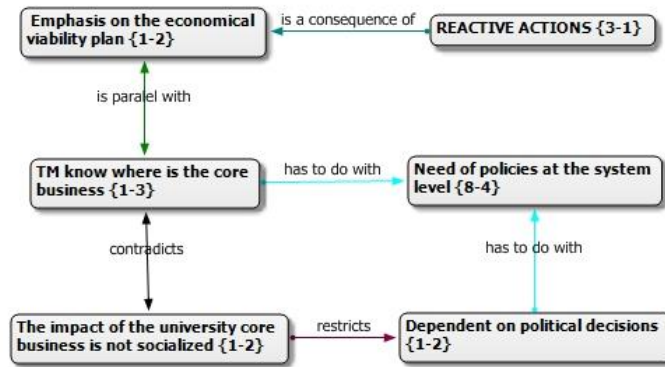


### Appendix 9B: Overview of academic manager's perceptions of practices (Case 1)

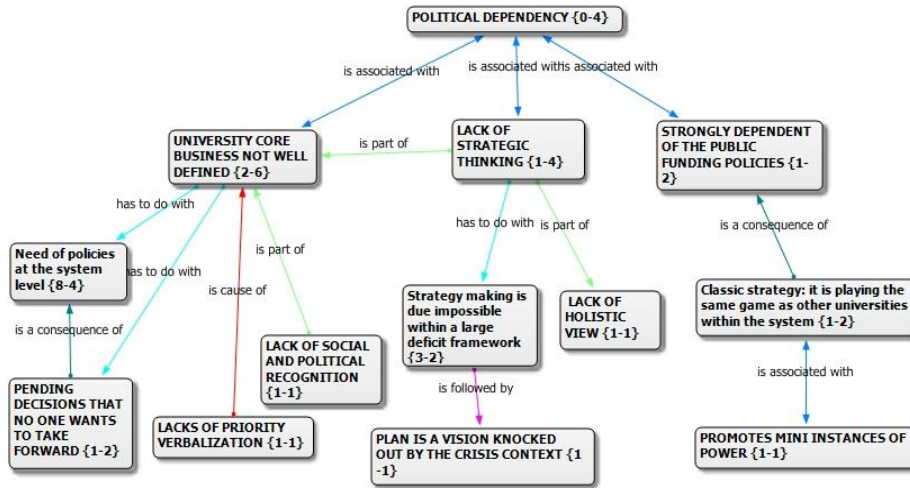
	Negative		Positive
<b>Singularized regulated</b>	<i>School board meetings</i>	MM	It function as decision making, not for strategic thinking
	<i>Direct contact</i>	TM	
	<i>Joint collaborations</i>		
<b>Standardized Cyclical</b>	<i>Standing committees meetings</i>	MM	Do not function as a forum for strategic thinking / strategic issues are not discussed
	<i>University Cloister meeting</i>		Very little practical
	<i>Council of department heads</i>	MM	Do not function as a forum for strategic thinking / Very restrictive to specific topics
	<i>Ad hoc committees</i>	TM	
	<i>General board meetings</i>	MM	Do not function as a forum for strategic thinking
			It lacks a key person to serve as an agreement mediator
			Not very practical
	<i>Planning cycle internal strategy negotiation</i>	MM	Regular operative meetings
			Scanty flexibility
			It facilitates to approach to the university vision
			Do not address strategic issues
			Corporate strategy alignment is done by political relations
Very restrictive to economic objectives			
Restrictive to budget distribution			
Management by complicity (alignment based on political relations)			
Very restrictive, system dependent			
	TM	Facilitates the harmonization of the internal quality	
		Facilitates the alignment with the institutional vision	
		It serves as an indicator of activities improvement	
		It contemplated emerging initiatives	

Source: Own elaboration

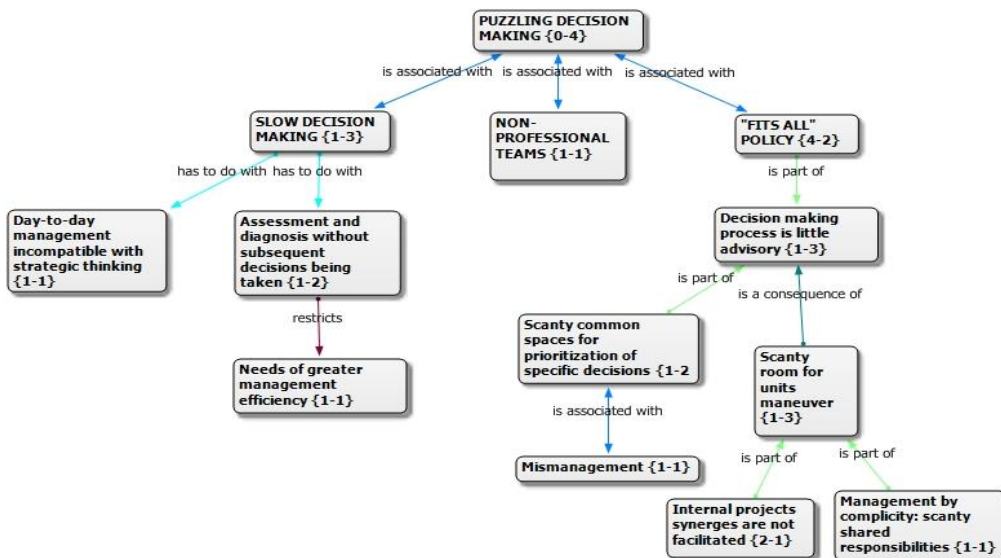
**Appendix 9C: Network of TM restrictive perspective on university strategy (Case 1)**



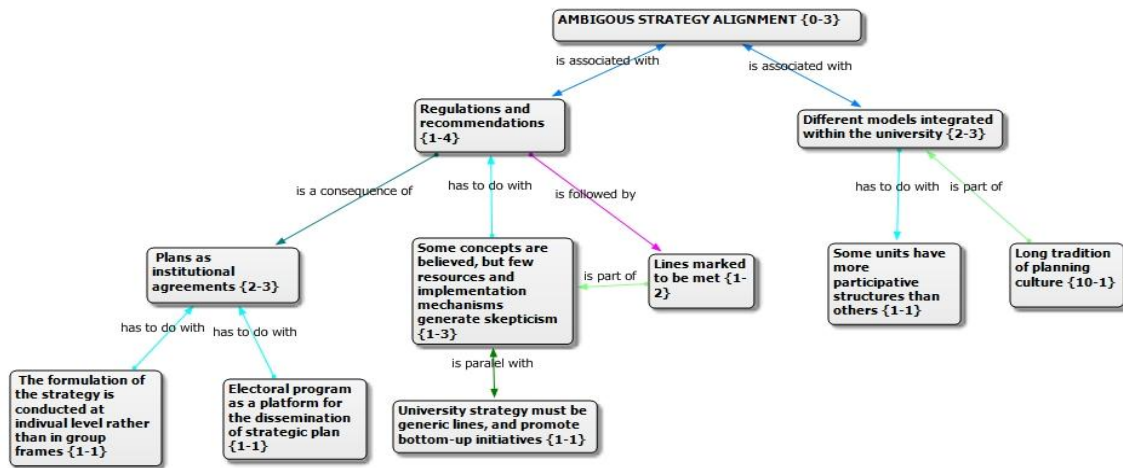
**Appendix 9D: Network of MM views on strategy: POLITICAL DEPENDENCY (Case 1)**



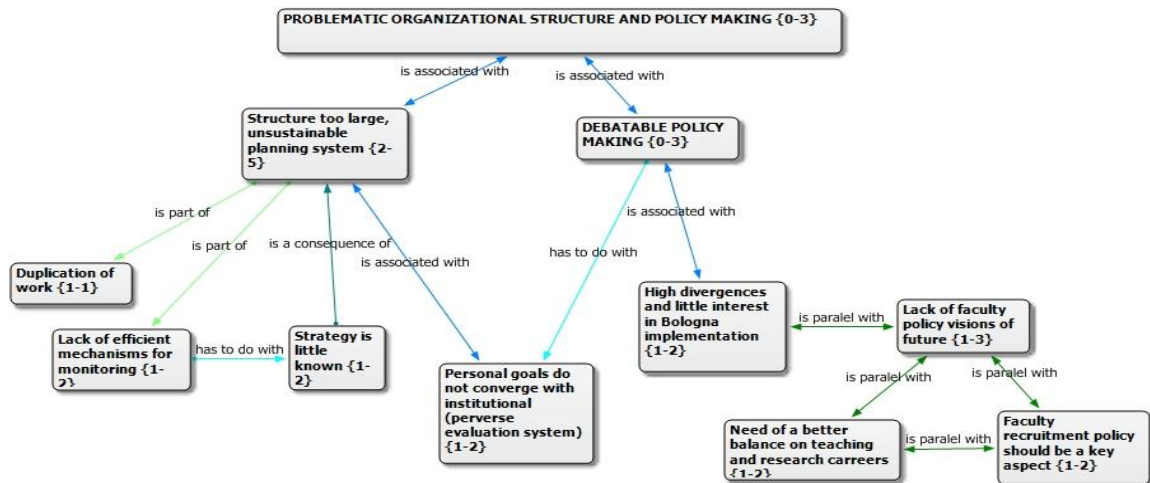
**Appendix 9E: Network of MM views on strategy: PUZZLING DECISION MAKING (Case 1)**



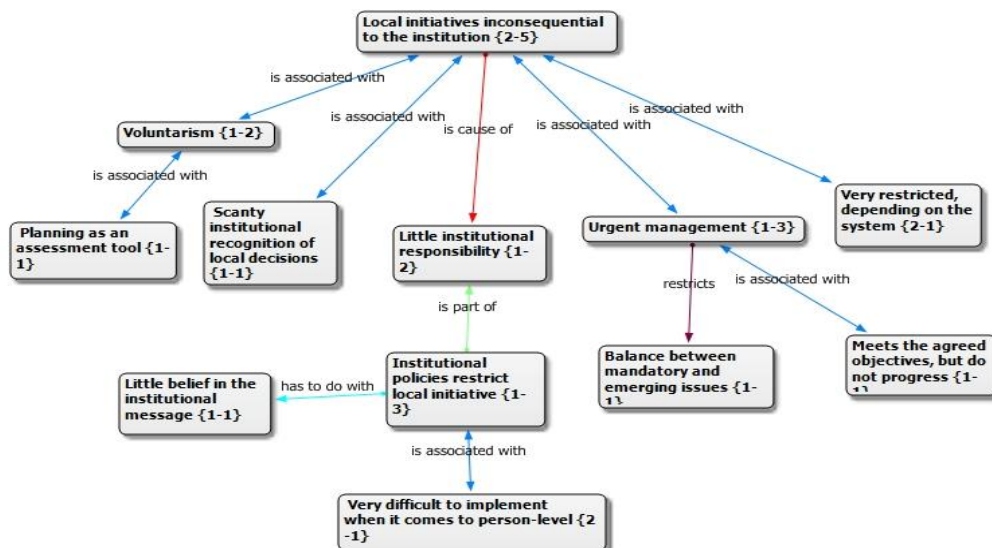
**Appendix 9F: Network of MM views on strategy: AMBIGUOUS STRATEGY ALIGNMENT (Case 1)**



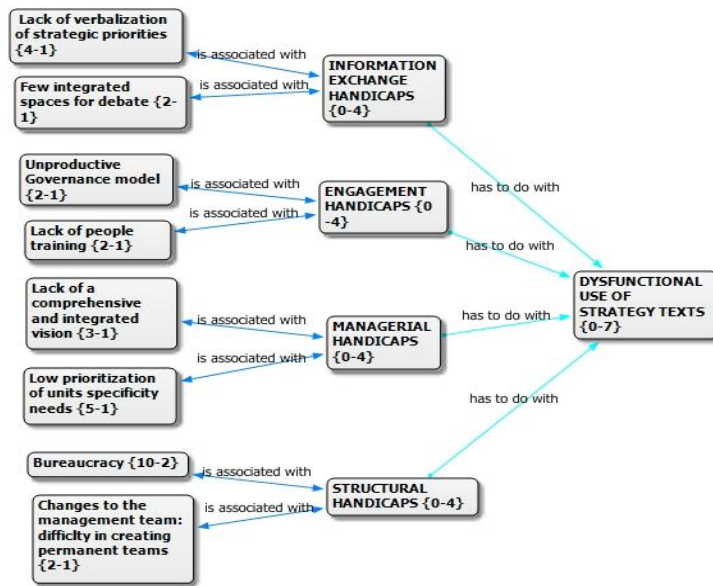
**Appendix 9G: Network of MM views on strategy: PROBLEMATIC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND POLICY MAKING (Case 1)**



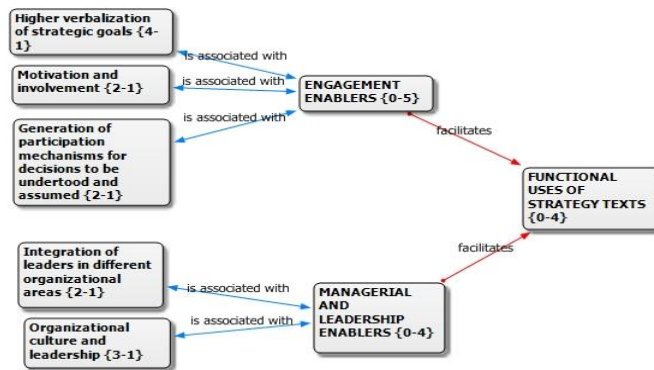
**Appendix 9H: Network of MM views on unit's strategy (Case 1)**



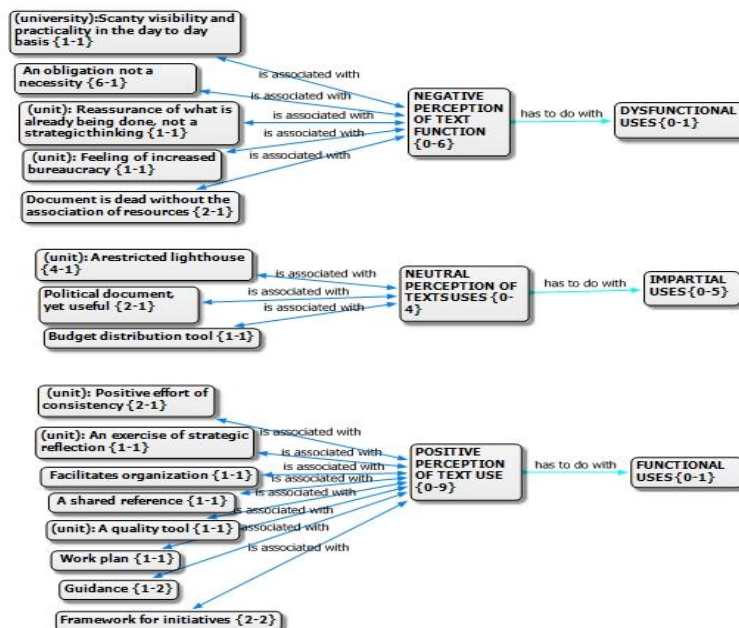
Appendix 9I: Network of MM views on strategy development handicaps (Case 1)



Appendix 9J: Network of MM views on strategy enablers (Case 1)

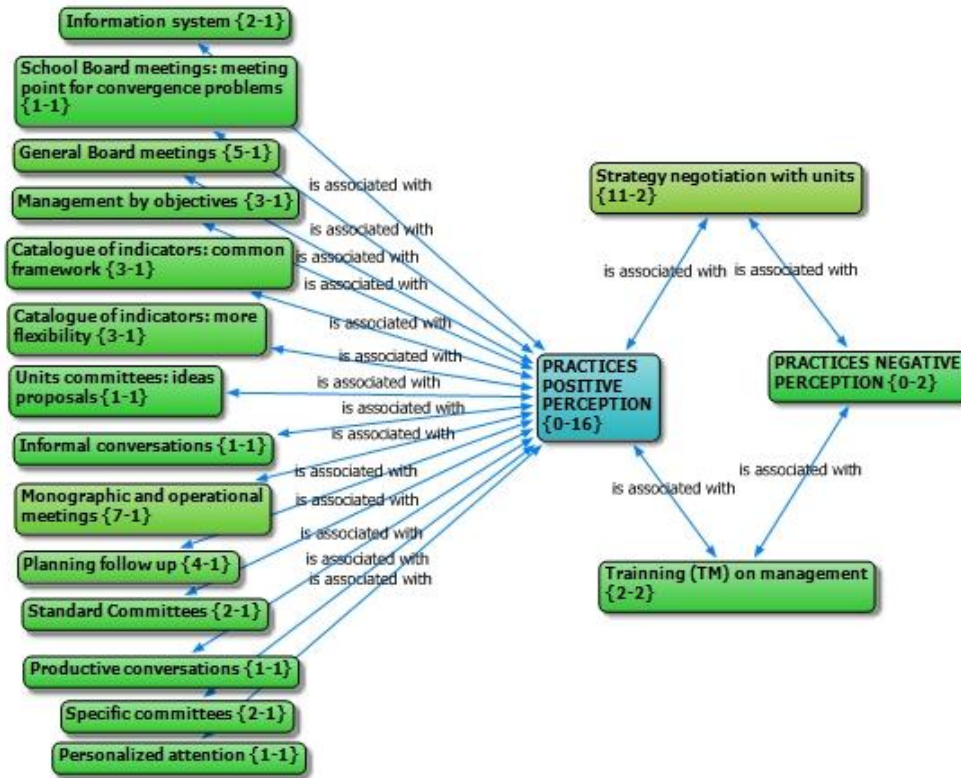


Appendix 9K: Network of MM views on strategy texts uses (Case 1)

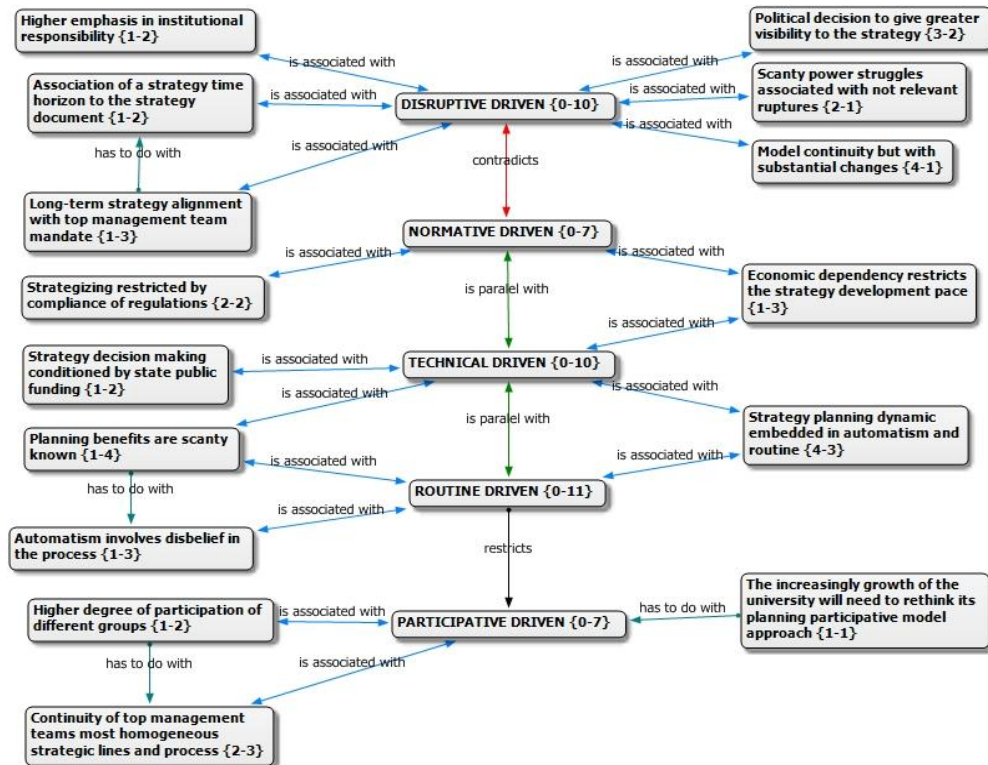


## APPENDIX 10 (Within-case analysis networks: Case 2)

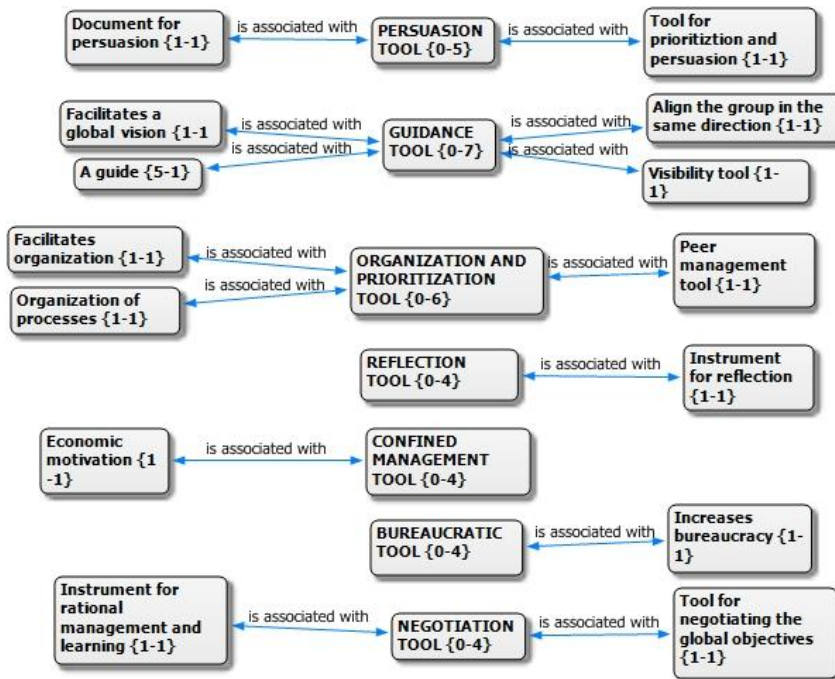
Appendix 10A: Network of positive and negative concurrent perceptions of practices (Case 2)



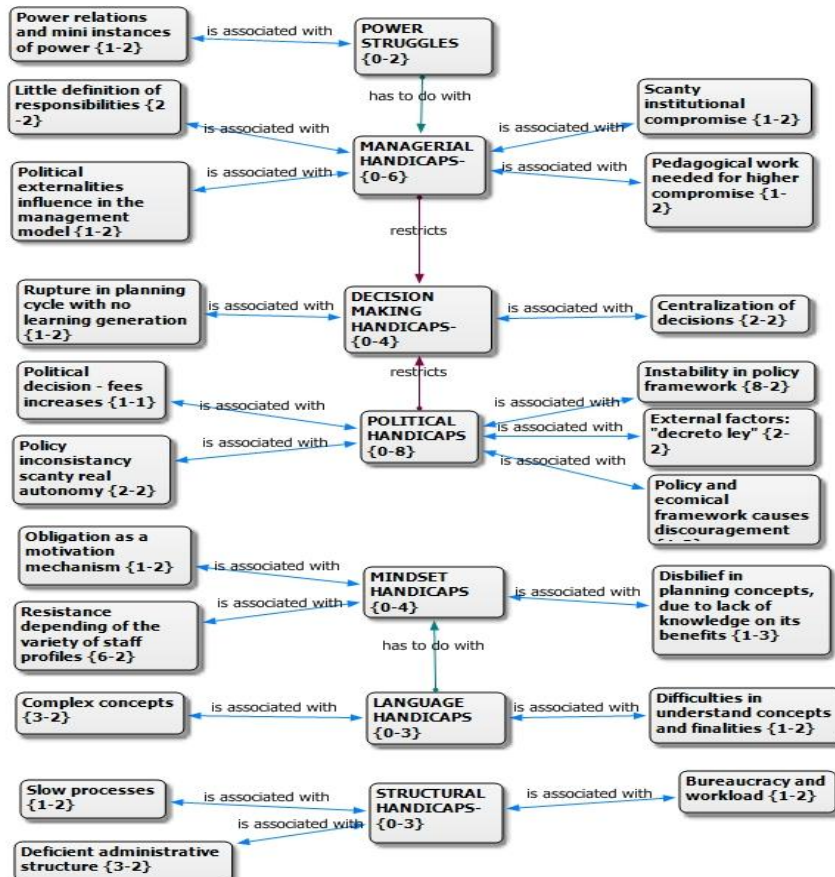
Appendix 10B: Categories of perspectives on the university strategizing behaviours (Case 2)



### Appendix 10C: Categories of strategy text functions (Case 2)

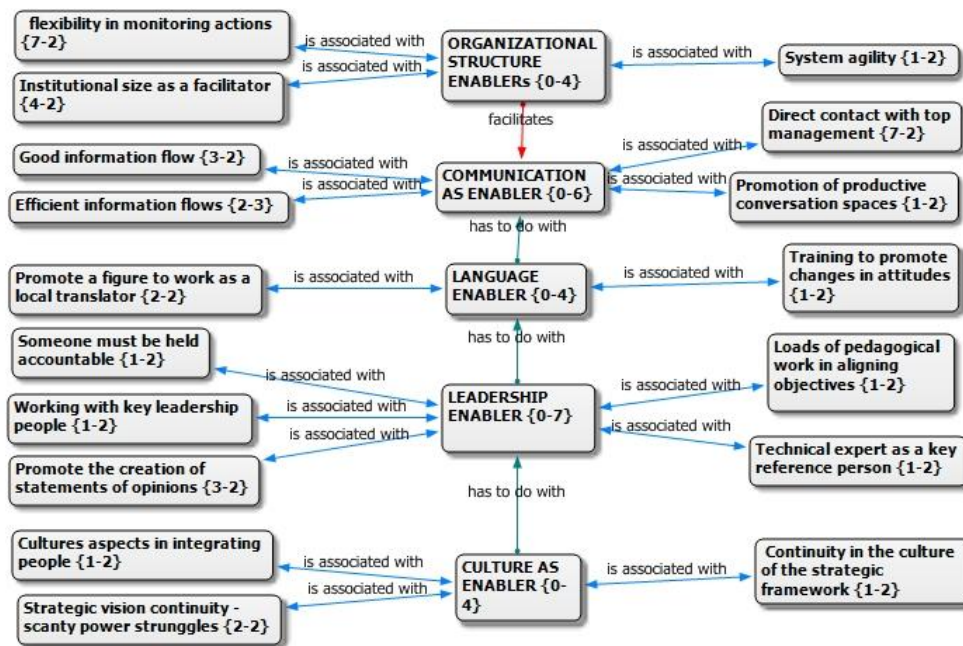


### Appendix 10D: Academic managers views on strategizing handicaps (Case 2)

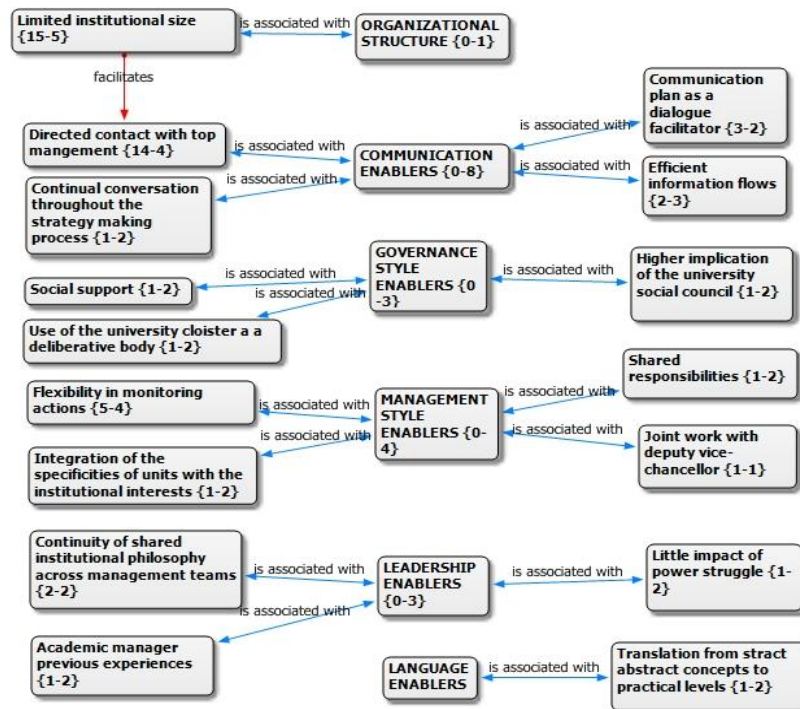




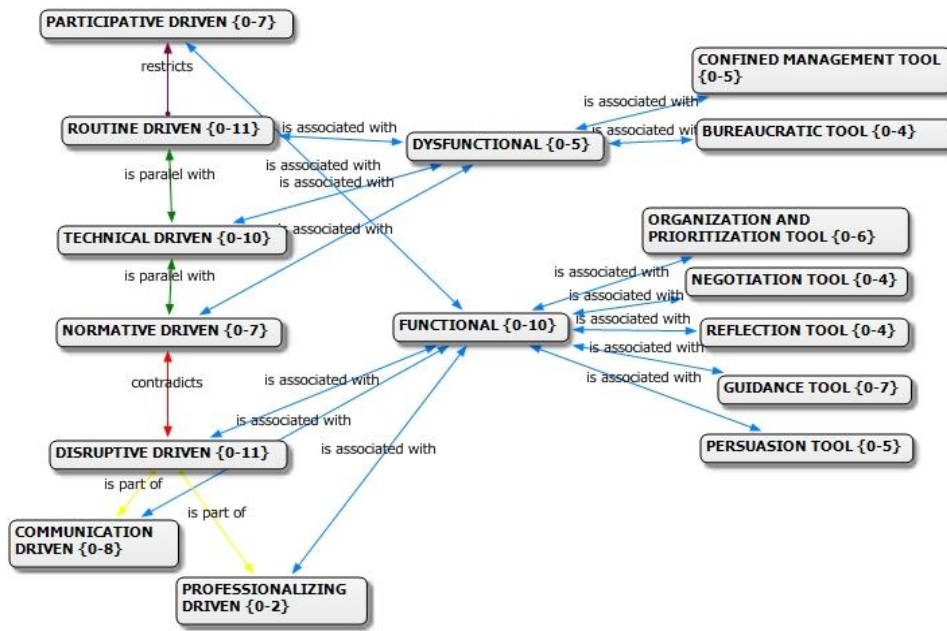
### Appendix 10E: TM views on strategizing enablers (Case 2)



### Appendix 10F: MM views on strategizing enablers (Case 2)

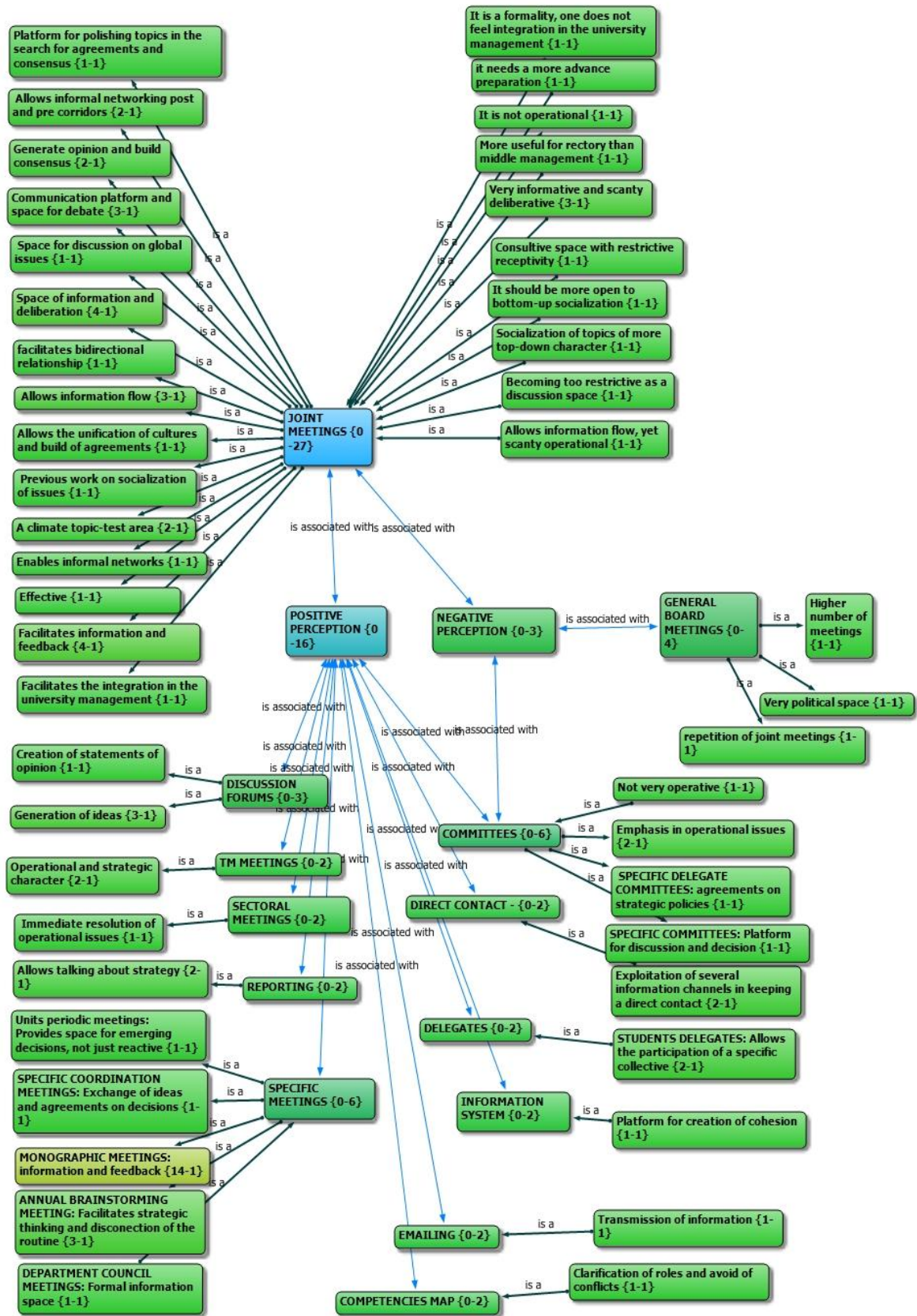


Appendix 10G: Types of strategy texts usages (Case 2)

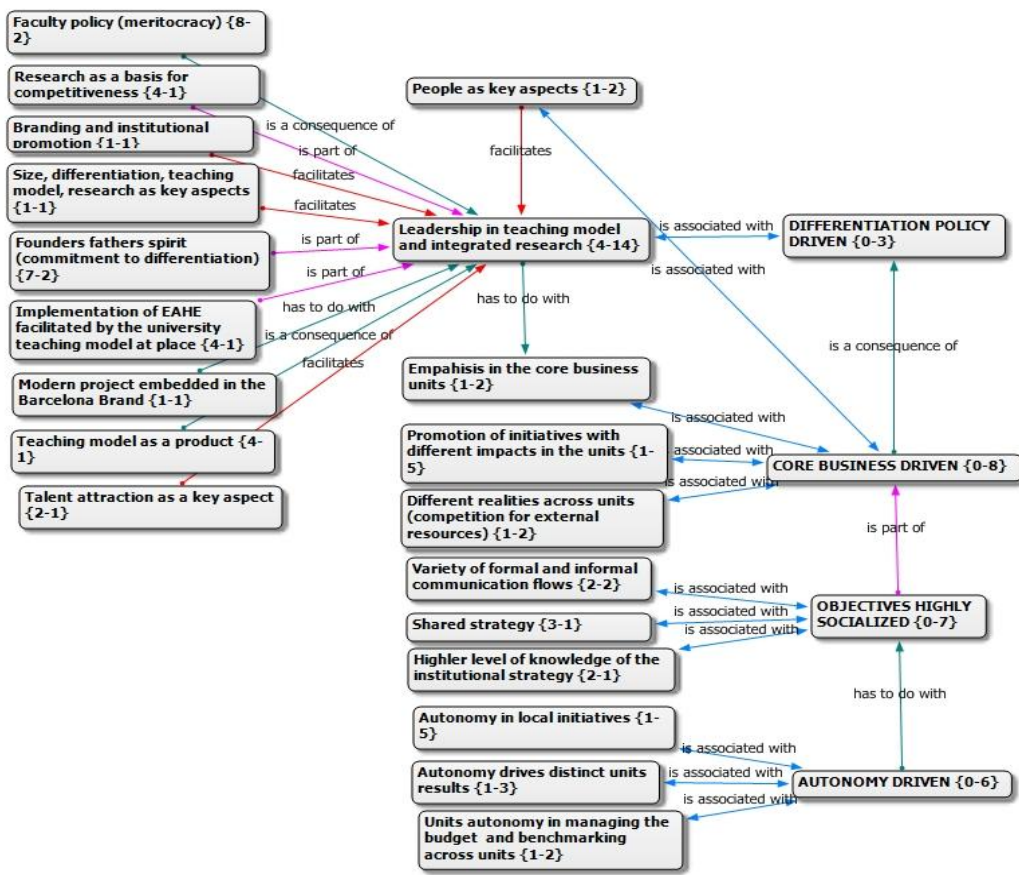


# APPENDIX 11 (Within-case analysis networks: Case 3)

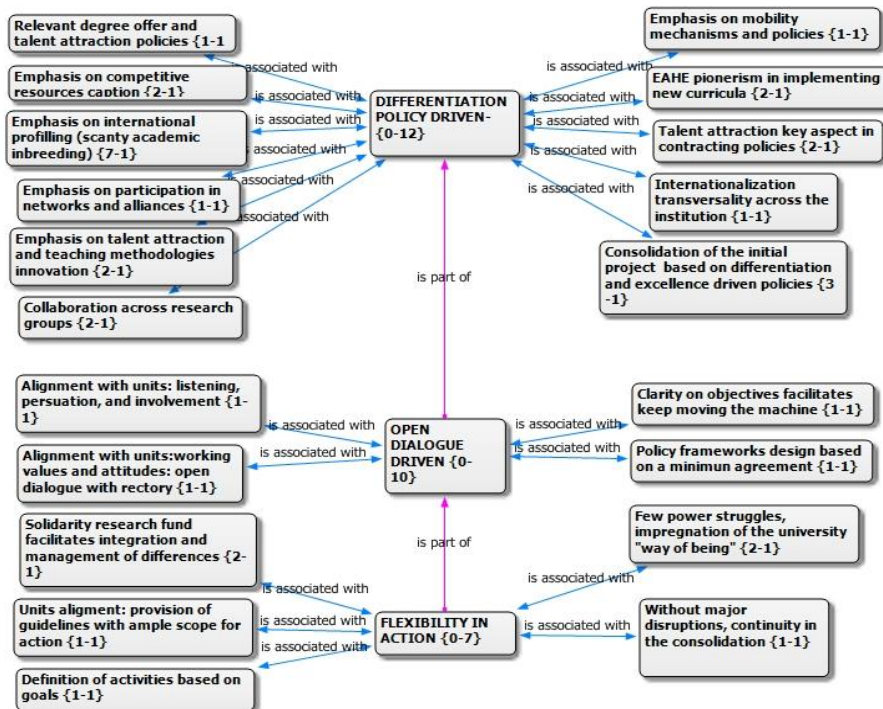
## Appendix 11A: Convergence network of academic managers perceptions of strategy practices – Case 3



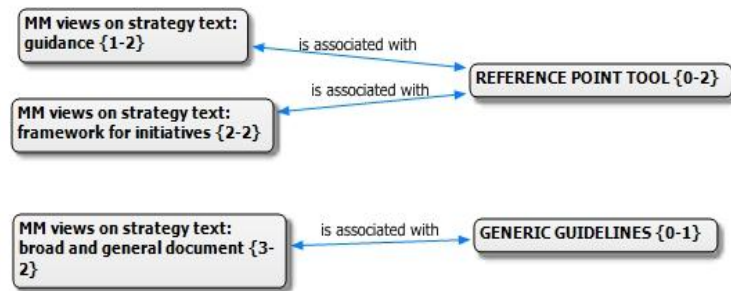
Appendix 11B: Network of academic MM views on university strategy (Case 3)



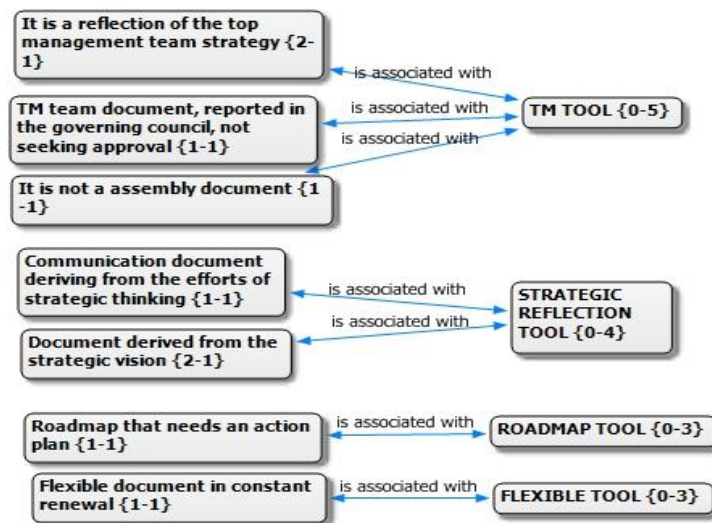
Appendix 11C: Network of academic TM views on university strategy (Case 3)



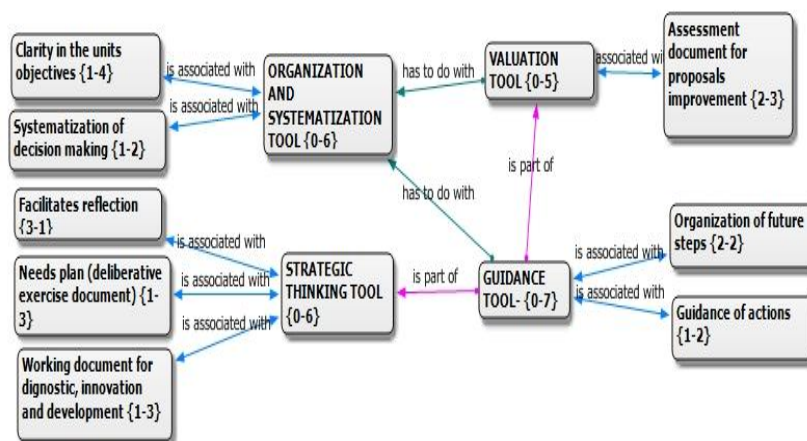
**Appendix 11D: Academic MM views on university strategy text functions (Case 3)**



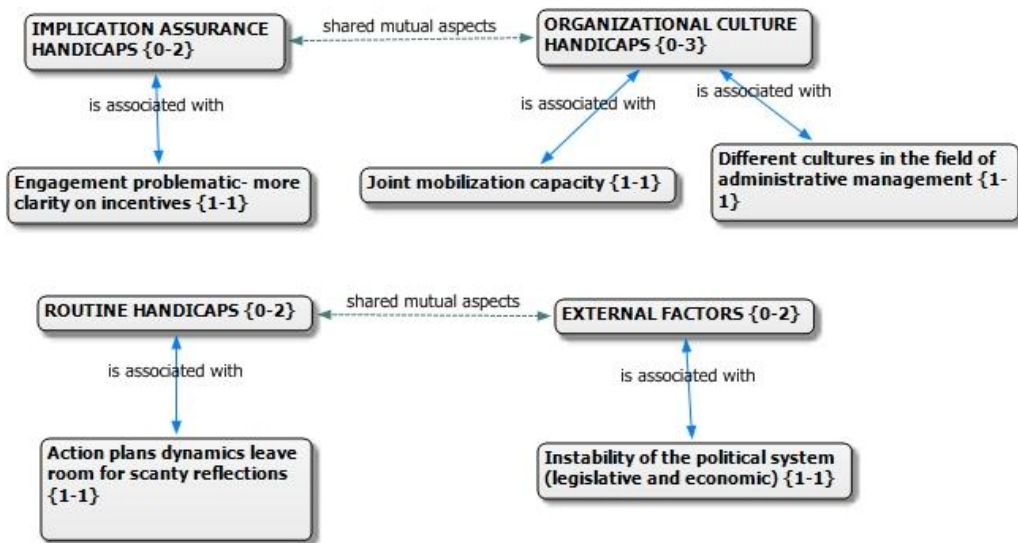
**Appendix 11E: Academic TM views on university strategy text functions (Case 3)**



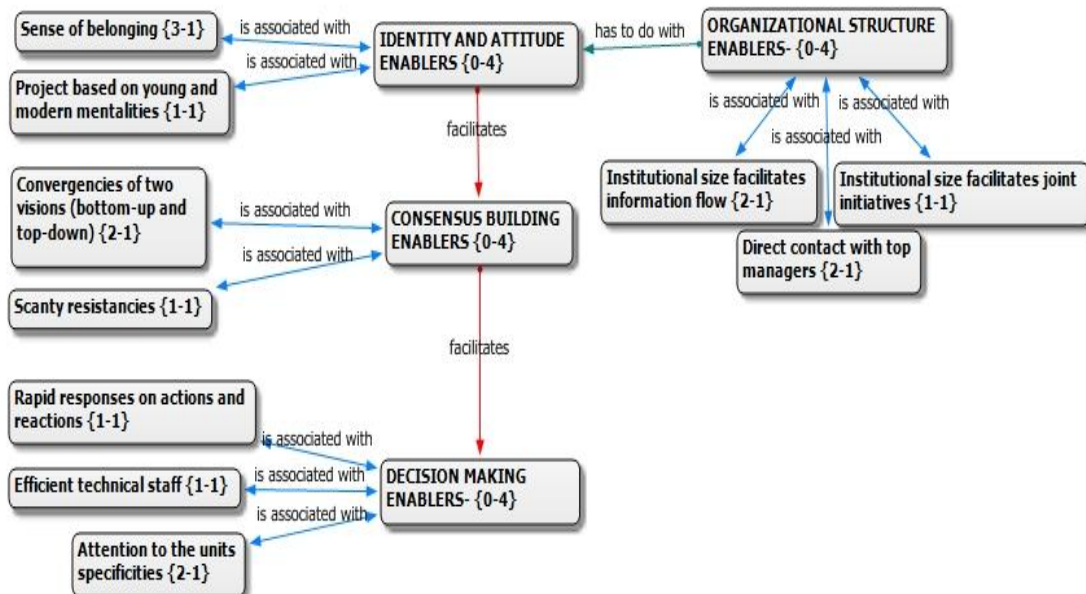
**Appendix 11F: Academic MM views on the strategy text of the units (Case 3)**



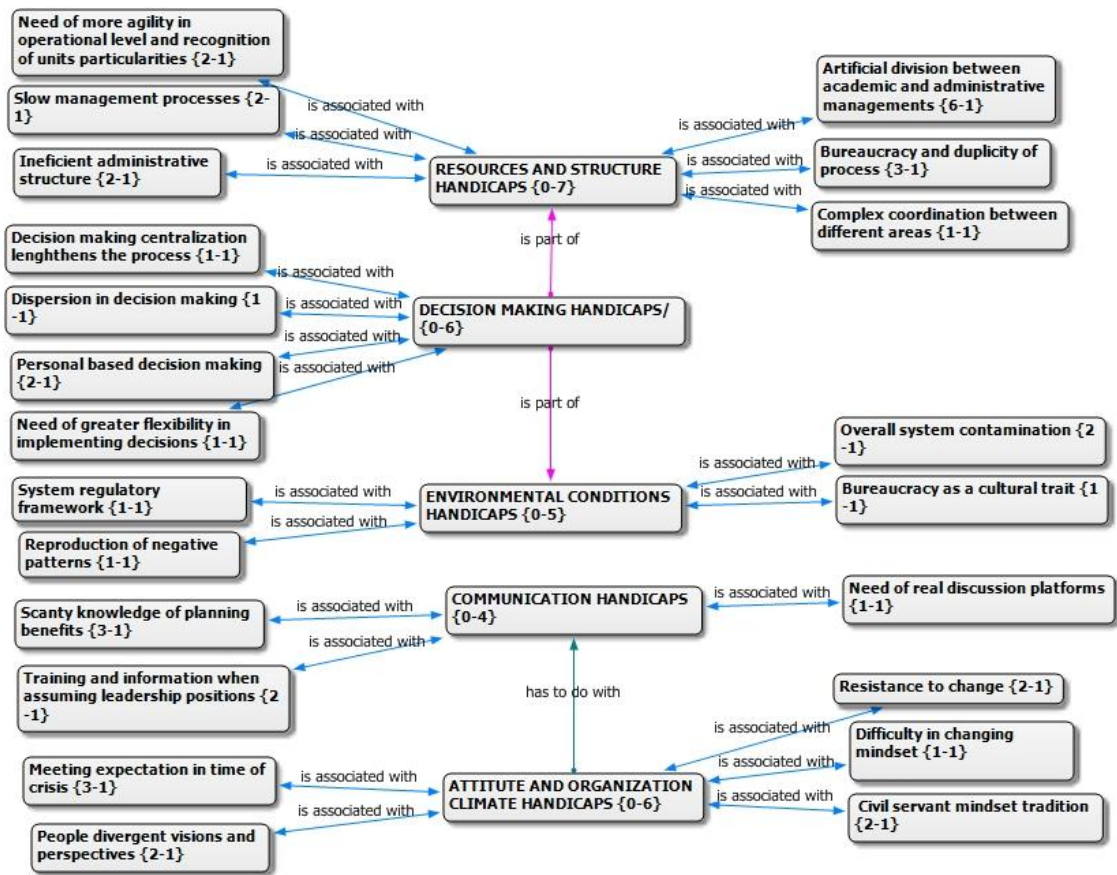
**Appendix 11G: Academic TM views on strategy development handicaps (Case 3)**



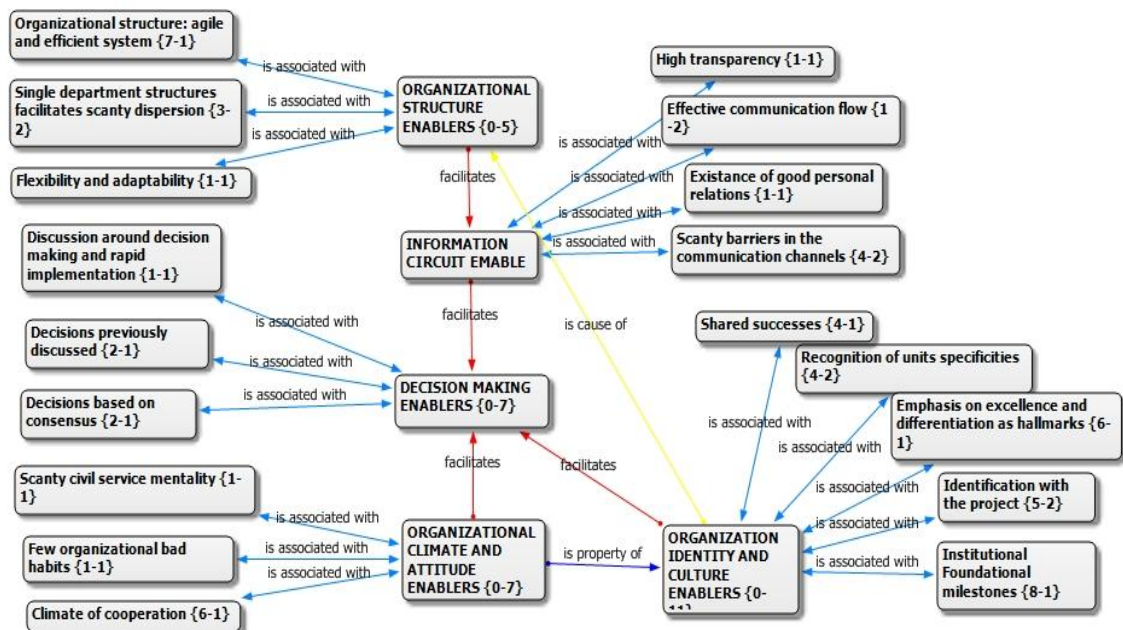
**Appendix 11H: Academic TM views on strategy enablers (Case 3)**



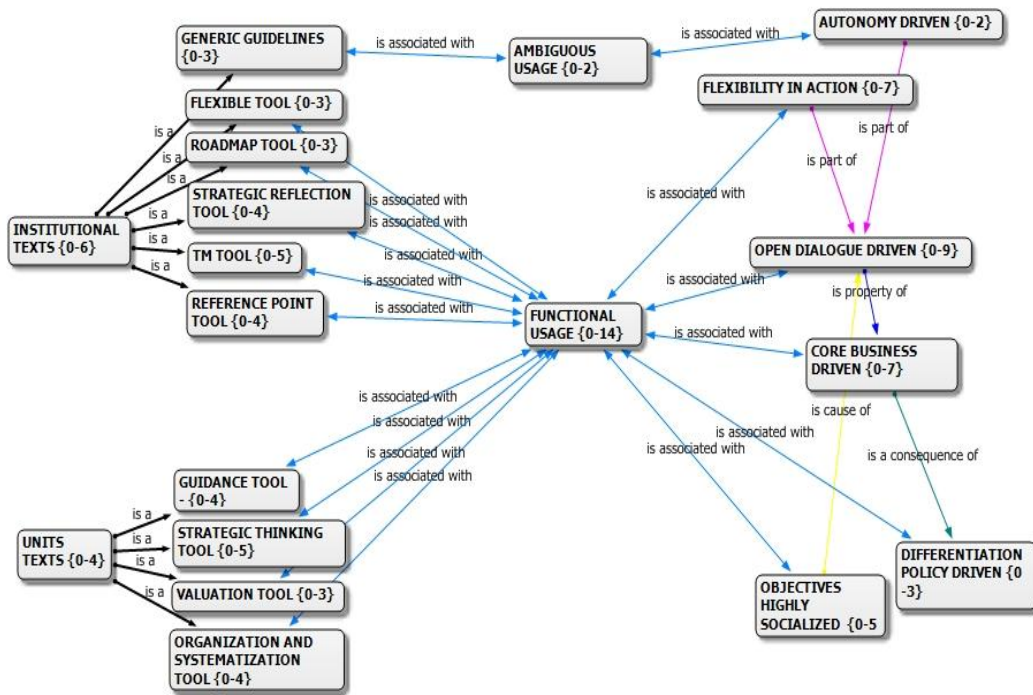
### Appendix 11I: Academic MM views on strategy development handicaps (Case 3)



### Appendix 11J: Academic MM views on strategy enablers (Case 3)



### Appendix 11K: Types of strategy text usages (Case 3)





## APPENDIX 12 (Cross-case analysis matrices)

### Appendix 12A: Overview of integration of textual and discursive features across cases

	Families	Technological	Regional	Research
<b>Development and continuity overtime</b>	<i>Type of texts</i>	Mixed (strategic plans, action plans and government plans)	Complementary (document basis, strategic management framework, strategic plan)	Mixed (Master plan, action plan and strategic plan)
<b>Intertextuality</b>	<i>Explicit reference to other texts</i>	Only when texts were related to the same management team	High	Vary
<b>Texts content structure</b>	<i>Main keywords and concepts</i>	Research, management and quality	Research, quality, EHEA	Research, quality, learning
	<i>Convergence of key areas</i>	People (different density variance on other areas)	People, innovation and value creation, resources, results and customer satisfaction	People, research, University and society, Teaching
	<i>Main Components</i>	Strongly vary across texts	Typical elements SP (mission, vision, values...), monitoring mechanisms and diagnostic analysis	Varied considerably.
	<i>Pattern of practices</i>	Meetings and committees	Units planning procedures and process certification	Strongly vary
	<i>Inclusion of typical strategy plan elements</i>	Vary	High	Vary
	<i>Amplitude of contents</i>	Mostly broad objectives driven	Mostly broad objectives driven	Mostly broad objectives driven
<b>Production Process (institutional level)</b>	<i>Who was involved in?(Actors)</i>	Overly implicit responsible	Mention of direct and also indirect involvement of actors	Vary considerably
	<i>Methodology description?</i>	Not in all texts	Most of the texts	Only in (master plan and strategy plan 25)
	<i>Frequency of the process</i>	4 years	Vary	Vary
<b>Planning formality</b>	<i>Schedules/timing</i>	Vary	No	Associated to the annual action plans.
	<i>Documents supporting the text</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Texts expressed:</b>				
	<i>Voice: Active/passive</i>	Mostly passive voice	Active when presenting intention and passive when proposing actions	Vary. Active voice to describe finalities and passive voice to elaborate proposals.
	<i>Character and style</i>	Mostly impersonal	Mostly impersonal	Mostly impersonal
	<i>Technical/narrative like</i>	Technical	Vary	Vary

	Families	Technological	Regional	Research
<b>Discursive features</b>	Strategy related terminology	Vary (used of vision, performance indicators, values, axis, quality system)	Extensive use of specific strategy lexicon (mission, vision, critical success factors, BSC, SWOT, quality system, EFQM model...)	Vary (mission, vision, values, strategic lines, strategic axis, BSC).
	Discourse variability (different priorities over time)	Consolidation of planning culture, sense of continuity, introduction of new vision to meet new demands, improvement of responses to society needs (didn't imply important changes), reflection to find new approaches.	Establishment of BSC and achieving mutual understanding of institutional objectives; sense of continuity, problematic of funding, change of model.	Consolidating, maintaining, creating new dynamics for future actions
	<i>Textual agency (justification of its importance an purpose)</i>	Some have addressed it (mechanism for prioritization, management model framework, proposal of future directions)	Explicitly addressed it (objectives setting and implementation procedures via BSC, adaptation to new demands, integration of policies and programs)	Explicitly addressed it (communication and alignment; mechanisms for prioritization; operational document, guide for reflection)
	<i>Documents intentionality</i>	Mixture of affirmative and tentative (open document)	Mixture of affirmative and tentative (open document)	Mixture of affirmative and tentative (open document)

Source: Own elaboration

## Appendix 12B: Repertoire of practices-in-use across cases

	Categories of Strategy Practices-in-use				
	Standardized			Singularized	
	<i>Cyclical practices</i>	<i>Supportive practices</i>	<i>Episodic practices</i>	<i>Unruled practices</i>	<i>Regulated practices</i>
<b>Technological University</b>	-General Board meetings -Council of departments heads -Committees -Projects -Planning cycle strategy internal negotiation	-Internal management system - Committee of department delegates	-External benchmarking -Customised training -Away days brainstorming	-Specific agreements -Middle managers informal networks -Direct contacts TM -Joint collaborations - Participation in discussion spaces	-Participatory planning - Project management -Internal and external benchmarking - Meetings (units board meetings and monographic meetings)
<b>Regional University</b>	- General Board meetings -Committees -Planning cycle strategy internal negotiation -Management by objectives - Planning monitoring mechanisms	-Adapted tools: catalogue of indicators; - Information management system - BSC	- Consultancy - Training	-Productive conversation spaces - Briefings - Personalized attention -Informal conversations - Direct contacts TM - Informative rounds	-Specific Committees - Monographic and operational meetings - School board meetings -Internal initiatives of benchmarking
<b>Research University</b>	-Committees -TM meetings -Sectoral meetings -Joint meetings -Management by objectives - University Council meeting	- Reporting - Information management -Shared management -Competence map	Annual away day brainstorming - Benchmarking of bottom-up initiatives	Informal networks - Direct contact TM -Emailing -Discussion Forums	-Local Board meetings (schools, departments) - Consultive and monographic meetings -Interlocutors in formal institutional

Source: Own elaboration

## Appendix 12C: Convergence of academic manager's perceptions of practices across cases

Organization	Type of practices	Academic Manager positive/negative quotes comments		
		Constraining	Enabling	
<b>Technological University</b>	<b>Standardized</b>	<i>Standing Committees</i>	- Do not function for strategic thinking	- Efficient formal space of government
		<i>University cloister</i>	-Scanty practical	
		<i>Council of department heads</i>	- Do not serve as a strategic thinking forum - Very restrictive to specific topic discussion	-Space for creative convergent thinking
		<i>General Board meetings</i>	-Not very functional for strategic thinking - Lack of key person for mediating the discussion - Scanty practical	
		<i>Planning cycle strategy internal negotiation</i>	- Not very flexible - Do not address relevant real strategic issues - Alignment by political relations - Restrictive to economic aims and budget distribution tool - System dependent	- Facilitates approaching to the university vision - Facilitates an increase in the economic budget contribution -Enables internal quality compliance - Improvement of units funding - Provides indicators for activities improvement - Allows the identification of emerging initiatives
		<i>General meetings</i>		- Allows operative discussions and development
		<i>Ad hoc Committees</i>		-Allows multidisciplinary visions for strategic thinking
	<b>Singularized</b>	<i>School/Dept Board meetings</i>	- Validation of decisions with no space for strategic thinking	-Decision making body which allows emergent themes
		<i>Direct contacts</i>		- Facilitates implication and problem solving
		<i>Joint collaborations</i>		- Facilitates sharing of tasks and responsibilities
<b>Regional University</b>	<b>Standardized</b>	<i>Committees</i>		- Allows to share information about what is going on in different parts of the university (representative from different fields)
		<i>General board meetings</i>		- Space where it is possible to be informed and to participate in the discussion. Effective flow of information - Reduced number of people (meetings are more manageable) - The culture of achieving objectives and indicators is assumed, a positive aspect

	Type of practices	Academic Manager positive/negative quotes comments		
		Constraining	Enabling	
<b>Regional University</b>		<i>Planning cycle strategy internal negotiation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We agreed on an amount of money to do certain things, people are not concerned with other things</li> <li>- It is very restrictive to data, it seems results matter less</li> <li>- The objectives are often set at low targets to assure they will be met (economic restrictive)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allows coordination and alignment around the internal objectives</li> <li>-Flexibility in working out internal indicators is a key aspect in facilitating engagement and avoiding resistances</li> </ul>
		<i>Information management system</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Allows to organize the output performance and facilitates the annual follow up</li> </ul>
		<i>Catalogue of indicators (monitoring) Planning follow up</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allows flexibility</li> <li>-Allows a common framework of possible directions</li> <li>- Closer relationship with the technical office on solving problems</li> </ul>
		<i>Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use of very specific terminology make it difficult to understand it depending on the different profiles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With training sessions, little by little, help on change the mindset on how to do things</li> </ul>
	<b>Singularized</b>	<i>School/dept Board meetings</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Space for convergence of problems and integration of visions</li> </ul>
		<i>Specific units committees</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Space for the convergence of ideas</li> </ul>
		<i>Monographic and operational meetings</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides gaining insights into what people at your unit think</li> <li>- Allows coordination of tasks and initiatives and problem solving</li> </ul>
		<i>Productive and informal conversations</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good personal relationships (informal pedagogical work)</li> <li>- Persuasion work in different group of people upon initiatives and ideas</li> </ul>
		<i>Personalized attention</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intensive pedagogical work allowed by the proximity of the university structure</li> </ul>
	<b>Research University</b>	<b>Standardized</b>	<i>Joint meetings</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Becoming a formality (restrictive)</li> <li>- Would need more previous preparation</li> <li>- Not very operational</li> <li>- More useful for TM than for us (middle managers)</li> <li>- Very informative yet scanty deliberative</li> <li>-Consultive space, but not very receptive of opinions</li> <li>- Should allow more bottom-up socialization (it is top-down)</li> </ul>
		<i>Away days meetings</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disconnection of routine facilitates strategic thinking</li> </ul>

Research University	Type of practices	Academic Manager positive/negative quotes comments	
		Constraining	Enabling
	<i>General board meetings</i>	- Higher number of meetings (repetition of joint meetings) - Very political space	
	<i>TM meetings</i>		- Aim different purposes: both operative and strategic matters
	<i>Sectoral meetings</i>		- Immediate resolutions of issues (focus on operational matters)
	<i>Reporting (monitoring)</i>		-Allows talk about strategy
	<i>Committees</i>	- Not very operative	-Emphasis on operational issues -Agreements upon specific strategic policies
	<i>Information management system</i>		- Allows creation of coherence
<b>Singularized</b>	<i>Discussion forums</i>		- Generation of ideas - Allows creation and exchange of opinions
	<i>Direct contacts</i>		- Exploitation of several channels for information, discussion and feedbacks
	<i>Specific meetings</i>		- Provides space for emergent initiatives, not only reactive - Space for exchange of ideas and agreement on decisions

Source: Own elaboration

## Appendix 12D: Drivers and forms of strategizing behaviours across cases

University	Drivers of strategizing behaviours	Forms of strategizing	Sample quotation
<b>Technological</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Information exchange handicaps</li> <li>- Engagement handicaps</li> <li>- Managerial handicaps</li> <li>-Structural handicaps</li> <li>- Engagement enablers</li> <li>- Managerial and leadership enablers</li> <li>-Political handicaps</li> <li>-Power struggles</li> </ul>	<i>Reactive</i>	<i>"Here we are very hit by the crisis, by the urgency ... when you're drowning you cannot decide which direction to swim, you just want to come out into the surface"</i>
		<i>Political dependent</i>	<i>"I discernibly know which is the core business of the university...and many others also hold this perspective, but there's a political decision ... you shut down an unit that is not core business ... and you will find the Mayor organizing a camping and the University Councillor behind it worried for people keeping voting on them ... that's the problem ..."</i>
		<i>Puzzling</i>	<i>"...we have long been running a fits for al policy ... to me when you are working out decision throughout strategy making, some people will like it more and others less, but if they (TM) think it is for the good of the university they should do it..."</i>
		<i>Ambiguous</i>	<i>"...if the vice-chancellor does not know how much the university budget is to be cut next year or the other, how can he possibly draw out a plan? You cannot make a plan, you can do some sort of management agreements ... but the guidelines from the Rectorate must be based on very generic strategic definitions..."</i>
		<i>Problematic</i>	<i>"I think we are effective but efficient? I do not know ... I do not know if the structure of the university, which centres offer the same degrees, ... we doubled resources., we do compete with each other internally and make an effort that should be devoted to compete with another university ..."</i>
		<i>Isolated</i>	<i>"...most things which are made across the units are made by voluntarism ....For the university everything seems fine... it is when you may realize that doesn't matter if you do things right or wrong, it has no influence..."</i>
<b>Regional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Power struggles</li> <li>- Managerial handicaps</li> <li>- Decision-making handicaps</li> <li>- Political handicaps</li> <li>- Mindset handicaps</li> <li>- Language handicaps</li> <li>-Structural handicaps</li> <li>- Organizational structure enablers</li> <li>- Communication enablers</li> <li>- Language enablers</li> <li>- Leadership enablers</li> <li>- Culture as enabler</li> </ul>	<i>Routine</i>	<i>"...when you keep the process (planning) many years and keep those economic resources, then people move exclusively by the economic resource and it becomes merely a question of lets submit these papers ... eventually became a routine..."</i>
		<i>Normative</i>	<i>"I do not see it strategic, I see it more as the intention of implementing a form-based management grounded on the fulfilment of the objectives, as standardized operating more like a control task. And that is pernicious ... but if you give us money to fulfil it..Great..."</i>
		<i>Technical</i>	<i>"...these two people who were leading the project (planning), they often presented the strategic plan and the truth was that people did not understand the Kaplan and Norton, strategic maps..., that is, as a communication tool it was not useful, although very sophisticated from a technical standpoint..."</i>
		<i>Disruptive</i>	<i>"We have reached an automatism, a routine... thus I thought that was the need to change, so enhancing people to say: what is to be done? then again re-thinking in terms of what you want them to think, because otherwise there is a routine like: the form has come and normally they would say: fill it in with the usual stuff, and that's it ..."</i>

Drivers of strategizing behaviours	Forms of strategizing	Sample quotation
<b>Regional</b> -Governance and management style enablers -Routine handicaps	<i>Participative</i>	<i>"..initially there was resistance, but actually I think the planning culture has been established,...the social integration we have worked it very hard... thus in trying to understand how we managed to change the academics mindsets this work on social integration is important ... all departments can do better or worse, but I think right now if you asked in many units, no one would question doing the strategic plan ..."</i>
<b>Research</b> - Organizational culture handicaps - Implication assurance handicaps - Routine handicaps -Resources and structure handicaps -External factors handicaps -Organizational structure enablers -Identity and attitude enablers - Consensus building enablers - Decision making enablers -Decision making handicaps -Communication handicaps -Organizational climate handicaps	<i>Core business driven</i>	<i>"...the idea of the founding fathers that wanted to clearly differentiate the university amongst the university landscape, with centres of quality in teaching, with the singular faculty policy, with a very committed research policy profoundly international driven, trying to balance public resources with competing for private resources, all this, are still clear signs of the university identity ..."</i>
	<i>Objectives highly socialized</i>	<i>"...the general lines that marked the university are lines that nobody can disagree, what the university wants is exactly what we all want...the Rectorate has been promoting actions that help the units to adjust in these lines ...you have to handle yourself in an environment of budget austerity, but if the objectives are clear and well defined, it is possible to keep moving forward..."</i>
	<i>Autonomy driven</i>	<i>"I have not received instructions from the Rectorate of the type: you have to do this, this and this. No, we are given an overview guidelines, then it is possible to check how you are in relation to others ..."</i>
	<i>Flexible</i>	<i>"we want to do things well, with quality, on that we all agree, and then everyone can work this out in their own field, how they have to organize, what tools to be used... then you can particularize it to your domain, possibilities, tools, and specific objectives..."</i>
	<i>Open dialogue</i>	<i>"I would say that the strategy is known by all who holds management positions as well as by other people, it has an advantage of being a small institution, which also facilitates an effective information flow and the participation in decision-making processes by who holds middle levels positions..."</i>

Source: Own elaboration



### Appendix 12E: Different strategy text usage across cases

University	Strategy text was seen as	Forms of usage	Quotations sample
<b>Technological</b>	<i>An obligation</i>	Dysfunctional	“Yes, we do have a strategic plan, which has been made as an obligation...”
	<i>Form-filling</i>		“...theoretically we have a strategic plan ... we fill out some forms and send them back, that's it ... it is pure formalism ...”
	<i>Bureaucratic</i>		“...we have some lines ... but more often it is aim at meeting the contract-program with the local Government rather than the will to foster real changes...”
	<i>Unrealistic</i>		“...the document is dead if there are no resources associated with it...”
	<i>Impractical</i>	Impartial	“It has helped us improve, but ... it should be more practical, making more visible its benefits in the day to day management of the unit...”
	<i>Budget distribution tool</i>		“...the strategic plan will be most useful the higher the economic link you have attached to it. I think that people would take it much more seriously, in the end if there are tradeoffs to get results, thus everything might be better understood...”
	<i>Restricted lighthouse</i>	Functional	“...I see it as two things, it is a political document, but also a working document and I think for us it is useful...”
	<i>Political yet convenient</i>		“...people have understood this way of working and this effort consistency...”
	<i>Effort of consistency</i>		“...rather than making a strategic plan, what we did was an strategic thinking exercise, then this is a document that is very handy, very much alive, this is our reference...”
	<i>Strategic reflection exercise</i>		“...the planning methodology has given us, besides organization, other benefits...”
	<i>Shared reference</i>		“...our plan, we're on it yet, but the idea is that it should be also a quality tool, the idea is that from this plan should be derived lines and sub-lines and get into the detail of what to do, which does what and how it is supposed to be done...”
	<i>Organization tool</i>		“...it is a working plan...”
	<i>Quality tool</i>		“...the strategic plan did not address minimal details, it set all strategic lines, strategic and operational objectives...it remained as a reference point ... ”
	<i>Working plan</i>		Functional
<i>Decision making guide</i>	“... it is good to have an instrument that allows forecasting of where we go and what we need to do to get where we want to go...”		
<i>Framework for initiatives</i>	“...for the first time we had somehow to manage rationally and to think, anticipate, foresee...”		
<i>Persuasion tool</i>	“...the positive aspect is that it demands us to carry out an organization with time ahead...”		
<i>Guidance tool</i>	“...it has been a good document in order to ask questions concerning lines or actions that you be worth to follow...”		
<i>Negotiation tool</i>			
<i>Organization and prioritization tool</i>			
<i>Reflection tool</i>			

<b>Regional</b>	<b>Strategy text was seen as</b>	<b>Forms of usage</b>	<b>Quotations sample</b>
	<i>Confined management tool</i>	Dysfunctional	"...it is a substantial part of the financing of the ordinary activities of the departments and groups. Then you cannot afford to lose it..."
	<i>Bureaucratic tool</i>		"...people are a bit board at this [biennial planning], as if to say: is it really useful? It is paraphernalia... now it is again turn to elaborate the new strategic plan of the department, here we go again, uff ... the truth is: it is difficult...."
<b>Research</b>	<i>Generic guidelines</i>	Ambiguous	"...the documents present very general lines..... are interesting, but they are very vague, there are no specific lines on where to go, or where we will act ..."
	<i>Reference point</i>	Functional	"...the strategic plan must give you a framework, which does not mean that you will get a solution... it is a framework for the initiative you want to carry out in the department or in any other area...the plan legitimates the initiatives that you may take..."
	<i>Legitimacy tool</i>		"...there will always be collective dissatisfied, which may convert the writing and evaluation of a strategic plan in a negotiation, and this is not a negotiation, but the government team decides to make a strategic plan and it does...therefore, we do not want to negotiate non-strategic issues in change of a strategic plan..."
	<i>TM (top management) tool</i>		"...this document served to make it known that we had carried out a strategic exercise and we had finished it, and that it was our roadmap for the coming years..."
	<i>Strategic reflection tool</i>		"...it is renewed periodically, verifying what is being achieved and what should need corrections, adjusting future goals..."
	<i>Roadmap tool</i>		"...it is a help on not having to improvise, not having to take many turns in order to do something..."
	<i>Flexible tool</i>		"...There is a part of making things more efficient, but first there is the need to diagnose and see how things are and how they are supposed to be..."
	<i>Organization and systematization tool</i>		"...here there is a bit of balance of this previous period, and proposals for the next period, then, here I raised, five strategic lines that seemed necessary at that time..."
	<i>Strategic thinking tool</i>		"...yes, it is useful for guiding actions..."
	<i>Valuation tool</i>		
<i>Guidance tool</i>			

Source: Own elaboration

## Appendix 12F: Characteristic of strategy texts roles as the basis for engagement potential

	Circumstances of the building mode	Textual features	Considerations of the dwelling mode	Typical Practices-in-use	
<b>Enabling engagement potential</b>	<i>1. Consultive</i>	Creation of guidelines as frameworks of references	Broad content	Emerging initiatives not directed derived from institutional alignment actions Particularization of references and holistic objectives to local context	Joint collaborations Personalized attention Catalogue of indicators Joint meetings Council of department heads
	<i>2. Conversational</i>	Spaces and platforms to be informed and participate Persuasion activities Shared frameworks of meanings	Broad content Explicitly address the purpose of the document	Open directed communication Reciprocal process Use of spaced to talk and to be listened Ongoing social exchanges	Reporting (monitoring) Direct face to face contacts Committees Joint meetings Informal networks
	<i>3. Authoritative</i>	Higher visibility to strategy, emphasis on communication of strategic priorities Effort to hear different opinions and then integrate and communicate it	Broad content Top management team strategy authorship, not negotiation tool	Contributions of strategic inputs to the strategy documents Ongoing social exchanges	Joint meetings Specific meetings (coordination, monographic, brainstorming) Committees University council meeting
<b>Constraining engagement potential</b>	<i>4. Prescriptive</i>	Strategizing activities more centralized to top management team Negotiation dependent on political alignment Inflexibility in mechanisms and procedures Centralized strategic management procedures	Very technical vocabulary driven content Very schematized mechanism and procedures Scanty communication potential	Form-filling Narrowed down to economic indicators alignment Planning routine driven	Internal strategy planning negotiation cycle Catalogue of indicators Information system
	<i>5. Contingent</i>	Planning mechanism restricted to fulfil economic indicators Budget driven	Very technical vocabulary driven content Very schematized mechanism and procedures	Form-filling Focus on process not results Planning negotiation not emphasizing emergent strategic thinking	Internal strategy planning negotiation cycle
<b>Borderline</b>	<i>6. Ambivalent</i>	Provision of generic guidelines	Very broad content Vagueness	Autonomy driven strategy implementation (not concrete centralized procedures)	Joint meetings Committees General meetings

Source: Own elaboration