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SUELDO

Strategic institutional communication
management and its contribution to
institutional excellence in private
entrepreneurial universities

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Social Sciences,
Management S 003

This dissertation was written between 2014 and 2019 (Vilnius university Kaunas faculty, Institute of Social Sciences and Applied Informatics)

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SUELDO

Strateginės institucinės komunikacijos
valdymas ir jo indelis į institucinį
tobulumą privačiuose
antrepreneriniuose universitetuose

DAKTARO DISERTACIJA

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the research topic

This thesis deals with two social phenomena in permanent evolution: the university, as a millennial core societal institution and communication, as a manifestation of the social nature of human beings. Institutional theory, in particular, the Institutional Logics Approach (ILA) sheds light on the interplay between competing institutional logics: the logics of business as pervading into the logics of education, with the additional accelerating institutionalization of the communication function in organizations. Modern hybrid institutions, such as entrepreneurial private universities, emerge as a natural consequence of these cross-institutional logic interactions. These Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) face the challenge of striking balance between the fulfilment of the societal mission (the commitment to pursue quality and excellence in accordance to the promises made to their stakeholders as declared in their unique mission statements) and the urge to maintain their earned license to operate in the competitive Higher Education (HE) sector.

The author highlights the important fusion between communication as a strategic function and the university, as an institution with an urgent need to communicate properly with its publics in a highly market-oriented environment. Institutional performance is increasingly measured in quantitative terms, quite often dictated by global rankings of university reputation, which in their turn, have become a sort of new institution in itself. Though sadly true, the search of quality and excellence in education may become a luxury only affordable when quantity is no longer the major concern (Cabanias, 2004). Contemporary universities are under the constant pressure for their own sustainability. Thus, quality and excellence are, more often than desirable, too much oriented to tangible results of quantifiable success in order to be catalogued as excellent, because of the plain perks that come together with a high-ranking position. Nevertheless, every university is committed to the triple backbone of excellence: teaching, research and knowledge transfer. In addition, this requires the continuous sap and vitality of strategic institutional communication to make mission-driven pursued or achieved institutional excellence widely known.

Every institution is a social construct and as such it *cannot not* communicate: whatever the institution says, does or fails to do, always communicates something *ad intra* as well as *ad extra* (Hanson, 2014); (Mateus, 2017). Each

response to the challenges within its own institutional environment as well as those coming from the social context will leave a trace on the institution's communicative curriculum. The university, as any other societal institution, must engage in active and transformational communication to provide answers for its *raison d'être*.

Excellence of institutional communication in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can become a flexible means to adapt to social and market demands, as well as contribute to the pursuit of institutional excellence. Thus, strategic institutional communication management ought to be fully aligned and respond to the mission and vision of the organization, its institutional model, the societal expectations and demands. The declared mission of a university should be the North Star that guides institutional endeavours, more independently of the dictum imposed by external requirements, like reputation rankings, league tables and non-mandatory accreditations, as if they were the only official voice of HE quality measurement. The criteria applied by reputation rankings may have an unquestionable validity; however, they may not reflect the excellence achieved by an institution with reference to its commitment with its stakeholders. A university that strives for excellence at all levels of performance may be entitled to deserve excellent reputation. Even though organizations can neither manage nor shape their reputation directly, excellent institutional communication can guarantee a more secure and sustainable path towards institutional excellence, as a bulwark of a long-lasting good reputation, deeply rooted in a cultivated mission-driven institutional identity, which can subsist amidst external pressure and environment changes. The dissertation author believes that the current complexity of HEIs is ripe for new paradigms such as mission-driven strategic institutional communication management. Management-by-mission offers a path towards a more transcendental and a less matter-of-fact vision of institutional communication management, based on strategic processes for key institutional stakeholders' internalization of the shared institutional mission and their identification with the joint pursuit of institutional excellence.

Scope of research

As stated in a collective review of existing perspectives on corporate communication (Lars T. Christensen, Cornelissen, Thøger Christensen, & Cornelissen, 2010), most current corporate communication research is focused on the controlled handling and organization of communication;

however, too little attention is directed to communication *per se* and to developing updated models of communication with stakeholders. High rank scholars claim that “the field of corporate communication would benefit from a figure ground reversal aimed at a better understanding of how communication organizes (Taylor & Van Every, 2010) rather than the traditional focus on the organization of communication”. This doctoral dissertation attempts to fill in the open space for theory development in the area of institutional communication management applied to HEIs, as a way to blend the important connections between largely separate traditions of corporate and organizational communication (Lars T. Christensen et al., 2010);(Shelby, 1993); (P. a. Argenti, 1996). The dissertation author adheres the call of prominent strategic communication scholars who advocate the need to expand the scope of strategic communication by integrating more disciplines so as to gain deeper knowledge of such a complex phenomenon (Heide, von Platen, Simonsson, & Falkheimer, 2018). These scholars assert that an organization’s capacity to communicate strategically comprises multiple sub-processes where managers and other employees take part daily and which deserve due attention as constitutive of the overall organizational performance as well as its strategic communication. On their part, communication practitioners clearly understand the urgent need to engage diverse audiences of internal and external stakeholders. They are extremely important co-creators of corporate identity and culture, who ought to be fully aligned with the institutional mission, aided by mission-driven communication management that plays a vital role in the transversal work of deploying the mission across the whole institutional structure.

Gregory et al. (Gregory, Invernizzi, & Romenti, 2013) describe communication management as a process which determines how communication is organized and managed and argues that communication management can significantly contribute to corporate reputation, which for the dissertation author is the acknowledgement of achieved quality and pursued excellence. A thorough and rigorous analysis of the communication process in institutions and organizations can ensure that the communication function is structured and focused on activities worth organizational efforts. As a result of purposeful and strategic endeavours, institutions can harvest enhanced reputation that matches their conscientiously sought excellence with the undeniable aid of excellent communication management.

Organizational scholars and rhetoricians (Heath, Taylor, Palenchar, Boyd, & Waymer, 2011) readily acknowledge that negative reputation can nullify long

years of hard philanthropic work. Nevertheless, these authors do not go deeper into the communicative processes by which negative corporate reputation has affected the organization. Thus, the effect seems taken for granted, whereas the plausible cause of poorly managed communication process remains underexplored.

Some scholars sustain that there are yet unexplored areas in the context of integrated overall organizational communication and its continuous intentional and unintentional interactions with all its publics (J. Costa, 2014); (de Aguilera Moyano, Batlle, & Fernández, 2012); (Scheinsohn, 2010). Usually, research and findings of this kind emerge from the needs of and are applied to business or for-profit enterprises. The dissertation author focuses her attention on HEIs, more specifically private entrepreneurial universities, which face the double challenge of remaining competitive market performers and fulfilling the specific mission entrusted to all universities as educational and scientific knowledge cradles.

The level of exploration in the specific area of strategic institutional communication management applied exclusively to universities leaves plenty of room for further research, as few scientific papers deal with this question. Contributions directly related to communication management in contemporary universities are visibly scarce. Five publications have been thoroughly analysed as they deal more or less tangentially with strategic communication in HEI. The study by Sataøen and Wæraas (2016) sheds light on the use of one-stop portals as a strategic communication tool adopted by national governments to build the reputation of the Higher Education sector. Herranz de la Casa et al. (2009) explores the satisfaction level of internal collectives in Spanish HEIs with respect to the internal communication in their institution, highlighting the significance of proactive communication departments to initiate internal assessment. Fernández Beltrán (2007) deals with the actual and potential influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the management of internal communication in HEIs. Simancas-González (2016) explores the social function of public Spanish universities in the defence of participative communication and strategic planning of collaborative process initiated by a more inclusive communication department. Tauber (2009) analyses the scope and role of communication in the planning and management of public HEIs in Argentina and claims that governance bodies often fail to consider communication a strategic component.

Mission-driven governance, considered as a key requisite for enduring institutional excellence, has also been explored. Few relevant scientific papers have been found. The first, by Bermejo (Bermejo Muñoz, 2014) offers an anthropological model of prosocial leadership based on the framework of management-by-missions (Cardona & Rey, 2008) and suggests its application to private universities, hence its affinity with this present dissertation. The second work by (Pérez Pérez, 2016) also explores the management-by-mission approach, but in this case applied to the communication management in museums. In the last study, the institutional mission is considered a key variable related to the higher levels of quality achieved by universities, Rodríguez-Ponce Pedraja-Rejas (2015) assert that there is a causal link from mission to quality, supported by the required internal and external consistency declared in the institutional promise (mission statement) as base for quality assessment. The dissertation author has also analysed abundant scientific articles in as much as some keywords, concepts, models and methods could be of relevance to the topic of this dissertation.

The latest scientific publications related to the main themes discussed in this dissertation reveal further research opportunities. Werder et al. (Werder, Nothhaft, Verčič, & Zerfass, 2018) invite scholars to “embrace an interdisciplinary worldview to further the development of strategic communication” (p.333). Zerfass et al. (Zerfass, Verčič, Nothhaft, & Werder, 2018) make other suggestions for further scholarly efforts directed to building up a conceptual corpus for the created value of strategic communication management to organizational performance and to disclose the resources involved in this value creation process. In the field of university performance and reputation measurements, Collins and Park (Collins & Park, 2016) address HE scholars with the request for “more nuanced accounts of ranking and reputation by scholars of higher education and in particular a greater emphasis on their successes and failures, the competing logics and unexpected outcomes of ranking and their implications for the future of universities” (p.115).

Regarding the expanding scope of the Institutional Logic Approach as part of the wider field of institutional theory, Smets et al. (2015) declare that they “see promising avenues for future research in the more prominent acknowledgement of the artefacts and materials that practitioners use in how institutions are created, maintained and changed to penetrate the micro-level practices in which logics are enacted and adapted” (p.19). Upton et al. (Upton & Warshaw, 2017) state that “of the multiple strategies at play in the

universities' responses to potentially competing values, the creation of new, hybrid logics is of particular interest" (p.89). The same scholars proclaim the concept of hybrid institutional logics as a "promising framework for understanding how universities can and do manage tensions in their mission" (op. cit. p.89). These calls for further research are tackled in this dissertation.

Formulation of the problem

Research problem/question: how does strategic institutional communication management in private entrepreneurial universities contribute to institutional excellence?

Object of the present study: strategic institutional communication management in private entrepreneurial universities and its contribution to institutional excellence.

Aim of the study: identify how strategic institutional communication management contributes to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities.

Research objectives to achieve the aim:

1. To disclose the importance of strategic institutional communication management for the institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities.
2. To define the concepts of strategic institutional communication, private entrepreneurial universities and institutional excellence.
3. To identify the prerequisites that affect the contribution of strategic institutional communication management to the institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities.
4. Based on the theoretical insights of strategic communication management, institutional theory and institutional excellence, to provide a theoretical grounding for the linkages between strategic institutional communication management, competing institutional logics and institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities.
5. To elaborate a conceptual model that integrates and explains the contribution of mission-driven strategic institutional communication to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities.

6. To empirically assess how the identified prerequisites of strategic institutional communication management affect its contribution to the institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities.
7. To provide managerial insights for private entrepreneurial universities to improve their strategic institutional communication management as a strategic component of institutional excellence and to provide suggestions for further research that can expand exploration to other areas of communication management in HEIs.

Scientific novelty of the research and contribution to science

With this dissertation, the author attempts to answer some of the recent calls for further interdisciplinary scholar developments in strategic communication (Werder et al., 2018); (Zerfass et al., 2018), university performance measurements (Collins & Park, 2016) and the further application of the institutional logics perspective to hybrid institutional forms and their management in the specific context of HEIs (Upton & Warshaw, 2017); (Smets, Greenwood, & Lounsbury, 2015).

The dissertation author examines how strategic institutional communication can contribute to create, maintain and transform the institution towards the achievement of institutional excellence in accordance with the triple institutional mission. The author suggests the paradigm of management-by-mission as a suitable model to synergize the competing institutional logics pervading contemporary HEIs, and approaches private entrepreneurial universities as the archetype of hybrid HE institutional form, where she explores how strategic institutional communication management contributes to mission-driven institutional excellence. The author believes one of her contribution is a systematized review of the latest scientific literature and the most significant empirical studies related to institutional logics, institutional excellence, university triple mission, hybrid HE institutional forms and strategic communication. The author advocates an integral view of institutional communication in accordance to the institutional mission and presents a conceptualization for its strategic management in HEIs. A conceptualization of hybrid forms of HEIs resulting from market and education competing institutional logics is also presented to disclose the current combination of business sector expertise in hybrid HEIs capable of dynamic adaptation to fulfil their mission and achieve excellence. The author

introduces the mission-driven approach to communication management and overall institutional governance with the management-by-mission paradigm, which endorses the declared focus on mission as a base for the assessment of institutional quality and excellence. The dissertation presents three established constructs (institutional excellence, management-by-mission and excellence in communication management) blended into a conceptual model for mission-driven strategic institutional communication management that contributes to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities. The author also introduces the identification of pre-requisites and features that interact in the competing intra-institutional logics and impact the contribution of strategic institutional communication management on institutional excellence and a methodological framework for empirical research. Finally, a set of comprehensive models applicable to strategic institutional communication management and its assessment in private entrepreneurial universities are presented as a result of the empirical research.

The dissertation author believes that a solid combination of the latest theoretical contributions from Institutional Logics Approach (ILA-institutional theory) with the most recent developments in strategic communication scholarship can result in relevant additions to advance applicable knowledge of private entrepreneurial universities as the archetype of contemporary HE hybrid institutional forms, where strategic management of communication can lead to a tangible and fruitful contribution to mission-driven pursue of excellence.

Practical implications of this thesis

The author believes her dissertation contributes these applicable insights:

- a. A comprehensive strategic institutional communication management model that implies the allocation of an ad hoc full-fledged structural unit with highly qualified staff.
- b. Coordination or joint supervision of external-internal communications by an ad hoc communication management unit that ensures transversal synergy with clearly established patterns and channels.
- c. Enhancement of the internal communication function (place in the organizational structure; resource allocation).
- d. Emphasized significance of stakeholder mapping and balanced stakeholder engagement for mission-driven strategic institutional communication management.

- e. Strategic collaboration to cope with intact demands of academics, executive leadership and administration: ad hoc structural adjustments in the stakeholder-oriented governance of academic units.
- f. Recommended blended profile for the Dircom in private entrepreneurial universities (extensive to other HEIs): preference for communication practitioner and scholar with PhD.
- g. Importance of the interrelation and integration of the neuralgic trinomial mission-strategy-strategic communication in HEIs.
- f. Application of the modern management-by-mission paradigm to strategic institutional communication management in private entrepreneurial universities.
- h. Significance of regular assessment of institutional communication management in accordance to the institutional mission and stakeholder expectations.
- i. Further application of managerial implications to public HEIs: urgent need for balanced entrepreneurship for triple mission fulfilment).

Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of four parts: a literature review with a theoretical framework and conceptual model for mission-driven strategic institutional communication management in private entrepreneurial universities; a review of previous empirical research findings. The third part introduces the substantiation of the chosen research design and methodology for this study, ending with an empirical research model. In part four, the author presents the empirical research findings, conclusions, research limitations and suggestions for further research.

Defended propositions

1. Institutional communication contributes to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities when the communication function is integrated into a mission-driven institutional strategy.
2. Strategic institutional communication contributes to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities when the communication management function is entrusted to an empowered and qualified structural unit led by a Director of Communication (DirCom) directly reporting to Higher Governance Body (HGB).

3. Strategic institutional communication contributes to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities when the institution has clearly identified institutional stakeholders and established patterns and channels for their engagement and alignment with the institutional mission and strategy.
4. Strategic institutional communication contributes to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities when the organizational structure facilitates balance between communication centralization and autonomy and the integration of internal and external communication.
5. Strategic institutional communication contributes to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities when there is a regular assessment of mission-oriented generated communication contents and stakeholder relations.

Research methodology

In order to identify prerequisites as mechanisms that explain phenomena, the researcher has relied on retroductive mode of inference to reconstruct the conditions for the occurrence of the observed empirical phenomenon (Berth Danermark, 2002);(Blundel, 2007); (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2005);(Easton, 2010);(B Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002); (Marschan-Piekkari, R., & Welch, 2011); (Morais, 2015).

Methods: the research design is a collective case study, epistemologically framed under the philosophical stance of critical realism. Data gathering and interpretation methods include: analysis of scientific literature, documents, situation analysis, comparative Web-based content; analysis of empirical findings and designing of theoretical models; triangulation of data sources and methods through combined Web-based content analysis, an exploratory survey questionnaire delivered to Alumni, an experts survey and experts interviews and in-depth with institutional representatives of three private entrepreneurial universities. Limitations are presented at the end of the dissertation, the main being the difficulties in getting responses from students, Alumni and other representatives, because HEIs were not authorized to send requests for research purposes of external scholars.

Literature sources used in this dissertation: the author has consulted and referred to 305 scientific works of scholars affiliated in international and national institutions from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark,

England, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands and United Kingdom and the USA.

Dissemination of research results

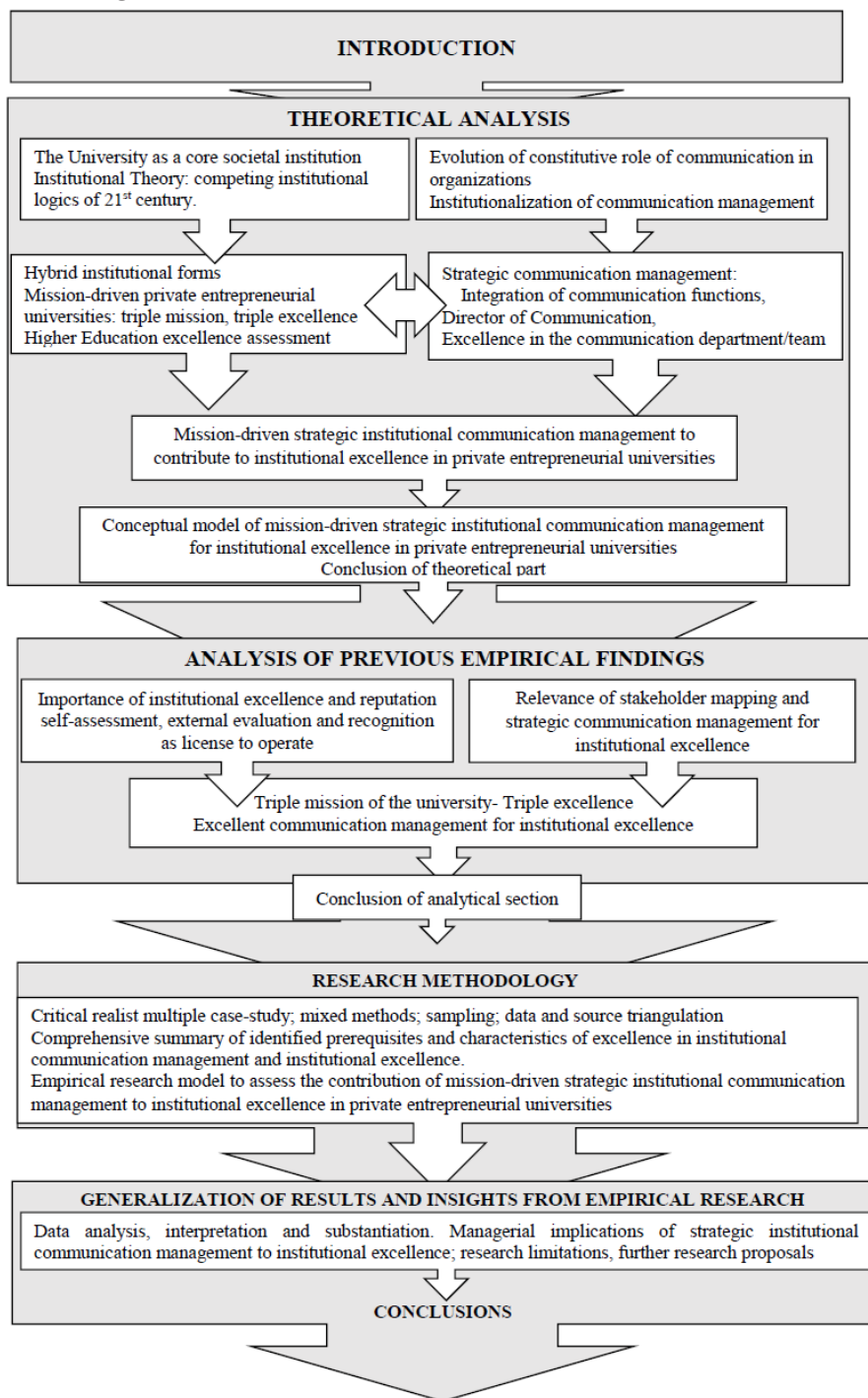
In international and Lithuanian scientific conferences

1. Conference paper: „*Rituals, culture, organizations*“. International scientific-practical conference “Creative Urban Development: culture, business, community“. November 20th, 2014. Kaunas, Vilnius University Kaunas Faculty.
2. Conference paper: „*A communicative Approach to Organizational Rituals and their role in Organizational Culture*“. International Conference on Changing World and Social Research I. August 25-28th, 2015. Viena, Austria.
3. Conference paper: „*Strategic Communication for Organizational Sustainability*“. 13th International Scientific Conference “Management Horizons in Changing Economic Environment: Visions and Challenges”. September 25-26th, 2015. Kaunas, Vytautas Magnus University.
4. Conference paper: “*Strategic communication management in Higher Education institutions. A theoretical framework*”. Presented at national scientific conference “Information and Communication, theory and practice”, held in Vilnius University School of Communication. March 24th 2017, in Vilnius, Lithuania.
5. Conference paper: “*Towards competitive advantage of Higher Education Institutions through the strategic communication of uniqueness*”. Presented at international scientific conference “Communication and Information Sciences in Networked Society. Experiences and Insights”, organized by Vilnius University School of Communication. June 14-15, 2018 in Vilnius, Lithuania.
6. Conference paper: *Socially engaged universities: reputational communication strategy or mission-based duty?*” International Conference on Vulnerability and Digital Culture. Madrid, Spain. 18-19th October 2018.
7. Conference paper: *Mission-driven universities: actions that reach out and pay off*”. Ibero-American Conference on Social Publicity and Institutional Communication. Madrid, Spain. 17-18th October 2018.

In publication in scientific research journals

1. Scientific paper “*The Impact of Integrated Organizational Communication on Organizational Sustainability*“. June 2016. “Management of Organizations. Systematic Research“. ISSN 1392–1142 (print), ISSN 2335–8750 (Online).
2. Scientific paper “*Organizational Rituals as Tools of Organizational Culture Creation*” . June 2016. “Transformations in Business and Economics“. ISSN: 1648 – 4460.

Figure 1. LOGICAL LAYOUT OF THE DISSERTATION



Own elaboration

I. Theoretical framework of strategic institutional communication management and its contribution to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities

Chapter 1. Competing institutional logics in the 21st century university

According to institutional theory, institutions structure action and emerge because of “higher-order” factors above the individual level, and not so much as the result of aggregated individual actions. The degree of influence and durability of institutions is closely related to how much and how far political actors at the individual or organizational level are involved in the institutions and the extent of their liaison with the institutional material resources and networks (Clemens & Cook, 1999).

Organizations as social agents in an institutional environment impact social reality, and naturally, each core societal institution will have its organizational archetypes (specific institutional infrastructures, relationships and interactions, jurisdictions) differing from those of other institutions (Greenwood, Hinings, & Whetten, 2014). In addition, these differences are becoming the area of institutional research, allowing cross-level comparisons between those ‘core societal level institutions’ and the similarities experienced through the institutionalization processes.

Organizations reach institutionalization level when they become valued natural communities whose main concern and objective is their own self-maintenance; hence, they become an end in themselves. Although institutions are engineered or designed *ex profeso*, at the same time they have a natural dimension, because they emerge from interaction and adaptation between individuals, groups and the environment. The researcher asserts the importance to analyse organizational difference across core societal level institutions (like market economy, family, religion, education, legal system, social strata, etc.) in order to understand „the processes whereby logics move from one institutional arena to another, how they are assimilated or rejected, and the organizational forms that result.” (Greenwood et al., 2014, p. 1215).

New organizational forms have emerged and are being created across institutional levels, however institutional theory may not have all the theoretical answers to why and how this occurs. Solving this particular scholarly debate is beyond the scope of this dissertation, whereas some insights from institutionalism are relevant for the examination of the university. As a core societal institution, during several centuries, the university has gained its place at the heart of social and historical

developments and it can still ring like a voice of conscience in the midst of crucial transformations. The dissertation author affirms that the application of institutional theory and the increasingly competing institutional logics to the phenomenon of contemporary Higher Education can lead to thought-provoking remarks, especially regarding the relation between institutional environments and organizational structure of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

1.1 The evolution of the university into the 21st century entrepreneurial university

Smets et al. (2015) admit that the institutional logics perspective prevails as the leading trend in contemporary institutional theorizing, with exploration of institutional complexity focused on the sources and consequences of competing multiple logics as a remarkably prosperous research domain that can benefit scholars and practitioners. Five elements constitute the core of the Institutional Logics Approach (ILA): society, agency (enabled through the plurality of logics), organizations as a medium through which the logics of sectors interact, the material and cultural or symbolic components of institutional logics and fifth, historical contingency (Smets et al., 2015). For this dissertation, the main elements of interest are the spatial and temporal setting of the private entrepreneurial universities as hybrid forms of the 21st century, marked by corporatization of all institutional logics, market economy and neo-liberal models which are shaping the expectations and demands of society and agents or stakeholders.

An institution is defined as “a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of *meaning* and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances.” (Olsen, 2006, p.4). All these rules, practices, structures and resources constitute a resilient way of doing, in other words, a certain institutional logic. Thornton et al. (2013) explain that each institution has its own order or logic, defined as the set of material practices and symbolic systems including assumptions, values, and beliefs by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences” (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2015, p. 3). From this the dissertation author infers that ‘pure’ institutional types are those where this set mentioned set is clearly delimited with no interference of ‘foreign bodies’ or invasive elements from other

logics. By contrast, when mingled practices, symbolic systems, practices and rules converge into an institutional form, this becomes a hybrid institutional form.

Skelcher et al. characterize hybrids as carriers of multiple institutional logics and, based on a priori combinations of institutional logics, propose five hybrid types according to the structural ways of accommodating their institutional pluralism: segmented, segregated, assimilated, and blended and blocked (Skelcher & Smith, 2015).

Table 1. Characterization of hybrid types with competing institutional logics

Hybrid types	Characteristics and relevant institutional logics
Segmented	Functions oriented to different logics compartmentalized within the organization. Compartmentalizing the market logic of small-scale revenue generation in the wider context of the professional logic of expert decision-makers.
Segregated	Functions oriented to different logics compartmentalized into separate but associated organizations. Compartmentalizing the corporate logic of fundraising from high worth individuals from the democracy logic of the non-profit's members.
Assimilated	The core logic adopts some of the practices and symbols of a new logic. Elements of market logic assimilated into family logic, but family logic retains dominance.
Blended	Synergistic incorporation of elements of existing logics into new and contextually specific logic. A new social enterprise logic emerges from elements of state, community, and corporate logics.
Blocked	Organizational dysfunction arising from inability to resolve tensions between competing logics. Irresolvable contradiction between democracy logic of the founders and state logic of the funders.

Adapted from (Skelcher & Smith, 2015)

The dissertation author believes private entrepreneurial universities share features of segmented, assimilated and blended hybrid types, since the core logic from HE adopts some of the practices and symbols of a new logic

(business principles) and they implement synergistic incorporation of both logics into the new specific logic of a private organization with an inherent social mission that is accountable to private ownership, the internal community and wide society. The negative side of hybridization could be manifest in the danger of segmentation soon being transformed into segregation as a reaction to increasing commercialization of fundraising. A selective incorporation of elements of each competing logic is typical of assimilation, which may arise in the form of resistance to the intrusive institutional logic authoritatively promoted by an external stakeholder: market pressure, decreasing number of students, urgent need to get funding for research because research production and h-indexes increase chances of getting higher ranking position, accreditation, membership in league tables, etc. And in its turn, all these factors may boost enrolment. Private entrepreneurial universities display some features of the blended type as well, because synergistic elements from different logics can converge into a new singular identity and here the role of mission-driven strategic institutional communication may prove critical.

Most institutional scholars tend to accentuate that the binary coexistence of logics can be either compatible or contradictory. Meanwhile, Smets et al. (Smets et al., 2015) seek to uncover the capacity of institutional actors to draw positive results out of the complementarities between apparently conflicting logics, bearing in mind the different organizational features such as size, reputation, internationalization and governance model, to which the dissertation author would add the mission that the institution has set to fulfil. Proponents of the Institutional Logics Approach (ILA) include market, state, community, family, religion, profession, and corporation as institutional sectors whose logic may be increasingly overlapping in the hybridization process by which new forms are emerging. Amongst the organizations recognized as institutionally complex by their very nature, hospitals, universities and social enterprises can be listed for their jurisdictional overlap by which structures and practices permanently face the challenge of competing logics.

Institutionalized organizations are sort of technical means designed to attain specific goals. Such is the case of HEIs, amongst which the university is a superior representative. The evolution of the university as a core societal institution can be described as a millennial path marked by continuous juggling. The origin of universities as centres of science and Higher Education (HE) can be traced back even to the Ancient Greeks who were already known

for their higher instruction and scholar endeavours (Avila, 1997);(Bayen & Pont, 1978). However, the institutional birth of the university is classically marked in the middle Ages, when it evolved from the simplest craft and artisanal corporations along the overall social and cultural reorganization process taking place in Europe after the Barbarian invasions. Tünnermann (Tunnermann, 1996) claims that universities sprouted out of the socio-economic and cultural atmosphere of Western European urban society in the 11th and 12th centuries.

The university, as every social institution, did not simply appear „ex nihilo“ and historians point out several determining factors: population growth and ensuing urbanization processes, economic structures, guilds, merchant communes; and most importantly, the rise of a genuine thirst for knowledge and the subsequent new occupations: teachers and scholars. The demand for education grew so much that large pools of students began to migrate to European cities, eager to attend lectures delivered by best-known professors of the time.

For some historians, the institution of HE to be first really and officially founded is the university of Bologna in 1119, followed by the university of Paris (1150), and the list of the oldest ones can be completed with Oxford (1167), Palencia (1208), Cambridge (1209), Salamanca (1220), Padua (1222). Perhaps it could be bravely claimed that the university is the most successful social organization ever invented by humankind in the middle Ages.

Since then, two distinct architypes of universities began their parallel development, namely: the Bologna model and the Paris model. The first was adopted by Salamanca and most of other Southern European universities, whereas the latter model was the choice of institutions of Northern Europe. The University of Paris, established to serve the needs of the Catholic Church, was run by professors, who formed a corporation and strived to defend their autonomy before the Chancellor and the civil authorities. This Parisian HEI was later given the name of La Sorbonne, after its prominent chaplain Robert de Sorbonne, one of the illustrious theologians. Hispano-American universities followed Salamanca's tradition, where students' involvement in governance was practically non-existent. These distinctive origins can partly explain why students' participation in institutional life and their active engagement in governance differed in one or another region.

There is a shared hypothesis (Avila, 1997);(Tunnermann, 1996) about the evolution process of the university as having to face, since the very beginning, a hard battle for its autonomy and freedom, especially those universities that

were taken over by state control. All these vicissitudes show that the development of the university has not been a smooth, calm and harmonious process; much on the contrary, it has gone through slow, irregular and very stormy periods. The university has been the reflection of the social events occurring at each given stage of its historical path until our days. One may wonder whether the university is the one that shapes society, or quite vice versa.

The institutionalization process of an organization implies making something worthwhile that promotes stability and persists over time. The millennial existence of the university is sufficient proof of its worth. However, two models of education have been in a tug-of-war competition for the last decades: the neoliberal versus the humanist. Rojas Mix (Rojas Mix, 2006) explains that the former is represented by the market society empiricists who steer education towards technical skills and abilities to produce pragmatic professionalism, in short, to educate for industry. The helmsmen of the latter have their minds set on a paradigm of education for values, where humanities are not mere disciplines, but basic formation, and ethics must be applicable for specific areas of knowledge, which would eventually forge a 'social practitioner' of any field.

The demands of the neoliberal management model are thrusting universities into the search for efficiency and the imperious need to liaise with the business and industrial sectors to procure themselves the necessary resources. Thus, managing a university under these neoliberal frames differs very little from managing any other large organization that must struggle for its survival in the fierce competitive market. Due to the over-commercialization of HE, the governance of most universities are pressed to acquire a clear business-like profile. Governing body members are trapped in "institutional juggling" (Julián Vejar, 2013): executive training is mandatory to procure and secure financial stability, to set a self-evaluation and accountability culture in return for the resources invested in education, while maintaining the university inner community participation in the debates of policies and significant decisions, and at the same time protecting academic freedom. The contradictory aspect of such juggling lies in the bipolarity of its objectives: a double accountability as an enterprise in competition with all other businesses and as a social actor on which high expectations have been raised.

In other words, commercialisation has become normalised and widely encoded in the HE systems of many nation-states. Simultaneously, universities are expected to launch to the market commercially oriented fresh

professionals, instead of raising public-interest graduates ready to serve society with their profession. As Lynch (2006) puts it, “the danger with this advancing marketised individualism is that it will further weaken public interest values among those who are university educated” (K. Lynch, 2006, p.2). Nelson (2007a) echoes this (K. Lynch, 2006) concern for the alarming escalation of commodified HE and the clearly visible accountability demanded from educational institutions. Trying to commodify all “goods” as products marketed for end-consumers means a nonsensical application of the principles of accountability to education, as the marketplace rules are not in force here, because students are not mere consumers, neither are colleges delivery outlets, nor education a commodity. Instead, “learning is a cooperative activity; it requires commitment and effort on the part of the student as well as on the part of the school, which is far more complicated than buying goods at the shopping mall. Diplomas are not bought and sold; they are earned.” (Nelson, 2007, p.24)

Nevertheless, the competitive race of neoliberalist models of management have paved the ground for a new “legitimated” accountability, based on accreditation requirements to be met. Nelson (Nelson, 2007) expressed his apprehension about universities “duty” to prove their worth on the basis of what students have learned though compulsory reports that compare students’ achievements in other institutions. This new accountability demand may have the positive aspect of being centred on what is good for the student, but it ignores the reasons for student’s choice of a particular institution for its distinctive learning style, specific community, etc. Following Nelson’s view (Nelson, 2007), the author affirms that institutional diversity may be weakened and endangered for the sake of common standards just to pass an accreditation test or compete for ranking positions. This implies levelling all institutions with the same ruler, instead of looking at the performance of a particular university in relation to its own institutional mission, and not to the mission, values, distinctive qualities, programmes of all or several others. The author of this thesis acknowledges that HEIs experience the tension between meeting market demands and maintaining the inherent scientific aspect of education. Amongst tension provokers, the author mentions the increased focus on employability and quality assurance required from educational institutions in Europe, as stipulated by the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy. Due to this mandatory “Europeanisation” process, ‘educational service enterprises’ must form a competitive internal market with growing demands for economic efficiency, but with the ever-leaning support from the

national governments (Garben, 2011). Growing pressure to make education more 'scientific' through linking instruction to research might often be at odds with demands and expectations set by the market, the current 'consumers of educational services' and the employers awaiting for the newly launched labour force.

The dissertation author's strong standpoint is that the current commodified reputation battle may be distracting universities away from striving to score higher in core values that would bring benefits to the whole humanity, and not just to enhance the professional careers of graduates and to meet the current needs of the market.

Each society sets core values to be transmitted to the younger generation who will soon take the lead of the most varied areas of professional performance (Garben, 2011). Moreover, these values should have an intrinsic connection to national identity and thus be rooted in the particular culture of each nation-state. International cooperation networks and quality assurance global initiatives in the field of education should not hinder the expectations of local, regional and national societies, where HEIs should work to preserve the unique national identity.

In the researcher's view, availability of mass-consumer oriented HE has given some undeniable positive fruit in most Western countries: enriched cultural capital, improved living standards, social and economic development and all this has been done with state financial injection. Nevertheless, high quality education implies large investments and within the neo-liberal frames, HEIs can no longer expect to survive solely from state funding. The researcher, on the other hand, disputes the eyebrow-raising definition of education as a profitable service and major new opportunities for investors (M. Lynch, 1999). Such view of education dooms HEIs to fierce economisation and academic capitalism.

The marketization of the academic world has led to yet another phenomenon called academization. This leads to teaching staff being requested to engage more actively in research often at the risk of losing tenure to a new hire with a fresh doctoral degree, but no teaching experience. Furthermore, scholar relations often entail addressing each other publications as a way of increasing measurable scholar productivity. Academization is significantly affecting academic staff composition, appraisal criteria, and teaching quality (Fransson & Jonnergård, 2009). The combination of marketization and academization has inevitably purported changes in the delivered contents in university studies, as graduates are expected to be harnessed with operational knowledge

and the skills required by prospective employers. This transformation has serious implications: values of the commercial sector encoded into the operational focus adopted by modern universities easily penetrate in the university processes and systems almost imperceptibly (Garben, 2011).

If a university is overtly and consistently urged to yield results out of commodification policies, faculty and students will naturally follow the trend to pursue their own economic benefit, thus contributing to an overall climate of self-interest, where rewards and credentials, career skills and diplomas become the sole horizon.

Persistence and stability are the defining features of institutions, if they are meant to last longer than the biological cycle of an average generation and to survive even after extreme social transformations. Therefore, in the author's view, the principles and priorities of the university as an institution of public interest should be still clearly identifiable as essentially different from those of the business sector. However, the interaction of all modern institutions in our current society, so permeated with neo-liberalist parameters, cannot but bear hybrid fruits and "this will undermine the public interest function of the university, which is to serve the good of humanity in its entirety and (...) it will compromise public trust in the scholarly integrity of university research and teaching." (K. Lynch, 2006, p.7,8). This tendency has crystalized into the contemporary *corporised* and *marketised* universities, where education has become a service available on the market. The problem is not whether the choice to access high standard education should exist or not. The real question is what education is available and what an educated person is supposed to be after graduation.

The author of this thesis adheres Lynch's reflections (K. Lynch, 2006) regarding the sort of a moral opprobrium, whereby the characterization of the current educated person is portrayed with attributes like autonomous, rational, market-oriented, consuming and self-interested individual. This definition has overwhelming implications for education as a practice in one of the most relevant societal institutions ever founded by human beings.

The author considers vital to remind participants in the educational process that they belong to the wider institutional environment where their particular educational organizations are included. Thus, they not only share their *organizational* culture, but are also shaped by the broader *educational* culture, which in its turn is highly influenced by global trends in this institutional field. Nowadays, this cultural belief system is significantly affected by stakeholders (students, parents, employees, employers, sponsors, etc.), who have made

their way into the embedded cultural infrastructure, leaving the organizational structures on a second place, as supporting frame.

In the author's view, in the contemporary context of permanent change and urge to adapt to the needs and expectations of post-modern society, a university faces the challenge to find equilibrium between novelty and stability, renewal and tradition. Nevertheless, deep-rooted traditions can serve as the solid rock and foundation for innovations and transformations. As Delich et al. (Delich, Delich, & Angel, 1988) pointed out decades ago, modernization of structures should not be equalled to abolition of great traditions or doing away with the priceless and endurable ones of the past.

The institutional logics of the market is undeniably interfering with the logics of education through the business principles that dictate how to organize processes, measure results and mingle private players from the market with academic staff (Ek, Ideland, Jönsson, & Malmberg, 2011). Yet, is there any way back or out of this cross-institutional cul-de-sac?

In the author's view, the expected tangible and quantifiable results applied to rank university 'appropriateness' (as if this were the only license to continue operating in the HE market) have pushed aside rules-based meritocracy, which would be now considered a far-fetched relic from Feudal times. Vital notions such as academic freedom, autonomy and self-image of academics are threatened as well.

Compelled by international ranking systems, national governments across the world seem to be betting on entrepreneurial universities for the commercialization of research results and the spin-off of knowledge-based enterprises. Emerging entrepreneurial universities have '*de facto*' become fully integrated players in the economic development of their societies by taking on board this additional function overtly proclaimed in their institutional goals. On the other hand, from an institutional approach it is now generally accepted that universities are an important instrument in the facilitation of the contemporary knowledge-based economy. University entrepreneurship is called for, proved by self-driven organizational character shifts, which position them as natural incubators, where teachers and students get support to initiate intellectual, commercial and conjoint ventures.

Thus, HEIs have only one strategic choice: adopting the best practices from the business sector institutional logics without betraying the primordial institutional mission of a university.

Neo-institutionalists scholars characterize the 21st century universities as an example of a hybrid institutional form called the 'entrepreneurial university'

(Guerrero & Urbano, 2012);(Guerrero-Cano, Kirby, & Urbano, 2006). Gutiérrez Olórtégui (2009) describes the ‘university-enterprise’ as an HEI with a particular ability to innovate, recognize and create opportunities, work in teams, take risks and respond to challenges.

The entrepreneurial university in developed countries is characterized as an institution ready to take on several roles in the innovation (eco)system and in society, by providing research results (patents and licenses) and incubators to commercialize their own discoveries (Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014). A comparative categorization between research universities and entrepreneurial ones (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014) portrays the former as largely dependent on public support and funding, focused mainly on teaching and research with conflicting goals and identities due to looser coupling amongst structural units. The opposite is attributed to entrepreneurial HEIs where there is tighter coupling amongst internal stakeholders as well as closer links with society and third stream activities, all steered by strategic leadership.

Universities are currently engaged in a ‘second revolution’ where economic and social development have become part of their mission, in contrast with the first academic revolution that made research an academic function in addition to teaching (Etzkowitz, 2004); (Etzkowitz et al., 2008); (Leydesdorff, 2013). Further research is recommended on the trends of universities towards entrepreneurship in developing countries and empirical studies that can add to the scarce literature in this context (Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014).

The 21st century environment is so much more intricate that institutional theory may fall short of answers to explain the existence and performance of the increasing number and types of hybrid organizations (Pache & Santos, 2013), amongst which new types have already conquered the HE market.

Hybrid organizations may emerge out of the blending different institutional logics: market-social, public-private, private-social logics, etc. Whichever the combination, the truth is that this kind of organizations experience inherent confusion: on the one hand, internal organizational members operate under contradictory pressures; meanwhile, the external observer cannot easily predict organizational behaviour of hybrids (Pache & Santos, 2013).

The university as millennial societal institution can still be one of the most stable organizational forms and its mission may seem unquestionable; however, confusion, contradictions and unpredictability can be nowadays attributed to HEIs as well as to any other contemporary organization.

Table 2. Main features of entrepreneurial universities

Features	Authors
High interdependence and engagement of all community members through networking of private and public actors	(Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014) (Etzkowitz et al., 2008) (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014) (Todorovic, McNaughton, & Guild, 2011)
Beacon of human capital, mastering stakeholders' relationships	(Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014)
Coherent institutional profile; unitary organizational identity	(Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014)
Core function and mission: Teaching, Research + Third mission	(Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014) (Dabic, Gonzalez-Loureiro, & Daim, 2015); (Todorovic et al., 2011)
Diversified income sources; social relevance and third stream funding	(Etzkowitz et al., 2008) (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014); (Dabic et al., 2015); (Clark, 2015);
Inclusion of entrepreneurship education in study programmes and personnel training Entrepreneurial culture, permeating the whole university	(Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014) (Etzkowitz et al., 2008) (Clark, 2015); (Todorovic et al., 2011)
Reward systems for entrepreneurial initiatives of staff members.	(Etzkowitz et al., 2008) ; (Dabic et al., 2015)
Maximum advantage of self-improvement opportunities in education, research and knowledge transfer; peripheries for development	(Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014) (Clark, 2015)
Economic gain from scientific and technological output	(Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014) (Dabic et al., 2015)
Governance model: Executive; steering core	(Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014) (Clark, 2015)
Strong, stimulating academic background	(Clark, 2015); (Dabic et al., 2015)
Dominant normative ethos: strategic science (knowledge production and user-inspired basic research)	(Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014); (Dabic et al., 2015)

Own elaboration based on (Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014); (Etzkowitz et al., 2008); (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014); (Clark, 2015); (Dabic, Gonzalez-Loureiro, & Daim, 2015)

1.2. Institutionalization of quality and excellence assessment and implications for contemporary HEIs

High quality teaching, excellent research, outreach and inclusion through empowering knowledge transfer should be the focus of university performance. However, the assessment process of HEI performance has undergone such level of institutionalization that it has gained full-fledge autonomous structure, agency and binding authority. National and supranational organizations have emerged as hybrid forms, which do not belong to the HE sector *per se*, but act as self-appointed evaluators of HEIs and set their own assessment criteria. These highly institutionalized and authorized agents (such as governmental offices from nation-states) have enough power to either by authority or coercively, mandate and legitimize structural changes or impose decisions through institutional mechanisms that affect organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983);(Richard, 2001). Thus, organizations are expected to abide by these rules to acquire support, maintain legitimacy and keep operating in a given sector. Structural changes in organizations may also be the result of market trends that are less controllable, or simply beyond the authority field of nation-states or other power agencies. Such would be the case of financial support agents, which have the right to specify conditions for eligibility. Naturally, organizations seeking this benefit would willingly modify what is required in order to be suitable recipients.

Smets et al.(2015) assert that the main postulation of institutional theory has been that organizations seek legitimacy through conformity with social expectations, because social approval comes along with access to material and symbolic resources essential for organizational sustainability. The dissertation author considers that this kind of institutional survival instinct emanates from the mere fact that organizations ‘are not free-floating islands of rationality or units of political expediency; instead they are seriously constrained by social expectation and the properties of legitimacy’ (Greenwood, Hinings, & Jennings, 2015, p.3). The current pro-ranking and non-mandatory accreditation seeking policies of most HEIs are signalling the new patterns of legitimation in the eye of ranking-conscious HE market customers and governmentalities of globalizing HE, all inevitably shaped and influenced by the official status gained by international rankings and accreditation systems (Collins & Park, 2016).

A tangible proof of the market-driven HE institutionalized sector is the persistent encouragement to synergize with foreign universities in order to cement global leagues of powerful partners that score high in the rankings and

help each other maintain or enhance their performance to secure good evaluations. In a similar fashion, some exclusive international accreditation agencies (mostly for business schools operating as private universities) have also gained their place in the arena of HE performance evaluators to whom newly born private universities are eager to apply. Paradoxically, university rankings and global accreditations are run as commercial operations, often administered by newspapers, prestigious magazines or private entities. Universities seem ready to do all in their reach to comply with the criteria set by these external assessors so that they can appear amongst the top performers, even though with little or no control over the procedures for such rankings and evaluations.

If being a leading or world-class university means being an excellent university, then the common features of what makes a university excellent should coincide and be the visible result of the underlying core concepts, values and elements identified and so much analysed by excellence assessment model designers and quality indicators scholars and practitioners. Several factors influence variations and approaches in the conceptualization and subsequent urge to assess and quantify excellence and quality: changes in social, economic and political contexts (Skelton, 2009), ‘new managerialism’ practices (Clarke & Newman, 1997); (Ek, Ideland, Jönsson, & Malmberg, 2013), national government increasing pressure for economic ROIs from HE (Salter & Tapper, 2002). Hence, the unsolved conceptual dispute amongst often misused terms like success, quality, excellence and reputation.

Harvey and Green (Harvey & Green, 1993) state that quality is relative to different views and uses of the term that may be synonymic to excellence, as it can be seen in table 3.

Several other reasons have been listed for the difficulties in defining quality and establishing valid evaluation indicators: a substantial growth in enrolment, students and scholars mobility, increasing diversity of students and institutions; global and regional integration, need for quality standards or comparison benchmarks of international validity to evaluate academic and professional qualifications (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009).

Some widely accepted values and elements of excellence can still be rescued, even though views of excellence in HE are multiple and conflicting (Brusoni et al., 2014). Some consider excellence an ambiguous and vague concept (Bruno-Jofré & Hills, 2011); others claim its normative nature (Elton, 1998) and even an ideal standard that must be pursued or a guiding core value for all

HEIs (Rostan & Vaira, 2011a); (Rostan & Vaira, 2011b);(Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b).

Table 3. Five ways of understanding quality

Quality as	Explanation	Application to HE
Exception	Something special, distinctive, exclusive. Excellence: exceeding standards or 'zero' defects, doing the right things well	Elitist view of high-quality Oxbridge education
	Checking standards: Satisfactory level to pass Fulfilment of minimum standards	Attainable criteria for acceptance (accreditation) or rejection
Perfection	Conformity with specified standards Democratisation of quality	Excellence as zero defects + quality of culture to prevent defects and do right at first time
Fitness for purpose	By customer specification: only meaningful in relation to the purpose of the service/product: meeting the needs of 'customers'	Quality standards hard to state and maintain. Who are HE customers? Should they assess the quality they receive?
	By institutional mission	Efficiently and effectively fulfilling clearly stated institutional objectives
Value for money	Accountability High standard at reduced cost	Public universities accountable for public funding Competitive market-determined mission Cost effectiveness through competition to get funds for research and teaching Performance indicators
Transformation	Qualitative change	Enhancing the participant (student) (feedback, added value of lectures and assignments)
		Empowering the participant (student): Student satisfaction feedback, monitoring, selection of study plan

Own elaboration from source (Harvey & Green, 1993)

The dissertation author follows Ruben's (Ruben, 2007) suggested positioning of the institutional mission as the first promise made to all stakeholders (see table 4). On this declared quest for excellence will depend the ensuing elements of the proposed Excellence in Higher Education set (EHE) and the concrete decisions to support excellence with total quality.

Table 4: Values and elements of excellence in HE

	Baldrige Education	EHE
1	Students as key customers and	Clear sense of purpose (mission) and future aspirations (vision)
2	Other customers (e.g., parents).	Effective leadership and governance processes
3	Well-conceived and well-executed assessment strategy	Strategic planning, plans, priorities, and goals
4	Year-to-year improvement in key measures and indicators of performance	High-quality programs and services
5	Demonstrated leadership in performance	Strong and mutually valued relationships
6	Performance improvement in relation/comparison with benchmarked organisations	Information about the needs, expectations, and experiences of key constituencies
7		Qualified and dedicated faculty and staff and a satisfying work environment
8		Systematic review processes and the assessment of outcomes
9		Comparisons with peers and leaders

Own elaboration based on sources: (Brusoni et al., 2014); (Ruben, 2007)

Furthermore, fee-paying students as key stakeholders have stronger influence to demand transparency and efficient performance, measurable by quasi-universal indicators, which may hinder national diversity and institutional autonomy.

Table 5. Types of private HEIs

Types of HEI	Description
Elite (world-class)	World-class, top tier: mostly US universities; some UK.
Semi-elite	Among leading HEIs in their country by rankings Above-average selectivity and status. <u>Priority on good practical teaching; good applied research</u>
Identity	Very often religiously based: Latin America, Europe and Africa usually Catholic; USA, Protestant denominations.
Demand absorbing	Largest increase; demand has exceeded supply in public or other private HEIs University “label”, <u>though rather technical/ vocational institutions</u>
For-profit	Small sub-sector markedly growing in developing regions Business model: students-customers; faculty-service provider; power concentration in Executive board.

Own elaboration based on (Altbach et al., 2009)

This can be noticed with more urgency in the fastest growing private HE sector with four main types of HEIs (Altbach et al., 2009).

A world class university counts on three defining factors of excellence, namely: a *favourable governance* able and willing to strategically manage *abundant resources*, allocated to offer the best environment for learning and research to a *high concentration of talented* faculty and students (Salmi, 2009).

Table 6. Defining Factors of Excellence for World -Class HEIs

Type of institution	Concentration of talent	Abundance of resources	Favourable governance
Research university	Students and faculty Emphasis on graduate students	+++	+++
Teaching university/ college	Students and faculty Emphasis on undergraduate students	++	+++
Community college	Diverse student body (academic achievement) Outstanding faculty with professional experience and pedagogical skills	+	+++
Open university	Diverse student body (academic achievement and age) Faculty with excellent skills for distance teaching	+	+++

Adapted from source: (Salmi, 2009)

A noteworthy consideration can be made here regarding the interconnection between HE excellence and quality concepts, so often used as synonymous and attributed to successful, leading or “top” universities, characterized in table 7. An interesting case is the top tier of USA universities, where both public and private universities can be found, while very few private HEIs of other countries make it to the very top in the different world rankings, which will be discussed next.

Table 7. Common features of leading or world-class universities

Leading international universities (Altbach, 2004); (Altbach, 2006); (Altbach & Knight, 2007)	World-class university (Alden & Lin, 2004)	Features of world-class universities (Tai, 2005)
Excellence in research	International reputation for : - ground-breaking research output, recognized by peers and prizes - teaching: can attract, recruit and retain best staff	Academic research quality and significance more important than quantity Highly internationalized with a wide range of subject coverage.
Top quality professors	Focus on “lead” subjects: research stars, world leaders in their fields Some world-class departments	Sufficient administrative and technical personnel to support teaching and research: faculty-staff ratio from 0.3:1 to 1.1:1.
Faculty self-governance	High-quality and supportive research and educational environment for staff and students	Enormous funds available: average annual expenditures per student: US\$148,000
Favourable working conditions	Very sound financial base: large endowment capital; diversified income sources (government, private sector, research, overseas student fees)	Public universities (except some in the USA)
Adequate funding, including predictability year-to-year	High internationalization: research links, student and staff exchanges, visitors of international standing	Relatively low student-faculty ratio (6.0:1 to 10.8:1)
Adequate facilities	High proportion of full-time students from overseas	Large: 20,000 to 34,000 students; 2,400 to 3,000 faculty (except private American universities)
Academic freedom and atmosphere of intellectual excitement	Attracts best students, produces best graduates; high proportion of postgraduates both teach and research	More undergraduate than graduate students
Job security and good salary and benefits	Graduates land top positions (prime ministers, presidents) Continuous benchmarking with top universities worldwide Big contribution to society	Ranked best in the world Have medical schools: significant commitment to biomedical science as competitive advantage

Own elaboration based on sources: (Alden & Lin, 2004); (Tai, 2005); (Altbach, 2004); (Altbach & Knight, 2007)

Amongst the prevailing and mostly referred world university rankings, three must be mentioned. The Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) is the first global university ranking with multiple indicators since 2003 compiled and issued by Shanghai Jiao Tong University and since 2009 annually released by independent organization Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. A comparative view is displayed in table 8 including

measurement criteria applied by each of these three widely known university performance assessment corporations.

Table 8. Comparison of world university rankings: ARWU, QS and THE

Ranking/features	Assessment Criteria	Praise and Critique
Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)	Quality of Education (# Alumni awarded Nobel Prizes + Fields Medals): 20 % Quality of Faculty (# staff awarded Nobel Prizes + Fields Medals): 20 %; Highly cited researchers in 21 broad subject categories): 20 % Research Output: Papers indexed in Nature and Science: 20 % Papers indexed in Science Citation Index-expanded and Social Science Citation Index: 20% Per capita academic performance:10 %	Praised for objectivity, stability and transparency of its methodology Criticised for unbalanced focus on scientific research giving lower profile to teaching quality; lack of adjustment to institution size, thus larger ones rank higher.
QS World University Rankings	Six metrics: Academic Reputation (40%) Employer Reputation (10%) Faculty/Student Ratio (20%) Citations per faculty (20%) International Faculty Ratio (5%) International Student Ratio (5%)	Praised for enrolment solutions through world's largest survey of prospective international students. Criticised for subjective indicators and reputation surveys; lack of global consistency and integrity of the data for ranking results.
Times Higher Education (THE)	13 indicators in five areas: Teaching (the learning environment): 30 % Research (volume, income and reputation): 30 % Citations (research influence):30 % International outlook (staff, students and research): 7.5 % Industry income (knowledge transfer): 2.5 %	Praise for improved ranking methodology since 2010; from 2019 including teaching excellence framework (TEF) in UK. Criticised for undermining non-science and non-English instructing institutions Subjective reputation survey

Own elaboration based on sources: (Altbach, 2010); (Marszal, 2012)(Pavel, 2015)

The QS World University Rankings are yearly published by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), a British company specialising in education founded by Nunzio Quacquarelli in 1990. And the Times Higher Education (THE) separated from QS in 2009 and began to apply their own methodology and

release their own version of university and reputation rankings. These methods evaluate and catalogue HEIs as *top*, *excellent*, *high quality* and *successful* (or not) and correspondingly ascribe high reputation to those at the top, according to different assessment criteria and indicators. HEIs may declare their commitment to excellence, but those classified as excellent are most often the same few ‘top’, ‘leading’, ‘great’ or ‘elite’ institutions’ (Brusoni et al., 2014), which by pure coincidence belong most often to the U.S.A and the UK with some Asian universities increasingly entering the league.

Different is the case of national and international accreditations, some of them mandatory in the respective countries as license to keep delivering certain study programmes and criteria for faculty appraisal and tenure. Meanwhile membership in other accreditation agencies is optional, though increasingly prescriptive as a condition for international partnerships in joint study programmes and research projects with state funding. Amongst international accreditations most sought by business schools, three institutions conform the so-called triple accreditation of business schools, namely AACSB, EQUIS and AMBA, which together constitute the ‘Triple Crown’.

Fewer than 90 institutions in around 35 countries worldwide are at the moment accredited with the Triple Crown, amongst them are two of the three private entrepreneurial universities examined in this dissertation: IAE (AustralArg business school) and IESE (UNAV business school).

The dissertation author’s strong standpoint is that the 21st universities already include in their institutional communication repertoire clear signs of how deeply they have come to terms with their role as catalysts for regional economic and social development, cradles of innovation that must not only add value through knowledge creation, but also - and sometimes at the expense of their primordial mission- be financially rewarding.

This dissertation author supports the valid point made by Naval (cfr. (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015a) who states that a complex approach to university reputation research, quality and excellence measurements should include objective and subjective factors, in order to give sound reasons for the appraisals expressed by different publics and measured by different agents. This double perspective places Higher Education into a quandary between objective quality and perceived quality, which leads into a third neuralgic issue: a culture of quality as opposed to a culture of success. An extremely intertwined trio emerges: success, quality and excellence. Unarguably, one of the core aims imposed to contemporary education is achieving success

pursued as triumph at all levels, i.e., academic, emotional and professional (Chapleo, 2010). From this viewpoint, the more indexes of quality in education, the wider the ‘coverage’ or range of success.

Table 9. The triple accreditation (Triple Crown) for business schools

////////////////	AACSB	AMBA	EQUIS
Scope	Broadest	Most focused	Middle
Accreditation	University-wide for management and accounting programs	only MBA and MBM programs (like MSc International Management)	Only the business school, but not the university neither specific programs
Duration	2–7 years	9–18 months	2–3 years
Quantitative/ Qualitative Approach	Favours quantitative criteria (checklists)	Preference for qualitative criteria	Middle between AACSB and AMBA
Internationalization	Evaluation by the institutional mission Only assessed if part of the declared mission	Criteria include research, curriculum and student enrolment	Strict requirements
Faculty composition	Prescribed faculty ratios (Academically Qualified/ Professionally Qualified)	No prescription of faculty-to-students ratio	Prescribed minimum numbers of faculty
Visiting faculty	Disapproved heavy use	Allowed as long as quality and course content is monitored by core faculty	Disapproved heavy use
Research requirements	In line with the mission	Publications in international refereed journals or proof of impactful research at national level	With an international dimension

Own elaboration based on sources (Alvarado, Thomas, Thomas, & Wilson, 2018); (Alajoutsijärvi, Kettunen, & Sohlo, 2018); (dos Santos Teixeira & Maccari, 2018); (Guillotin & Mangematin, 2018)

The researcher envisions a conceptual problem, since quality and success are frequently used indistinctively. Nevertheless, it is a profound mistake to mix up quality with success (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b), as if the former was dependant on the latter. Quality should be an objective element based on fulfilment of certain requirements established by the nature and essence of the

action, performance, and the institution under assessment, independently of how different individuals or publics react or perceive the objective reality. The third term in the discussed conceptual triplet is excellence, which implies that something or someone *excels*, i.e., has reached *beyond* the established norm, has gone *further* in being and doing what is normative. Excellence refers to the highest degree of quality, which should not be measurable only in terms of success.

The author of this dissertation clearly understands that as long as most contemporary organizations (amongst them HEIs) are under constant pressure for their own sustainability, Quintana Cabana's (Cabanas, 2004) words will be sadly true: the search of quality and excellence in education is a luxury only affordable when quantity is no longer the major concern. By the end of the 20th century, quality entered into the context of quantifiable economic competitive advantage, administered by newly born hybrid quality control and reputation evaluation institutions of questionable selflessness towards the main stakeholders of HEIs.

To counteract such approach, the researcher abides by Naval's "Decalogue of university academic excellence (cfr. (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b).

Table 10. Decalogue of university academic excellence

Three aims	Six means	One operative leverage
Excellence in: 1. teaching 2. research 3. knowledge transfer	4. Differentiation 5. Financial support 6. Participation 7. Communication 8. Networking 9. Openness to environment	10. Governance

Own elaboration based on Naval (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b)

Excellence can reveal itself as quality, which positively perceived becomes reputation. This research author claims this is the moment for strategically communicated excellence, as the deserved reputation deserves being talked about. The researcher envisions communication at the core of each item in Naval's 'Decalogue': transferring knowledge implies cooperating with business, economic, social and cultural initiatives by creating sustainable bonds, networking with key players in each area, justifying public and private funding with the three areas of excellence, and all this inspired and supported by professional, efficient and participative governance.

The triple backbone of excellence (teaching, research and knowledge transfer) matches the threefold mission of the university and needs the continuous sap

and vitality of strategic institutional communication to make achieved institutional excellence widely known, counting on the full support of communication-oriented and mission driven governance. A university that strives for excellence may be entitled to *deserve* excellent reputation for *excelling*, i.e., for doing *extremely well* and *beyond* ‘established norms’ what the institution has overtly declared to be its particular way of fulfilling the common mission of a university.

The author asserts that the problem hinges in *who* and *which* ‘norms’ are established to ‘measure’ the achieved degree of quality, and whether an externally manufactured ranking may exempt institutions from serious self-evaluation vis-à-vis its own excellence commitments.

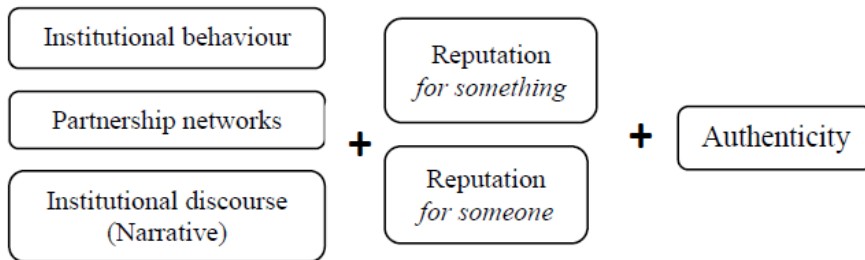
The researcher does not deny the added value conferred by agency-ascribed reputation when most universities are going through hard times to capture and maintain financial resources. The increasing visibility of reputation rankings is irrefutable and despite the disputable simplification or plausible manipulation of data, published and accessible rankings have become a token of quality in the eyes of diverse publics, who may base their choice of Alma Mater or workplace on this information.

There is yet one more important aspect regarding reputation: a person, an institution or a business corporation may have several reputations, i.e., be well-known and valued for something as perceived by someone or group of “specific assessors”. Universities may have a great reputation for their excellent teaching, together with a terrible reputation for logistics and facilities, and this last factor may ultimately not hinder so dramatically the mandatory triple excellence discussed before, but still this less significant drawback pulls the institution down in the rankings.

Truly, reputation can have multiple facets that are perceived and evaluated by current and former students, academia and governance members (Younger in (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b)). Upon professors (the intellectual essence of the university) lies the enormous responsibility for tuition quality and research excellence, which again are direct ways of capturing best students, colleagues and funding. Attracting the best students enhances reputation and helps to ensure the best and motivated professors, and so the virtuous circle keeps spinning. University governance body must act as leaders of a great enterprise with strong and disciplined management. Younger, an Oxford university expert, suggests a “3-2-1 formula of reputational commitment (cfr: Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b).

Younger (Mora et al., 2015b) stresses institutional behaviour and the relevance of signals sent with each decision and explains that expectations created around quality can influence the perception of publics. For instance, when the UK government set a higher limit for tuition fees, all the universities in the Russell Group (UK leading universities), decided to raise their fees at the same level, because offering lower prices to compete with each other could have sent an unfavourable message: cheaper tuition relates to lower quality and worse reputation. If an institution is expected to behave in the predictable manner declared in the institutional mission, then the institutional behaviour should confirm the institutional reputation.

Figure 2: The 3+2+1 formula of reputational commitment



Own elaboration, based on Younger (cfr. in (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b)

Through the choice of partnership networks, each institution naturally seeks to be part of a group with similar or higher reputation, as if the higher ranking or status of some universities could be borrowed or lent to others in order to boost the institutional reputation of a newcomer or perspective partner institution. With the choice of narrative (institutional discourse) the university tells its own stories, announces events, and launches products or services. The formula continues with the abovementioned ‘double reputation content’: reputation *for something* the institution is good or excels at, and reputation *for someone* who appreciates this asset. Multiple reputations imply different abilities, character and distinctive ways of doing in certain circumstances. Abilities take longer to achieve, are harder to create and emulate, but endure the test of time and bear reputational fruit. Contrastingly, lucky strikes of reputation attributed to suitable institutional character may occur more frequently and easily, though they can also easily fade. Strong institutional character can be demonstrated by daring and challenging opinions released by scholars with sound and well-grounded scientific research. Solid reputation of good governance contributes as well to retaining current students and

attracting new ones. Number 1, the last number in the formula, has to do with authenticity or the lack of it, when the content of institutional discourse does not match the behaviour, therefore indicating character deficiency and probably lack of capacity as well, all of which directly and negatively affects reputation and its sustainability.

Multi-faceted reputation is measured through rankings that tend to aggregate different elements into a melting pot where multiple reputations *for something* seen by *someone* go through standardization not prevented from methodological limitations. The dissertation author adheres to the point made by Collins and Park (2016) regarding the mismatch between quality, reputation and rankings which have promoted new kinds of institutional behaviours in response to the proliferation of ranking systems. These scholars express their critical stance on the high-level metrics and the need for better grounded scholarly study that would open a well-informed intellectual debate on the influence of competing logics and university rankings on the resulting behaviours of HEIs.

The landscape of HE has been disrupted by rankings: lists of top universities, guidelines for accreditations, subject learning outcomes, scientific journal metrics and all sorts of indexes have occupied the horizon and blocked the view to wider and less commodified quantitative goals. To put it bluntly, “rankings are a ‘calculative technology’ *par excellence*” which may be endangering the pursuit of the triple institutional excellence to which universities are called. And this is so because rankings seek to “make legible the tangible and intangible features of universities” in order to “generate imaginative geographies of institutional difference” (Collins & Park, 2016, p.115).

Reputation for excellent performance of universities is becoming more and more dependent on the smart use of rankings as tools to create an image of quantifiable quality in the eyes of publics who are getting easily and increasingly used to the scripted discourse of pretended objectivity of rankings. As it can be seen from the assessment criteria of world university rankings and accreditation agencies, teaching quality and excellence in teaching is often neglected and even called the “poor relation” or “the Cinderella” of research excellence in the context of HE performance evaluation (Land & Gordon, 2015).

Research excellence receives higher rewards, or in commercial terms, better return on investments and there is a much clearer agreement on how to evaluate research achievements compared to the lack of consensus regarding

teaching quality indicators. Besides, research excellence results pave the way for future funding and so the wheel keeps spinning and generating more income.

HE scholars and practitioners try to explain the reason behind the challenges in identifying, defining and measuring excellence in teaching. Elton (2012) warned about the multiple dimensionality of the concept as the main reason for the lack of precision. Two dimensions of teaching excellence can be explored: one being the classificatory that distinguishes levels of excellence achievable by the institution, department and individuals working in HEIs. The second, termed as the substantive dimension, would account for the differences in how each level displays its excellence and which deserve corresponding recognition and reward. However, in practice, institutional and departmental levels of excellence are hardly less attainable, in comparison with individual level of achievable excellence (Elton, 1998). Besides, the teaching process should not be separated from the learning process, thus the inherent difficulty in delimitating the concept of excellence and deciding who carries more responsibility, who should judge ‘the quality of its final product’, when only teaching that can produce excellent learning could claim its excellence (Elton, 1998).

Undeniably, global excellence in teaching ought not to depend on the position held in the existing and already mentioned university world rankings. A proof is the “Global Teaching Excellence Awards” whose winners may rank fairly lower than those universities at the very top when research output is the main decisive factor. Higher Education Academy is an independent non-profit organisation committed to world-class teaching in HE working in cooperation with the *Times Higher Education rankings*. Since 2017, as per official information in the institutional Website of the Higher Education Academy, a global contest is open to all universities in the world for the Global Teaching Excellence Award (GTEA), the first global benchmark to showcase exceptional institution-wide commitment to the pursuit of teaching and learning excellence in higher education.

The globalizing critique in the research literature acknowledges the relationship between contemporary calls for ‘excellence’ in HE and marketization; it reveals how far the “global HE sector is being profoundly reshaped by these processes of neoliberalism, which are driven by economic imperatives to develop global, entrepreneurial, corporate, commercialised universities” (Gourlay & Stevenson, 2017, p.391). Neoliberalist pervasiveness in the HE sector can be perceived in the dominant rhetoric of “student

satisfaction, research and teaching league tables, branding, and competition for students” (Burke, Stevenson, & Whelan, 2015, p.30).

Furthermore, the excellence construct is presented as an *a priori* ideal, but the concept requires measurement and this leads to fragmentation of the complex into the discrete which enables the commodification of higher education as an external object for purchase or sale by students positioned as customers who can demand accountability (Saunders & Blanco Ramírez, 2017).

The dissertation author advocates a balanced and reconciling position that harmonizes teaching and research as equally valued parts of the single though triple mission of every university. While acknowledging the current tension forced into the university as a force for social transformation and the notion of ‘excellence’ pressurized by a competitive and marketised sector, focusing on teaching excellence could be an alternative solution in challenging notions of teaching as craft coupling it with the complementary role that research can play in informing teaching (Behari-Leak & McKenna, 2017).

Stern criticism can be found against “the manipulation of scholarly rating and measurement system” in an era of newly fabricated academic stardom. Oravec (2017) expresses deep concern for the surfacing “traces of individual and institutional gaming and manipulation” with metrics and daringly speaks of academic corruption in evaluation-related metrics which distort the social and ethical aspects of intellectual activities (Oravec, 2017, p. 3). This critical researcher also alleges that the application of academic metrics generates new normative patterns of ‘excellence’ in teaching and research by which the new class of academic ‘star’ faculty and journals are established. This leads to academic participation easily manipulated by quantitative measures that pre-determine the value of intellectual efforts, erode the independence and autonomy of those who entered the academic profession with a real calling as well as a personal commitment with quality and diversity in research (Oravec, 2017); (Holland, Lorenzi, & Hall, 2016). Deep concern and disquiet are perceivable with respect to the undermined social standing of the once devoted professors as faculty members who have lost their role of arbiters of academic standards to be instead externally evaluated by manipulating metrics. Wood and Su (Wood & Su, 2017) join this scepticism regarding the measurability of excellence and advocate a more ethical and relational conception against the threatening vacuity that this term may gain when excellence is everywhere and the already excellent ones have to be ‘yet more excellent’.

The dissertation author does not deny the current inalienable urge of academic institutions to keep up with the inter-institutional race for funding and

prominence. Admittedly, this exerts pressure on universities to fulfil their threefold mission and some kind of accountability ought to be established. Even if some smart and clever external assessors succeeded in manipulating metrics with which internal stakeholders are forced to comply, the ultimate accountability should be against the declared mission, the real guiding standard for institutional long-term pursuit of excellence as “a process of growth, development and flourishing”, and not as an end in itself (Nixon, 2007, p 22; 2013).

In the long run, institutional excellence should be neither exclusively nor prudishly dependant on rankings, because these may be unpredictable and may raise expectations that some institutions need not struggle to reach. Nevertheless, each HEI should work out its own strategy towards a reputational commitment to be worthy of positive appraisal, to earn and deserve the reputation that correspond to its achieved excellence in the light of how the institution has fulfilled its promise: whether it is doing its best ‘to do what is preached’ or what has declared in its mission statement as a commitment with institutional stakeholders first and then to society at large. An institution seeks to become identifiable and identified amongst others, but *wider* visibility is not the goal (Jevons, 2006). Instead, excellent universities want to be singled out for their pursued excellence (unique communicated identity) that justifies their praiseworthy attributes: strong strategic agenda, clear vision, internal support, leadership support, collegiate structure of academic excellence (Chapleo, 2010). Then, a deserved good reputation based on the truth about the institution’s actual excellence may lead more easily into *being the chosen one* out many other universities. In order to be chosen out of the several thousand universities operating in the world, there must be a particular way of fulfilling the common triple mission that all other universities share. And this particular way of doing what all others do is comprised in the institutional mission of each university. The unique mission can be the differentiating factor and at the same time, the cornerstone upon which to build the unique identity, the singular path towards externally measured *and* internally pursued excellence.

1.3 Managing competing institutional logics in private entrepreneurial universities

The current context where most universities operate features a multi-faceted complexity that results from the interrelation of several other societal institutions at local, national and international levels: the government and its

science and education ministries, accreditation agencies, the business sector and the various different socio-economic and cultural environmental factors. Undeniably, the contemporary knowledge-based and market-minded society keeps re-shaping the role and mission of the university with a mandatory call to become entrepreneurial in the execution of its threefold mission while maintaining its academic identity (Guerrero, Urbano, Fayolle, Klofsten, & Mian, 2016). Amongst entrepreneurial universities, both public and private ones can be listed and even though that substantial differences in this regard do not abound in scholarly sources, yet a distinction can be made between entrepreneurial intention of public HEIs (Yıldırım & Aşkun, 2012), entrepreneurial orientation or mandatory entrepreneurship for sustainability of the HEIs, as they are inevitably immersed in a demanding market where collaboration between academia and the private sector through joint educational and scientific projects is not only desirable but also strongly recommended (Ec-Oecd, 2012).

The dissertation author again asserts that private entrepreneurial universities can be counted amongst the contemporary hybrids immersed in the pluralistic institutional logics of education, the market, social and governmental politics. Maintaining internal endorsement may be easier in very competitive labour markets where senior academia members have fewer chances of bargaining their conditions. Moreover, the academia's intersection with the private sector markets is not an inherent feature of public HEIs, whereas private universities belong to the private sector, hence the entrepreneurial nature and character is an essential feature of private HEIs.

The dissertation author also supports the point made by Bermejo (Bermejo Muñoz, 2014), with respect to more explicit declaration of the institutional mission in private universities, in comparison with the implicit mission of public HEIs as belonging to the public sector and expected to render a public service or 'public goods' to society. Unarguably, private universities do share this general mission attributed to and expected from any HEI. Nevertheless, the mission statement of private universities can be considered a promise of services and true commitment with the engaged internal and external stakeholders, what in market terms would be equivalent to employees or service providers and consumers or users respectively. What is more, the declared institutional mission of private entrepreneurial universities should be one of the key tools to communicate their differentiating characteristics as specific ways of fulfilling the shared university mission.

As discussed before, several symptoms of conflicting logics are perceivable in the contemporary university, especially in private ones, where academization, marketization, standardization, managerialism are all processes which can hardly be stopped, thus the urgent need for a suitable management framework which soothes the embedded conflicting institutional logics and helps the entrepreneurial university to pursue its unique way of fulfilling the triple mission. For all the reasons exposed above and also inferring from the contribution of other scholars (Pache & Santos, 2013) the dissertation author narrows the focus of competing institutional logics to private entrepreneurial universities where the co-existing logics are most often found, as illustrated in table 11.

Scholars suggest the existence of two hybrid organizational types: conforming and dissenting: the former prioritizes only one of the competing institutional logics, while the latter opts for selective coupling and innovation. (Mair, Mayer, & Lutz, 2015). Other researchers explain that in the pluralistic institutional arena of hybrids, bridging logics is not enough because it is rather limited to raising awareness and sensitivity. Instead, they advocate integrating competing logics understood as coordination, combination and interconnection of conflicting logics to develop a unified sustainable system (Zhu, Rooney, & Phillips, 2016).

Scholars who go deeper into the reality of hybrid organizations have attempted to unravel the complex ways by which these institutional forms deal with competing logics internally and which strategies are chosen to solve this contradiction (Pache & Santos, 2013). De-coupling, compromising and selective coupling have been described as three strategies to cope with competing institutional logics. Decoupling can be a survival option when externally prescribed policies conflict with internal preferences but conformity with regulations is mandatory, for example in cases of quality assessment, auditing, fund allocations, etc.

However, it may prove less sustainable in the long run. Compromise also has its negative sides it is subject to endorsement of key institutional referents who may not accept the conditions and bargaining with dissenters may lead to internal divisions.

Finally, selective coupling demands from hybrid organizations the thoughtful choice of intact demands imposed by the conflicting logics in which they are embedded.

Table 11. Co-existing institutional logics in private entrepreneurial universities

Characteristics	blended societal and market logics
Triple mission common to HEIs	Provide education, generate and share knowledge for the benefit of institutional community and the whole society
Organizational form	Owned/run by non-profit foundations Owned by business groups/shareholders
Mixed Governance	Decision-making body: rectorate, senate, or Executive team) who control efficient resource allocation, product/service consistency Hierarchical structure of administration staff (like in business organizations) Hierarchy in academia: titles, positions, degrees. Certain degree of autonomy in academic units
Power structure	Material and human resources can be administered to ensure return on investment Career opportunities, promotion, motivational packs upon scientific output and research projects. Partly empowered stakeholders inspired by the institutional mission
Equal opportunities	Fund-raising and grant system for low-income talented students State-granted funding in some countries
Inclusion and social benefit	Open educational events free of charge with an indirect promotional aim to advertise study programmes Knowledge transfer projects with private or state funding for research
Legitimacy and accountability	Measurable by - stakeholders' satisfaction: students and Alumni ambassadorship; word-of-mouth advertising and endorsement - managerial and technical expertise - national accreditation and quality assessment agencies - non-mandatory reputation rankings, international leagues of private accreditations

Own elaboration

Although public universities are not hybrid forms per se, they also must function under the imposed urge to become entrepreneurial, so this in kind of

HEIs decoupling and compromising may be the most usual practice, because of their institutional origin. Since state-owned HEIs have been born and belong to the public sector, they are fully accountable for their decisions if they want to continue operating.

Out of the three strategies discussed, the author asserts that selective coupling seems to be the least costly and most effective hybridizing option in private entrepreneurial universities, because they do not need to craft new or alternative practices to match internal preferences nor to negotiate the support of influential institutional members.

Table 12. Hybridizing strategies to deal with competing institutional logics

Strategies	Definitions
Decoupling	Separating normative/prescriptive structures from operational structures; maintaining gaps between symbolically adopted policies and actual organizational behaviour.
Compromising	Enacting institutional prescriptions with some slight alterations to strike balance between conflicting expectations by conforming to minimum standards, bargaining with institutional referents.
Selective coupling	Combining intact demands drawn from both logics

Own elaboration from source: (Pache & Santos, 2013).

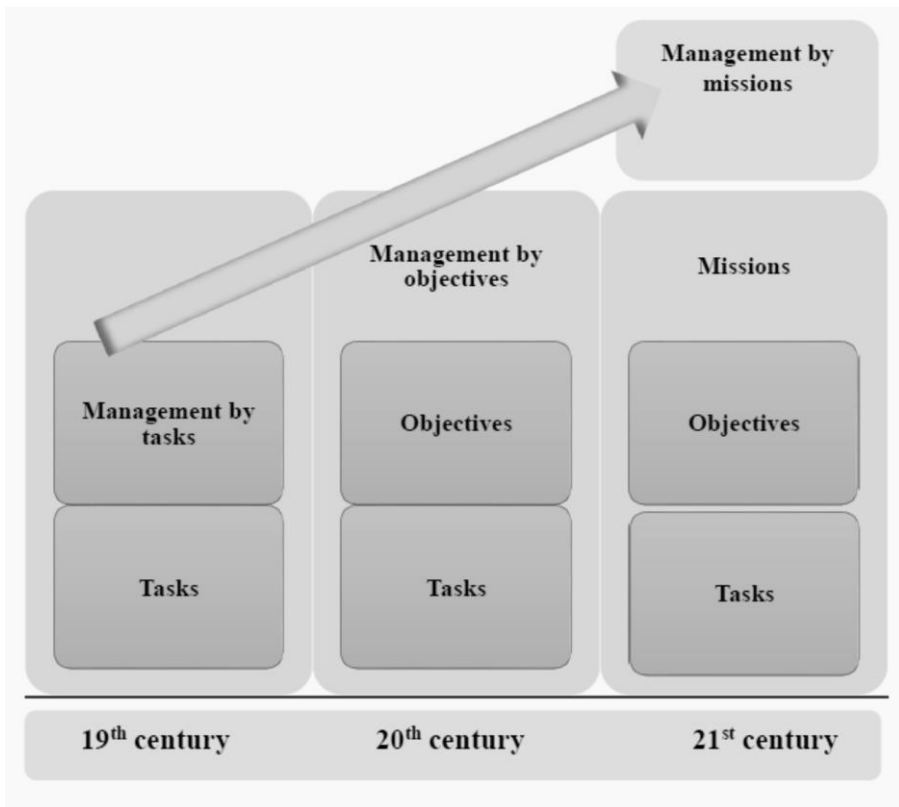
The dissertation author believes that management by missions (MBM) can be an appropriate choice for the reconciliation of conflicting social and commercial logics that private universities are facing.

This modern holistic approach to strategic management puts forward a clear focus on the institutional mission with a strong stakeholder approach and a fully developed programme to guide institutions towards mission formulation, deployment and review based on strategically managed communication (Cardona & Rey, 2008); (Marimon, Mas-Machuca, & Rey, 2016).

The joint pursuit of a mission bestows meaningfulness to everyone's work and the contribution of all stakeholders, thus the first step in mission formulation or revision is stakeholder mapping and prioritizing so that the institution can make a clear commitment with each stakeholder group and foresee it in the formulation, dissemination and regular revision. As Rey (Rey, 2011) explains, the declaration of the mission in the so-called mission statement is only the

formal part of the mission, which must be escorted by an effective communication process to disseminate the mission to all the institutional community members. Mere information about the mission is not enough: once the mission is formulated by the steering committee or the governance body of the institution, the mission should be endorsed by all the stakeholders.

Figure 3. Management by missions



Adapted from source: (Cardona & Rey, 2008)

The term “stakeholder” was used for the first time in 1963 by Freeman who stated that “a stakeholder in an organization is (by definition) any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives” (Freeman, 1984). And if the modern university has become more like a “stakeholder university” than a “republic of scholars” (Kogan, Bauer, Bleiklie, & Henkel, 2007), it is vital to identify who are those most affected and able to impact the institutional development.

A key element for the identification of stakeholders and their role in their organization is the choice of corporate governance (Ayuso & Argandoña, 2009); (Mahoney, 2012) as this will determine the power distribution, structure and decision-making procedures to exercise this power and the extent to which the governance body is willing to legitimize and safeguard the interests of corporate stakeholders, without undermining corporate strategies. In the particular case of entrepreneurial private universities, or universities-enterprises, stakeholder participation in corporate governance bears a more instrumentalist approach: enterprise-specific investments (in physical, human or social capital) must be recognized. The researcher urges organizations to consider the need to literally 'take on board' key representatives from the value-creating stakeholder groups. The author goes along with the belief that entrepreneurial universities can definitely be considered amongst organizations where such compulsory normative framework must be seriously taken into account as a premise of legitimization (Olcese, 2005).

Quezada (Quezada, 2009) describes three generic models of governance, namely: bureaucratic (main decisions strongly conditioned by public administration); market-based: (decisions oriented to selling educational, consultancy and research services to interested customers, and collegial (decisions taken by university self-government with criteria suggested by the academic staff). These three models can hardly be found nowadays in 'pure state' amongst HEIs of Western countries. Most probably two of them coexist, one being naturally more prominent over the other, even though some universities do operate with a strong democratizing principle to mix in the increasing self-regulating capacity entrusted to the academic community (Vallès, 1997). Several scholars point out the need for HEI corporate governance system that allows long-term and short-term planning, organizing, direction and control (Ganga Contreras, 2005); (Neave, 2001); (De Miguel, Caïs, & Vaquera, 2001); (Vallès, 1997). The usual practice is unipersonal governance (the rector) aided by pluri-personal bodies (executive board, social councils, academic councils).

The dissertation author strongly believes in the incorporation of stakeholders into the corporate governance of the university as the leading trend of the 21st century universities, who pride themselves of being socially responsible, communication-based and people-oriented institutions. A key step in the formation of stakeholder-based university governance model is the identification of institutional stakeholders and the construction of a really operational stakeholders' map that each HEI must assume in everyday

decisions. Table 13 displays HEI stakeholder typologies provided by different authors.

Table 13. Comparative summary of the stakeholders' typologies

Typologies Stakeholders	Licata & Franwick (1996)	Owlia & Aspinwall (1996)	Rowley (1997)	Burrows (1999)	Parra Luna (2004)	European Commission (2008)	Convergences
University management	+	+	+	+	+	+	4
Students	+	+	+		+	+	4
Teaching staff	+	+	+		+		4
Administrative staff		+		+	+	+	4
Employees	+			+	+	+	4
Parents /family	+	+	+			+	4
Labour market		+	+		+	+	4
'Clients' (Students, parents/spouses, employers, financial support entities, business enterprises for internships, etc.)				+			
Alumni	+				+	+	3
Governmental regulating entities		+	+	+			3
Non-governmental regulating entities				+			1
Competitors				+	+		2
Suppliers							
Sponsors/ business partners				+	+		2
Civic society	+		+	+	+	+	5
Labour unions					+	+	2

Based on multiple sources: (Weaver, 1976); (Burrows, 1999); (Luna, 2004); (Eurydice, 2008); (Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2010).

As foreseen in the stakeholder salience model the more power, legitimacy, and urgency each stakeholder has or is perceived to have, the higher their salience (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Thus, greatest attention should strategically be focused on stakeholders having the highest and most comprehensive salience. Institutional governing bodies, employees (teaching and supporting

staff) and society are mentioned by most authors, though with slight differences, and of course students as well, if Burrows' (Burrows, 1999) *clients* are added.

By the end of the 20th century, the tendency seems to no longer differentiate teaching staff from other employees as HEI service 'providers' to consumers (students and indirectly, their families). Weaver (Weaver, 1976) already back in 1976 spoke of *consumers* of HE services, referring to students, their families, employers and society in general. For Drūteikienė (Mackelo & Drūteikienė, 2010) "potential and present students, their parents, personnel, scientists and scientific research institutions, partners, competitors, high schools, governmental institutions, business organizations and media" are "influence groups" examined as either subjects or objects in the creation process of a HEI image. For the dissertation author 'influential actors' are the same stakeholders already included in the presented HEI stakeholders' typologies.

The interplay between neo-institutionalism and resource dependency theoretical insights fit well in the HEI stakeholder analysis due to their peculiar degree of institutionalization and increasing social expectations (Wit & Verhoeven, 2016).

Undoubtedly, HEIs depend on the environment to obtain essential resources (government financial support, academic and administrative staff, students), thus HE openness to society is a question of survival (Wit & Verhoeven, 2016) and the main argument to grant each HEI the maximum amount of autonomy to take part in international competition and yet "pass the control of quality" set by local government.

The institutional structure reflects norms and beliefs about the current social reality which will ultimately affect every interaction with the environment. Institutional ability to cope with pressure and manage the required adaptation will depend on the degree of institutionalisation of the expected change and the institution itself (Meyer & Rowan, 1977); (March & Olsen, 1983); (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983); (Richard, 2001) (Julián Vejar, 2013); (Greenwood et al., 2014).

As the current HEI environment is characterized by a noticeably institutionalized academic offer and marketization, most communicative efforts are centred in a fierce marketing communications race, where publics expect and demand openness, continuous updated and transparent information. This requires extraordinary institutional efforts to maintain the balance between external communication outputs and internal communication

needs. The internal environment of institutions requires attention as well, since there are undeniable issues of power and interests of actors inside the institutions, where departments, teams, or sub-units will naturally strive to ensure that they at least keep, if they cannot improve, their *status quo* regarding crucial resources to fulfil their tasks or to influence decision-making procedures that affect them more directly.

To sum up, the constraints in the environment of organisations may limit their ability to change; consequently, organisations tend to adopt the same structural designs as other organisations, regardless of whether these designs are the best and most suitable for them or not. In the university context, the existence of a networking environment, in which every university is visible to every other university, can enhance a mimetic effect, and the tendency to copy the successful actions of others, often at risk of losing the return on investments allocated to differentiation. However, even if the mission statements were copied from other more successful universities or those at the top of world rankings, there is a long way from formulation to implementation and it is precisely in this long path where each institution can reveal its unique way of fulfilling the commitment with its stakeholders. Having a clearly written and approved institutional mission to which all key stakeholders adhere is a powerful shield against mechanistic and utilitarian management models. Such institutional governance paradigms seek tangible quantifiable results and economic benefit and quite very often at the expense of the welfare of people, thus betraying the inalienable mission of the university as a core societal institution (Bermejo Muñoz, 2014). Naturally, the institutional mission ought to become the beacon for governance and the inspiration for all strategic management decisions, if the institution really aspires at institutional excellence counting on the essential support of strategic institutional communication.

Each university should aspire to achieve excellence in the fulfilment of the triple mission common to all universities and later on specified and re-defined by each individual institution. Even though institutional excellence is externally and optionally measurable by rankings and accreditations, yet these are neither mandatory nor comprehensive in terms of the threefold excellence. Thus, universities should allocate resources and capabilities to the fulfilment of their own declared institutional mission, because this declared commitment to pursue excellence is only a specification of the binding triple mission and triple excellence expected from all HEIs.

Concluding remarks of chapter 1

Institutional theory sheds light on the birth of hybrid institutional forms and the competing institutional logics that cause tension and makes their management more complex. Private entrepreneurial universities are considered the 21st century archetype of the Third mission fulfilment due to their ambidexterous capacity to adjust their internal capabilities to the changing external needs of society, the market and a wide range of institutional stakeholders. Through selective coupling and pragmatic collaboration guided by the institutional mission, private entrepreneurial universities are able to address the needs of their distinctive institutional stakeholders. Some of them provide while others receive educational services of a unique transformational nature: a diploma on completion of a certain period of studies that will legitimate the graduates' status and grant licence to operate in a particular field of work for the benefit of the whole society. And all this ought to be done in a strategic manner so as to safeguard the loose coupling typical of academic institutions where freedom of thought, flexibility and autonomy of structural units are vital for high quality teaching, the dynamic development of scientific production and knowledge transfer projects. At the heart of all strategic management processes towards the implementation of the triple institutional mission and the achievement of excellence the dissertation author envisions the strategic role of communication, as it will be seen in the next section.

Chapter 2. The constitutive role of communication and its management in organizations and institutions

Organizational communication scholars have historically had little success in establishing unequivocal parameters for their field: for some organizational communication is broader while others substantially limit its scope (Kreps, 1990). The author of this dissertation believes that the starting point is considering the institution or organization as people interacting and giving meaning to that interaction. Then, communication becomes an *organization-making* function, rather than just an *organization-maintaining* one. Then, the author declares that „communication does not *just serve* the organization; *it is* the organization. Communication is central to organizational existence and does much more than simply implementing organizational plans“ (Sueldo, 2016).

Several scholars promote the communicative constitution of organizations and stress the primordial role of communication, pointing that the organization is

an effect of communication rather than its predecessor (McPhee & Zaug, 2009);(Putnam & Nicotera, 2009);(Zerfass, 2008);(Gregory, 2013);(Craig, 2000). In the author's view, this confirms that the function creates the organ, so the organizational structure should respond to an institutional inherent need.

Depending on the theoretical perspective and the subsequent pragmatic expectations set on the 'fruits' that communication can bear to the organizations, a number of concepts and terms have already developed and become widely accepted both in scholar discussion and managerial use.

2.1 Conceptualization of communication in organizations and institutions

The role of communication in institutions has obviously evolved, both as a discipline and a practice, since its first steps back in the early 20th century. It has witnessed the development of theories focused on a more integrative view of communication (Félix, 2014);(Gomez- Aguilar, 2007); (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998);(Schultz & Schultz, 2003), though the path towards integration of all communications that occur in organizations has been marked by enthusiasm and tension (Lars Thøger Christensen, Firat, & Cornelissen, 2009); (Lars Thøger Christensen et al., 2009).

One of the main goals of corporate communication and corporate branding 'integrational' strategies has been the avoidance or elimination ambiguity, as it hinders clarity and consistency (Hatch & Schultz, 2001); (Eisenberg, 1984). Unarguably, integrating corporate strategies are useful, but organizations should not be considered as unitary homogeneous actors with no room for different voices, flexibility and diversity. For the dissertation author, the key to contemporary pro-integration trends lies in consistency and synergy in the management of institutional communication.

As many scholars point out, organizations operating in the mature and demanding market of the 21st century need to grow in awareness of the desire and ability of savvy consumers and critically inquisitive stakeholders who create their own perceptions and stories (Lars Thøger Christensen et al., 2009); (Thøger Christensen, 2002);(Kozinets, 2002);(Lars Thøger Christensen et al., 2009).

The concern for integrated communications was perhaps purely success-driven, rather than inspired in the real needs and demands of those outside the organization (Thøger Christensen, Torp, & Fuat Firat, 2005), paying little attention to the apparent lack of interest on the receiver side of integration. At

this point, one may ask whether there is a real need for integration and which are the reasons and motives for corporations and institutions to seek this so much dreamt-of and promoted alignment and coordination of all corporate messages. The dissertation author claims that otherwise the legitimate concern for congruity of all corporate messages may put the whole communication orchestrated strategy at risk and the organization may be seen as one-dimensional and patronizing, downplaying the active role of the receivers. This puts higher demands on executives to ensure that all organizational members have consistent understandings of corporate values and their express manifestations in organizational performance at all levels.

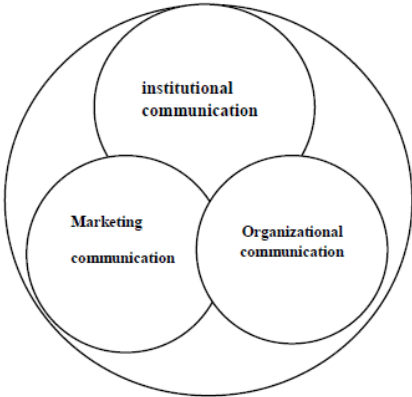
Organizational, corporate or institutional are the adjectives frequently used to refer to the overall phenomenon of communication in any kind of organization and the conceptualization keeps evolving (under whichever term) along with the role played or granted in each organization; also as natural result of new technological advancements in the arena of communication and information. Some scholars and practitioners make distinctions (Gomez- Aguilar, 2007); (Mora, 2009); (Méndez, 2013), while others use one term as more inclusive, considering certain ‘areas’ or ‘functions’ as subordinate to a more comprehensive communication reality (Andrade, 1991); (Raigada, 1997); (Miguez, 2007); (Jose Maria Herranz de la Casa, 2010); (Cervera Fantoni, 2004) (Garrido & Javier, 2004); (Barquero & José, 2005); (Losada Díaz, 2002); (Sotelo Enríquez, 2001); (Kreps, 1990); (Valbuena de la Fuente, 1997 n.d.). Others integrate both connotations in the collocation “corporate communication” (C. S.-S. Costa, 1995); (C. B. M. Van Riel, 1997); (Goodman, 1998); (Bernstein, 1986); (Lars T. Christensen et al., 2010); (P. A. Argenti, 1998); (Dilenschneider, 2000). The highlighted difference may lie in the fact that the classic brand-oriented “corporate” communication promotes products or services, whereas institutional communication strives to raise awareness of the organisation itself (Weil, 1992); (Andrade, 1991); (Losada Vázquez, 1998); (Méndez, 2013).

Herranz de la Casa (2010) explains the two main trends in defining communication in organizations: the first characterizes communication as a global, all-embracing, strategic and integral process. The second, on the basis of the ‘space’ where communication operates, that is the organization, the business corporation or the institution.

One scholar uses the term “total” communication (Cervera Fantoni, 2004), while others prefer to call it “strategic communication” (Garrido & Javier, 2004) (Barquero & José, 2005). Other scholars seem less concerned with

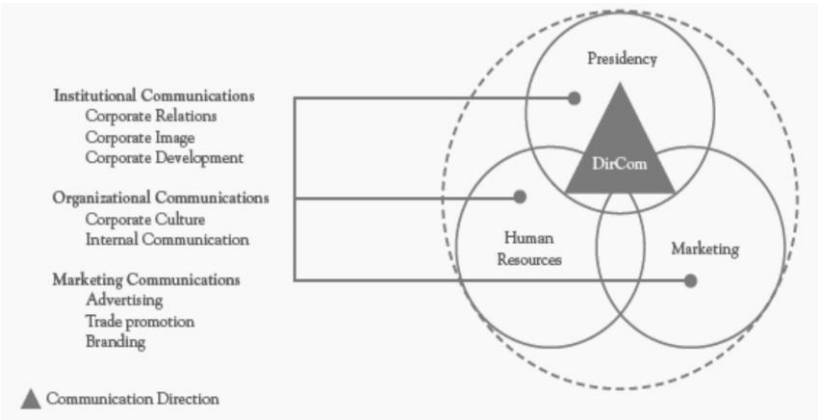
terminological issues and advocate for an integrative position to discuss the same reality of communication in any kind of organization, indistinctively referring to it as corporative, corporate or institutional (Martín Martín, 2003). University communication researchers tend to opt for the word “institutional” (Losada Vázquez, 1998);(Losada Díaz, 2002), while some authors merge it with marketing and public relations (Sotelo Enríquez, 2001). For Costa (2005), corporate communication is best defined as the communication of any kind of enterprise understood as a global or integral process (figure 4).

Figure 4: “Global communication structure” in an organization



Based on Costa (J. Costa & Com, 2005)

Figure 5. Global communication according to Costa



Source: (J. Costa, 2014)

This global communication structure envisions an all-embracing communication (the background larger circle) with the strategic role of the DirCom at the heart of the communication functions (three smaller circles inside) integrated into a global plan of communication management that includes three areas (figure 5).

Díaz Méndez (Méndez, 2013) claims that even after a few decades of scholarly and pragmatic debate, still one unequivocal and widely accepted definition of institutional communication cannot be singled out and corporate communication principles can be likewise applicable to a broader range of organizations, whether private or public, profit and non-profit organizations. Institutional communication is understood as a strategic type of communication directed to different stakeholders of an institution and clearly aimed at establishing high quality relationships between them in order to increase social knowledge and reputation of the institution (Méndez, 2013). Ultimately, excellent institutional communication should result in the favourable development of the institutional image by improving different stakeholders' relationships. And here there is a convergence point in the extant literature that sets the basis for a theoretical examination of institutional communication as different from corporate communication, though it lacks consistency regarding what factors and aspects it encompasses.

Several scholars agree on the point that institutional communication is doing well as long as identity and image match under the scrutiny of the different institutional publics or stakeholders, or in other words, when messages *ad intra* and *ad extra* of the institution are coherent and consistent. Coherence and consistency are the truth of the institution and this is reflected in its image (Dolphin, 1999); (J M Mora, 2009). For Scheinsohn (2010), image is the record of corporate/institutional attributes that the publics hold in storage like a mental synthesis, made out of all the acts of the organizations, independently of whether they were of a specifically communicative nature, or of any other kind. From a managerial point of view, institutional image becomes an output/input resulting from the global communicative performance of the institution, and it can serve as precedent for future decisions.

The image of an institution is compared to a filter that maintains the balance in the stakeholders' perception of institutional decisions, mistakes and actions, especially when the context or market conditions become hostile (Méndez, 2013). It is precisely then when the institutional image can make a solid contribution to consolidate its position in the minds of its different stakeholders, representing an added value and a managerial competitive

factor. An interactive approach to the formation of the institutional image explains that it results from a wide range of behaviours of the organization towards its publics (Villafañe, 2005). Another definition puts more stress on the receiver, as corporate image consists of the “interpretations stakeholders make about the company” (C. B. . and F. C. J. Van Riel, 2007).

It can be concluded that most scholars agree on one relevant term regarding institutional (or corporate) image: perception. However hard an institution may work at trying to shape the publics’ perceptions, corporate image is most commonly related to the receiver side of the communication process, during which the institution may be one more participant, competing with other informative inputs and noises. If image can be positively or negatively affected by unpredictable circumstances from internal and external publics, it may also be purposefully altered according to the organization’s strategic goals through timely and decisive communication tactics. However, institutional image is vulnerable to several uncontrollable forces and it requires due attention and involvement from executives to manage communication as a crucial function in an institution.

Unarguably, publics may elaborate their own mental synthesis out of their perceptions, experiences and other information sources. Yet, the organization is always responsible for the image their publics make of it, as long as institutional image is manageable, though only indirectly through strategic institutional communication. The management of communicational resources is the key to indirectly impact the publics, so that they elaborate the most favourable image of the institution. Speaking about image management means speaking about communication management.

Abundant scientific sources can be found where corporate/institutional communication is presented as a conduit between corporate identity and corporate image. However outstanding these theoretical insights might be, communication management professionals are not to blame for not controlling how the image conveyed by the institution is received by its different stakeholders. Gaps in institutional communication should be avoided, potential ones predicted and alternative ways of delivering institutional information must be prepared for immediate interventions. Thus, a fundamental recommendation is to maintain “fluent communication between communication managers and top managers so as to provide consistency to all actions taken by the institution, as well as establishing some principles and stick to them” (Méndez, 2013).

Most scholars would agree that consistency relies on transparency and loyalty to institutional identity. Communicative forms and corporate behaviours should reflect the institution's clear-cut reputational positioning leading to immediate and faultless identification of institutional values and differentiation in comparison with the competitors' positioning.

Following Fombrun (C. Fombrun, 1996), institutional reputation can be understood as the sum of perceptions that stakeholders have about the organization. In sum, institutional reputation has to do with a kind of assessment or evaluation of the image formed in the minds of the observers (stakeholders). Thus, proactive and operative institutional communication programmes are vital to increase the value of reputational capital, by communicating institutional successes and strengths without puffery, reinforcing bonds with reputation measurement organisms, increasing internal sensitivity in the organization and maintaining positive relations with internal and external stakeholders. That is why the institution should take the initiative to highlight fundamental features of its identity in order to get a desired reputation, so largely discussed by scholars and practitioners and considered a key element in communication management.

The term *institutional*, as qualifier to communication, may not imply a radical different understanding of the same communicative phenomenon in an organization. However, a great number of HEIs noticeably have an area dedicated to *institutional* communication (instead of 'corporate') in their institutional webpages; therefore, a purposeful choice of term can be inferred. The author of this dissertation follows this last trend as it seems more befitting the nature of communication in HEIs.

Having discussed different approaches to the conceptualization of communication in institutions and organizations, attention will focus now on institutional communication as a dynamic process that requires strategic management to bear all its potential fruit within and beyond the organization.

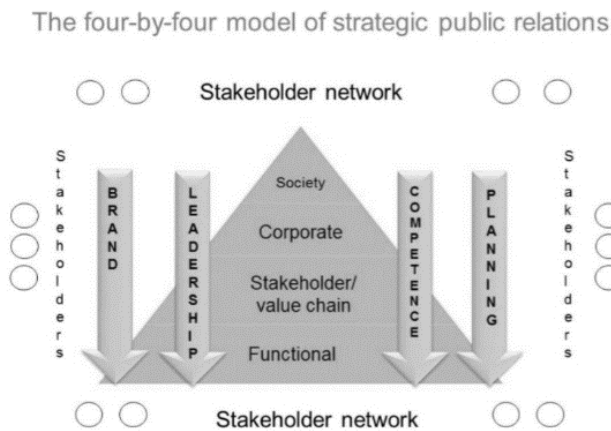
2. 2 The dynamic process of institutional communication

Modelling communication has been both a scholar and managerial attempt to comprehend a process that is by nature an articulated phenomenon, hard to contain and control in tight frames. To this end, several communication theoretical frameworks and models have been designed by researchers and practitioners from public relations, organizational, strategic and corporate communication. The point of departure seems to be that the nature of institutional communication is procedural and scholars like Shannon and

Weaver, Berlo, Lasswell, Schramm, Barnlund (cfr. (Fiske, 2010) have attempted to describe the communication flow from sender to receiver by means of channels that would allow encoding and decoding of the message. Practically all these process models portrayed a lineal and mono-directional communication, with few interactional and bidirectional trials. These lineal models deserve a symbolic mention as stepping stones into modern studies of the communication phenomenon. Each approach seeks to illustrate elements of communication processes, structures and different communication contexts (Craig & Muller, 2007).

The dominant paradigm in most communication management models relies on the systems theory, with the pre-eminence of the Excellence Model (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). Further elaboration on widely used four models advocating symmetric and asymmetric public relations has resulted in new designs like the four-by-four model of strategic public relations (Grunig & Dozier, 2003); (Gregory & Willis, 2013).

Figure 6. Gregory-Willis 4-by-4 model of strategic PR



(Gregory & Willis, 2013)

True leadership and professionalism in public relations are emphasized to match the increasing demands of competences, skills and strategic roles expected from public relations experts. As the four-by-four model authors assert organizational communicators can undertake their role much more effectively when they have a fuller understanding of what the brand means to the key organizational stakeholders (Gregory & Willis, 2013).

The dissertation author shares the emphasis placed on internal communication because the more engaged internal stakeholders (employees and students, in

the case of a university), the more active advocates and greater the communicative and reputational impact (Gregory & Willis, 2013).

In order to adjust this model to the institutional context of a university, the dissertation author would replace '*brand*' (the first pillar) by *mission*, which is considered as the foundation for all institutional decisions that requires the full acknowledgement and endorsement of key stakeholders, starting from the internal ones: academia, administration staff (obviously including here the governance body) and students.

Van Ruler and Korver (Ruler, 2016) affirm that notwithstanding the proven lack of efficiency of lineal models for the reality of the 21st century, they are still widely used by public relations practitioners. The thesis author shares the preference for conduit circular models of the communication process as a better match for the dynamic nature of contemporary individual and institutional communication needs.

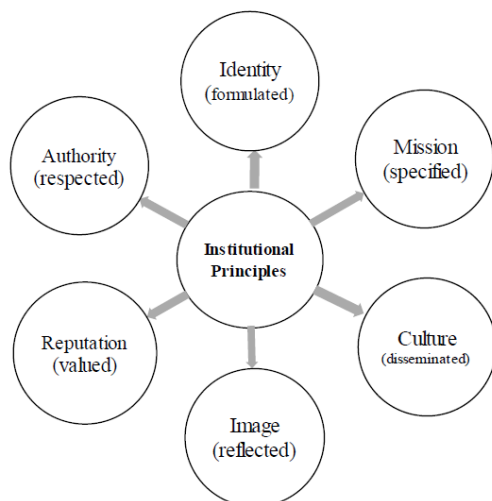
Communication in an institution can be considered a circular process of human activities that starts with the formulation of institutional identity and 'returns' to the starting point after self-evaluation, in order to make the pertaining adjustments to improve institutional communicative performance. Improvements require implementing without altering the institutional principles that ought to inspire all institutional actions. The dissertation author endorses Nieto's (2006) conceptualization of institutional communication process in as much as it constitutes the frame of reference for communication management decisions, which should always be inspired by and manifested in the guiding institutional principles along the spinning wheel of the process.

As Nieto (Nieto-Tamargo, 2006) explains, institutional communication implies a structure and an organized activity aimed at establishing relations between offer and demands of informative services and products that should disseminate institutional identity and mission. Relations are at the core of the whole institutional communication process, which is 'born' precisely out of relations amongst persons who offer and request informative contents about the institution.

The starting point of the proposed circular process is identity, understood as the explicit formulation of institutional principles, as specified and pinpointed in the institutional mission, which can only be effectively transmitted and achieved through the creation of an institutional culture, and ultimately reflected in the institutional image. Reputation results from the positive or negative assessment or evaluation that addressees make and hold regarding the 'enacted' institutional principles. When the institution enjoys a good

reputation, it can gain a certain authority and become a respected source of opinion and expertise (Nieto-Tamargo, 2006).

Figure 7. Nieto's institutional communication process



Adapted from source: (Nieto-Tamargo, 2006)

The starting point of the proposed circular process is identity, understood as the explicit formulation of institutional principles, as specified and pinpointed in the institutional mission, which can only be effectively transmitted and achieved through the creation of an institutional culture, and ultimately reflected in the institutional image. Reputation results from the positive or negative assessment or evaluation that addressees make and hold regarding the 'enacted' institutional principles. When the institution enjoys a good reputation, it can gain a certain authority and become a respected source of opinion and expertise (Nieto-Tamargo, 2006).

As the institutional communication process turns around its axis, it goes through different phases that display a) conceptual manifestations: identity, mission, culture, reputation, authority; and b) operative manifestations, crystallization in formulated, specified, disseminated, reflected, valued and respected principles.

The communication process in an institution has to do with intangibility and thus, it is hardly measurable by quantifiable means. However, it can and must be thoroughly evaluated in order to know and understand how communication flows ad intra and ad extra the institution. In order to evaluate the structure and activity of an institution, it is necessary to know the identity and the

mission the institution has set to fulfil, as well as the culture it disseminates and the image reflected in the market whether the institution operates.

Mora (J M Mora, 2009) claims that institutional communication is successful when the forged identity and the perceived image coincide. With this underlying criterion, communication management in an institution should not consist in promoting an image that bears little or no connection with reality. In a strict sense, an organization does not “manufacture” its public image, but rather earns it, as long as the image is a true reflection of the institutional reality. Scheinsohn (2010) supports this position asserting that knowledge of one’s identity is the starting point for institutional communication purposeful management that should raise awareness of essential differentiation features in the eyes of key institutional publics. Therefore, the perspective for all communication planning should be the clear understanding that whatever is said or done on behalf of the institution should reveal an exclusive and identifiable personality, rooted in the institutional reality that comprises the mission, vision, objectives and institutional body.

Going back to Nieto’s circular model, comprehending the distinctive aspects and manifestations of the whole institutional communication dynamic process contributes to managing the itinerary that takes the whole institutional performance along the circuit from identity to reputation (Nieto-Tamargo, 2006).

The dissertation author fully adheres this position and asserts that the institutional reality should be assessed in the light of the attained objectives and the involvement of key stakeholders, their attitudes, perceptions and potential decisions along the different phases of the process. In other words, managing the more or less active participation of institutional stakeholders in fulfilling the mission, disseminating the culture, reflecting the image and affecting the reputation that will contribute to enhancing the authority of the institution as a referent (authority). Unarguably, each of these stakeholders can add or deduct value to this process, as stakeholders are the ‘theoretical owners’ of the intangible added value that communicative and informative relations can contribute to the institution.

This added value can become the perceived quality resulting from purposefully communicated excellence. Otherwise, if institutional communication management remains at a mere tactical level, it can hardly unleash its transformational capacity to deploy the institutional mission and integrate stakeholders in the common pursue of institutional goals.

Table 14. Theoretical models of communication in organizations

Approach	Model	Main contribution
Authors		
Organizational communication (Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001) (McPhee & Zaug, 2009)	The CCO model	Communication as constitutive of organizations
Corporate communication (Steyn, 2007) (Vercic & Zeffass, 2016) (C. B. . and F. C. J. Van Riel, 2007) (Balmer, Fukukawa, & Gray, 2007)	Excellent Communication framework Corporate Communications Mix Total Corporate Communications Mix	Stakeholder approach to public relations Organizational aims through strategic communicative relations Communicative strategies oriented to reputation construction and maintenance Reputation management: task of communication department Identification of suitable channels for each public
Corporate communication (corporate branding) (Capriotti, 2009)	Corporate identity communication 3-stage corporate communication plan	Communication inquiry plan based on reception and emission auditing for planning, implementation and evaluation
Institutional communication (Villafañe, 2004) (Nieto-Tamargo, 2006)	The 4-action model for communication of reputational capital Institutional Communication Process Model	Key elements: identity, image and reputation Dynamic process, as circular itinerary from identity to image Reputational capital
Public relations (Long & Hazelton, 1987) (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) (Grunig & Dozier, 2003) (Grunig & Grunig, 2008) (Gregory & Willis, 2013)	Public Relations Process The Four models of PR Excellence model: symmetric bidirectional Four-by four model of strategic public relations	Specific environment to configure communication processes -Map of emerging relations from communication process -5 inter-relational dimensions: legal/political, social, economic, technologic, competitive. Stakeholder theory of public relations Organizational efficacy: relations quality: bidirectional dialogue Contingency principle: continuum of persuasive tactics (asymmetric) and dialogic (symmetric) communication Public relations leadership roles and competences
Strategic communication (Scheinsohn, 2010) (J. Costa, 2001) Integrated communication(s) (Lars Thøger Christensen et al., 2009)	Strategic communication Global communication DirCom paradigm	Communication decisions at executive level Integration/alignment through structure: Communication department Social drivers of integration: corporate credibility and transparency
Public sector communication (Gregory, 2006) (Sanders, Crespo, & Holtz-Bacha, 2011); (Canel & Sanders, 2010)		Quality management theory applied to communication Communicators skills and abilities Communicative environment analysis Planning methods, channels Assessment and monitoring Communication programme management

Own elaboration

2.3 From communication strategy to strategic communication management
 “Human communication is as old as humankind, but theorizing about strategic communication is rather new” (van Ruler, 2018). Communication management is unarguably a strategic management function, and even if this fact has for long been taken for granted, it has not been addressed directly by scholarly research till recent times. Strategic communication is an emerging area of study in the communication and management sciences and has recently been defined as the study of how organizations use communication purposefully to fulfil their overall missions (Heide et al., 2018).

Table 15: Strategic communication: definitions and scope

Author	Definitions and scope
(Scheinsohn, 1998); (Scheinsohn, 2010)	An ethical frame, a set of principles and an integrated system of solutions for the boarding, the management and the direction of communication issues. A management method destined to articulate in a general strategy all the tactical communications.
(Grunig, 2006)	“Bridging activity” between organizations that should be institutionalized.
(Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007)	“The purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission”.
(Garrido & Javier, 2004);(Barquero & José, 2005)	All the communication of a business enterprise as an entity
(P. A. Argenti, Howell, & Beck, 2005)	“aligned with the company’s overall strategy, to enhance its strategic positioning”
(Werder et al., 2018)	“the purposeful use of communication by an organization or other entity to engage in conversation of strategic significance to its goals”
(Heide et al., 2018)	“Communication that contributes to the goal attainment of the organization” “the study of how organizations use communication purposefully to fulfil their overall missions”
(van Ruler, 2018)	“The management of the amalgam of processes of communication in the context of continuous strategy development”

Own elaboration

According to several scholars, this expanding conceptual scope gained conceptual momentum out the decreasing popularity of other two communication management practices: public relations and marketing communications (Werder et al., 2018). These same scholars attribute

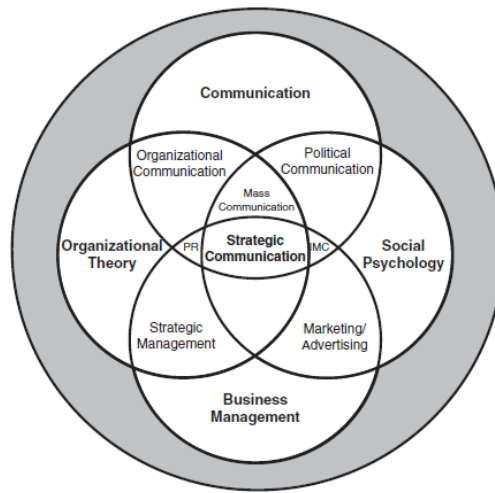
geographical and cultural reasons explaining the less favourable translation of public relations in other languages (Slavic and Lithuanian amongst them) denoting a more limited spectrum of communication management amongst the reasons for the preference of corporate communication and strategic communication in the business and non-profit sectors respectively. The dissertation author adheres to this position once again claiming the desirable detachment from the term ‘corporate’ when referring to communication in HEIs. Several definitions of strategic communication have surfaced, many of which can be seen in table 15.

Despite some arguments regarding the terms *strategic* and *corporate* as evoking a one-way and top down approach to communication (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007), the tendencies of late 20th and early 21st centuries focus on the increasingly vital role of strategic communication management, especially on the study of intangible values. The proof lies in the exponential increase in classifications, criteria sets and rankings to measure brand competitiveness, corporate reputation and communication performance (Sala-i-Martin & Schwab, 2004), such as the European Communication Monitor (Zerfass, Moreno, Tench, Verčič, & Verhoeven, 2007) Fombrun’s reputation quotient (C. J. Fombrun, Gardberg, & Sever, 2013); *Monitor Empresarial de Reputación Corporativa* (MERCO – Corporate Reputation Monitor), etc.

The 21st scholarly endeavours of proliferous academics and practitioners in the field of corporate communication, public relations, organizational studies and strategic management keep shuffling questions such as: how does communication strategy integrate into the overall institutional strategy? Which are the implications, requirements, contributions and expectations of this conjoint strategic design? These are just a few enumerated top priorities in which soft and hard competences, resources, skills and assets need to blend. This implies managing a process that involves a set of communicative actions usually resulting from the application of theoretical and managerial models that combine insights from corporate communication, public relations and strategic management (Matilla, 2012).

Werder et al. (2018) advocate the increasingly accepted interdisciplinary paradigm of strategic communication and its evolving scholarly definition, which should naturally lead the integration of all communications taking place in the real life of organizations.

Figure 8. Interdisciplinarity of strategic communication



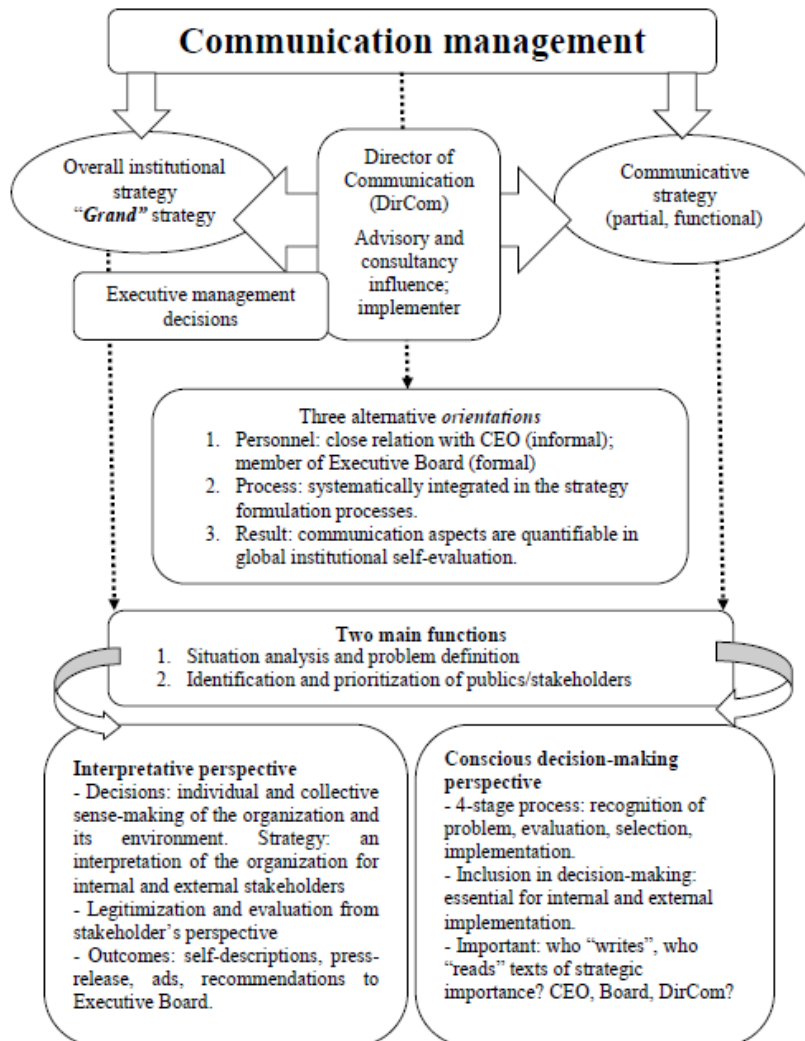
From source (Werder et al., 2018)

For Van Ruler (van Ruler, 2018), communication is the pillar of strategic communication, whereas strategy would be the context in which strategic communication takes place, by this meaning that communication must be aligned with modern approaches to strategy development. Another conceptual paper provides a thorough explanation on how communication relates to strategy, not only because communication management *is* a strategic process, but also because the neuralgic function of communication in any organization must be *strategically* managed (Raupp & Hoffjann, 2012).

According to Botan (Botan, 2006) there are two coexisting and interrelated strategies: the “grand” strategy and the “communication-related” strategy. The former is related to policy-level decisions affecting goals, ethics, relationships with publics, whereas campaign-level strategies imply decision-making to manoeuvre and allocate resources with view to the implementation of the grand strategy. What Botan (Botan, 2006) calls grand strategy corresponds with corporate strategy (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2007);(J Cornelissen, 2008). These scholars would refer to Botan’s strategies as tactics, communicative functional or partial strategies. The author of this dissertation asserts that as long as organizations sustain an intransigent grand strategy, the role of communication management will be rather limited to be a mere implementer of strategies, rather than taking part in the executive board decision-making processes, where strategies are usually born.

The relevant conclusion is that the grand strategy (Botan, 2006) influences not only the content of communication-related strategy, but the overall communication management. Reversely, as long as organizations have a cooperative and an integrative grand strategy, communication management can exert advisory and consulting influence on overall corporate matters. This and other scholarly contributions have been blended into the conceptualization of strategy in communication management, as shown in figure 9.

Figure 9. Conceptualization of strategy in communication management



Own elaboration from multiple sources: (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2007); (Butschi & Steyn, 2006); (Botan, 2006); (Raupp & Hoffjann, 2012); (J Cornelissen, 2008).

For more than a decade, the European Communication Monitor (Zerfaß, Tench, Verčič, Verhoeven, & Moreno, 2014), has advocated the fundamental and undeniable link between business strategy (by extension applicable to overall institutional/corporate strategy) and communication. However, it is a challenge for communication professionals to prove the tangible worth of the added value that excellent communication management brings to the whole organization.

The dissertation author claims that organizations are required to wage all tangible and intangible assets to face the “strategic inflection point” (Grove, 1996), because strategic institutional communication starts with the strategic decision of having permanent expert advice from within the institution: such crucial function should not be delegated to third parties.

Institutional communication must be strategically managed; yet the question remains open: how to structure and organize the so-much advocated alignment and integration? Organizations most often resort to one of the three patterns of communication department described in table 16.

Table 16: Communication department structures

Criteria	By functions	By tasks	By projects
Areas or divisions of workload	Marketing, corporate affairs; community, internal communications, media	Media and on-line Events Sponsorship Publications Design and print	Short or long-term project teams that combine functions and tasks
Advantages	Expertise of people in charge and packing of all tasks related to the area of specialization	Tasks demanding specific skills, knowledge and experience entrusted to groups/individuals	Opportunity to learn skills and knowledge from other team members Variety of work
Disadvantages	Inflexibility of resources hinder operation in other areas Risk of ‘siloe specialists’ More efforts to coordinate groups Duplicated communication with internal and external stakeholders	Technical expertise overrides focus on strategy Risk of ‘siloe specialists’ Harder to coordinate	Difficulty to keep coherent, overall picture of the organization, when teams formed to solve needs of particular departments Other needs may remain unspotted

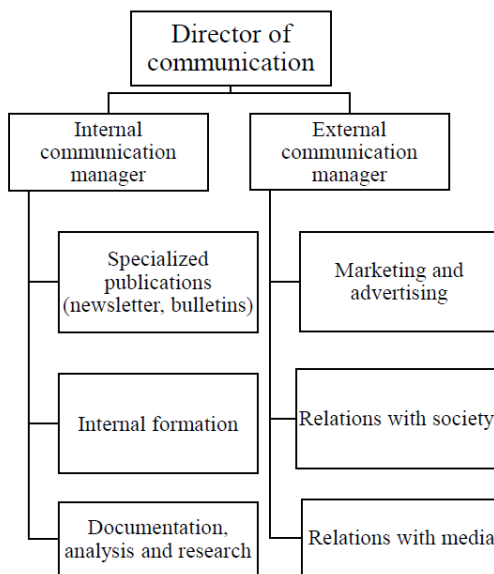
Based on sources: (Gregory, 2013); (Ramírez, 2014)

Naturally, most organizations and institutions entrust the communication management function to a team and sometimes allocate it in the organizational structure as communication departments according to their institutional needs,

goals and available resources. Meanwhile, others affirm that communication departments as well as any other functional unity in the organization compete for power and resources, so it is only natural that in order to succeed, each department must constantly improve quality and demonstrate their exigency (Joep Cornelissen, Van Bekkum, & Van Ruler, 2006).

Standard organigrams of communication departments undertake basic functions distributed amongst the team members, led by a senior communicator with full membership in the highest governing body of the institution. The leader of the communication department must be endowed with a multi-disciplinary personality and a wide range of competences and traits. The internal organization of the communication department should naturally match the size, structure and management style of the whole institution. Whatever the organizational design or structure chosen, executive management should grant communicators plenty of access to senior management and all other organizational levels.

Figure 10. Standard internal organization of a communication department

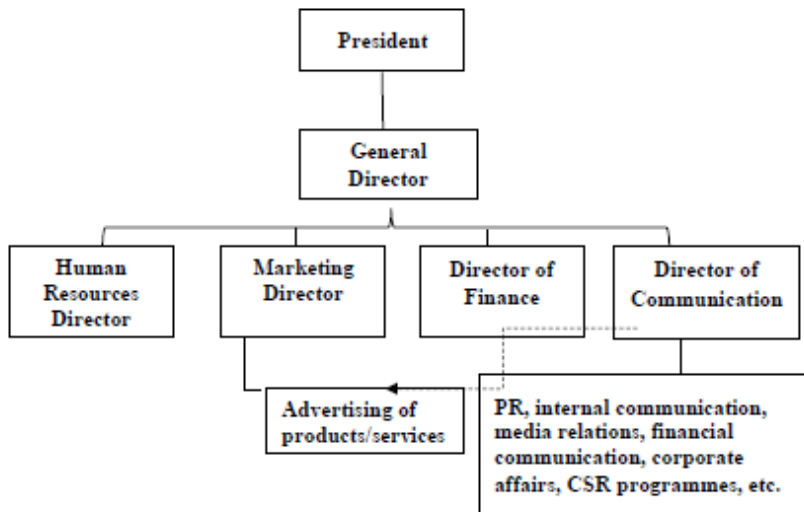


Adapted from source (Ramírez, 2014)

Highly qualified communicators can prove that communication constitutes organizations, as long as they are integrated into the strategic management of their organizations.

Excellence in communication management requires expertise for strategic planning, outlining communication programme alternatives and guiding senior management through a logical problem-solving process. In brief, to make communication policy decisions with full responsibility and accountability. Whichever the pattern, communicators will ‘ideally’ gain full membership in the dominant coalitions either by the formal position (organizational chart) or informally (expertise) (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 2013). Only then, will senior communicators be given the chance to play the strategic role of “boundary spanner, environmental scanner, and an “early warning system” (Gregory, 2013); (Ramírez, 2014); Dozier et al., 2013) to keep the dominant coalition well informed about what publics know and feel, and their probable reaction to the strategic decisions under consideration. The author asserts that, notwithstanding the proven expertise of the whole communication department staff, even such foundation of excellence is not enough to guarantee excellence. Internal partnerships with those empowered to set directions must be strategically forged and maintained. Figure 11 shows the desirable organigram of an institution including a consolidated structural until entrusted with the management of the communication function.

Figure 11. Organigrams of an institution *after* consolidation of a communication department



Own elaboration

Following the recent trends for an all-embracing understanding of the practice of strategic communication, the dissertation author believes in the need to make the best use of the formal and informal interactions amongst organizational members so that “the overall ability of an organization to act and communicate strategically” is more fruitful (Heide et al., 2018).

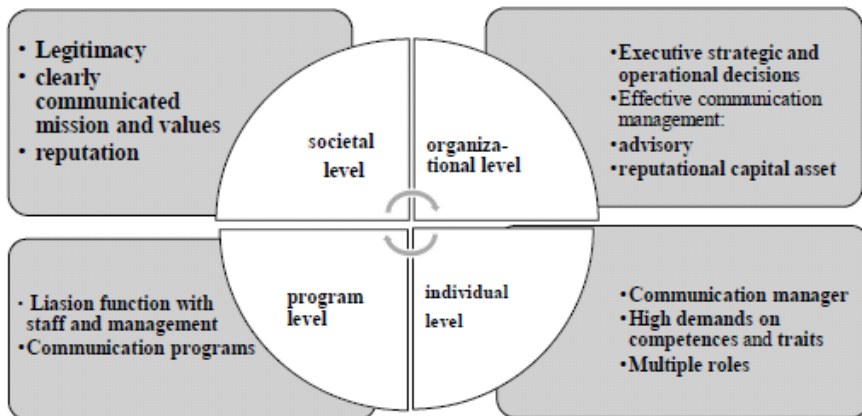
As Manucci (Manucci, 2009) states, strategies begin where certainties end and even more so in the 21st century characterized by the growing complexity of the contemporary organizations. In order to distinguish strategic communication from non-strategic one, a superficial explanation would lead to stating that non-strategic is simply tactical and operational. In contrast, strategic communication would encompass “all purposive communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity” (Werder et al., 2018). These scholars emphasize the subjective dimension of the suggested substantiality or strategic significance that top managers may attach to certain issues, thus making them a priority, because they consider them as strategic. The objective dimension would be defined by the real impact that certain issues have on the current situation and future development of the organization. Thus, strategic management and communication management must blend so that communication accompanies and supports both dimensions of what is strategic and significant for the organization.

In a recent academic discussion, Zerfass et al. (Zerfass et al., 2018) elaborate on the drivers of strategic complexity and the communication role first as a process, second as communicative resources (established media to reach significant publics) and third as intangible assets (reputation, trust, image, etc). Communication in this triple form can and ought to be managed in a way that helps entities to cope with the growing internal and external drivers of complexity, such as resources, competition, environment, risks, innovation, etc. Strategic communication management comes into play as the attempt to manage the communication of strategic significance mentioned before, supporting the overall strategic management of the organization with specific communicative activities and resources that are of substantial relevance for the organization. The natural decision would be entrusting the management of these communication functions to communication departments or similar structural unit in the organization, though in some institutions CEOs or top managers may opt for a more hands-on approach to managing strategic communication. The degree of institutionalization of strategic communication management may vary from one organization to another, depending on the subjective and objective significance attributed to certain issues with more

impact on the further development of the organization, as well as on the impact of the mentioned drivers of strategic complexity. Communication is underlying and latent at every stage of strategy creation, presentation, implementation and revision; nevertheless, this may not be enough to make an organization succeed in their strategic efforts as long as communication is not strategically managed. Drivers of communication excellence and tools for strategic communication management are gaining their space in the research agenda as the need to take integrated communication more seriously grows, even though how and what to integrate is yet not so clearly defined. What is of strategic significance for one organization may be less relevant for another; similarly, communication may have already gained a superior position and power with the subsequent institutionalization and visibility in the organizational structure while in other entities it may still be struggling its way to the top management for the allocation of badly needed resources.

The dissertation author shares Gregory's view (Gregory, 2013) that notwithstanding the organizational structure, the communication function should be positioned "where the most senior communicator is "wired in" the organization to ensure a holistic overview of the organization and of the broader operational context. The vital role of communication as enabler and constitutive in an organization has been widely discussed by several authors (McPhee & Zaug, 2009);(Putnam & Nicotera, 2009); (Zerfass, 2008).

Figure 12. The 4-level model of communication management



Elaborated from source: Gregory and White (Gregory, A. White, 2009)

To this, Gregory (Gregory, 2013), adds that communication is a powerful transformer, the DNA of the organization where all vital data is contained and

administered. Communication being embedded in the processes, systems, structure and physical assets of the institution clearly indicates the core transformational force gained or granted to communication: from corporate messenger to a key core corporate agent who takes part in making well-informed decisions seen through communication lenses.

Gregory (Gregory, 2013) emphasizes that the strategic process of communication management requires rigorous and integral examination to work successfully at four levels, namely: societal, organizational, programme and individual. The communication function goes beyond its role of integrator to become a transformer of ways of thinking and operating. This implies liaising with other functions and executives, elaborating communication programs for research, design, implementation and evaluation.

Table 17: Communication management roles and levels

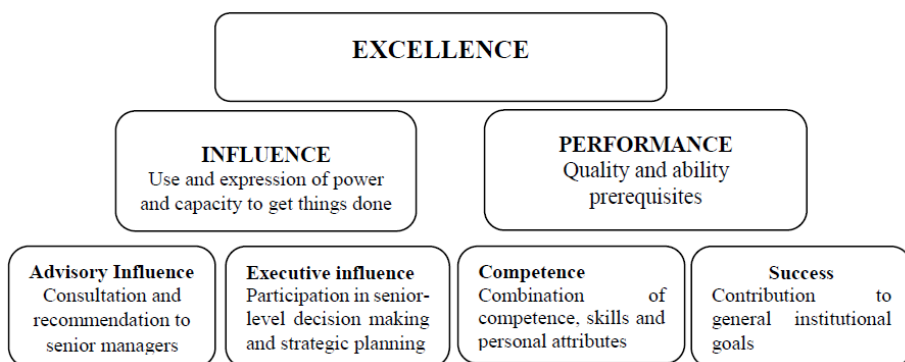
Roles	ENABLER	TRANSFORMER
Levels		
Societal	Assisting in promotion of identity, dialogue with relevant stakeholders CSR programs	Clarifying mission and values Bringing in contextual intelligence Generating support or realignment with changing societal/ stakeholders expectations
Organizational	Ensuring effective means of relaying decisions inside and outside the organization	Assisting executive management in making properly informed decisions with multiple stakeholders' view
Program	Educative work: identifying key members and functions to build communicative expertise within the organization	Deep effect on creating culture : All members: <i>co-creators</i> of organizational DNA Force for innovation and unity
Individual	CEO/executive management acknowledges key role of communication management Search for CCO	CCO as guardian of reputation <i>Communicating to form and transform</i> , not only to inform

Own elaboration based on sources: (Gregory, 2013); (Gregory, A. White, 2009)

The advisory role of senior communicators is vital whenever executive management needs briefing on the foreseeable impact of their decisions on stakeholder communities. Legitimacy gained on the basis of what and how the

institution has performed can translate into a license for further operation. Finally, clearly communicated mission and values prove the reliability of released messages. Then society's judgement may result in a positive reputation that matches the actual excellence an institution has achieved. Verčič and Zerfass (2016) blend insights from management theory and public relations to define excellence in organizations as a basis to create the Communication Excellence Framework (CEF). Their main purpose is to identify distinctive attributes of outperforming communication departments that help them link communication to organizational goals. Amongst the required characteristics for excellent communication departments, the CEF authors mention influence (advisory and executive) and performance (quality and capability).

Figure 13. The Comparative Excellence Framework (CEF) for communication management



Adapted from source (Vercic & Zerfass, 2016)

If the communication manager and his/her department are duly qualified and able to perform the tasks entrusted to them by executive management, the communication department will gain a strong internal standing, a certain professional authority based on their own proven expertise. Thus, top management and the staff will not only listen and accept advice, but also request support and engagement of institutional communicators in transversal projects with other departments. Excellence models have a dual purpose: to guide organizations toward excellence and to enable assessment of their performance (Vercic & Zerfass, 2016);(Dahlgaard, Chen, Jang, Banegas, & Dahlgaard-Park, 2013).

In order to serve both purposes, the CEF aspires to be a relatively easy tool for communication practitioners in their crucial task of monitoring the quality

of departments that strive for excellence in communication management. It can also be a guide for the development of training and education in communication management, as it highlights the required knowledge and experience (six characteristics) that communication professionals should have to form excellent communication departments.

Table 18. The Six Characteristics of Excellent Communication Departments

Characteristics of excellent communications departments	
1. Staffing	Experienced practitioners at higher levels of the hierarchy with a stronger focus on institutional goals and strategy.
2. Alignment	Chief Communication Officer or DirCom is member of the executive board and/or reports directly to the CEO
3. Listening	Developed organizational listening structures and techniques that pledge openness to stakeholders
4. Collaboration	Integration and intensive collaboration with the executive board and other departments.
5. Measurement	Research to assess the value they add with their activities: monitoring and evaluation of environments and stakeholders
6. Strategy	Strategies designed for overall communication, messaging and listening.

Own elaboration based on source: (Vercic & Zerfass, 2016)

These authors claim that current theories of public relations advocate the double expectations set on communication management, entrusted with inbound and outbound communication flows, monitoring issues and publics, to build relationships, convey messages to relevant stakeholders and influence their mindsets and behaviour. This dual role of excellent communication management should contribute to institutional decision-making and institutional strategies as a reply to the questions raised in 1985 by the International Association of Business Communicators: what are the characteristics of an excellent communication department, and how does excellent public relations make an organization more effective, and how much is that contribution worth economically?” (cfr. (Grunig & White, 1992).

As a strategic means to tackle the legitimate and growing demand for fluent communication amongst institutional stakeholders and publics, an *ad hoc* department in the organizational structure has been included in most Western organizations under the expert leadership of a Chief Communication Officer or Director of communication (Matilla, 2012); (J. Costa & Com, 2005); (Martín Martín, 2010); (R. A. P. González, 2008). Several other authors firmly believe that the communication management unit must be a department

directly reporting to the Presidency and general director (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b);(Nieto-Tamargo, 2006), (Gregory & Willis, 2013);(Dozier et al., 2013);(J. Costa & Com, 2005); (Villafañe, 2005);(Mercado Ramírez & Alvira Domínguez, 2016);(Molina, Noguero, & Sánchez, 2013). The Director of communication must constantly make decisions about the institutional public image, reputation, brand, etc. Thus, close coordination with the highest governing body is essential to know what and why this or that is going on at each moment in the institution and then decide what and how to transmit the content with the adequate institutional discourse, based on comprehensive and relevant information.

The dissertation author believes that in order to exert the transformational force that leads the whole institution to the desired excellence, the communication function must be given a strategic place. This view is endorsed by Excellence study authors advocating the appointment of a senior communicator (Chief Communication Officer, Communication Manager or Director of Communication) who should report directly to the CEO and thus become part of the dominant coalition taking part in decision making (Dozier et al., 2013). For the dissertation author, the degree of autonomy granted to the communication department is another relevant condition for communication to be transformational. The communication department can strategically integrate all internal and external communicative functions and efforts (J Cornelissen, 2008); (C. B. . and F. C. J. Van Riel, 2007)(C. B. . and F. C. J. Van Riel, 2007), and facilitate the transversal use of shared channels, tools, social media, networks, etc. To sum up, the dissertation author asserts that institutional communication management becomes strategic when it is integrated into governance and management processes, aligned with the institutional overall strategy that is born of and driven by its institutional mission. Thus, two main prerequisites must converge in order to count on communication as a key player in the attainment of institutional goals: first, that the highest governance body really consider communication as strategic and second, that strategic institutional communication is actually strategically managed.

2.4 A conceptual model for strategic institutional communication management for institutional excellence

Strategic communication entails first and foremost taking into account a) the mission and identity of the institution b) the publics with whom the institution

must communicate; c) the current context where communication occurs d) the objectives the institutions sets to attain; e) the strategies, means and resources to achieve institutional goals and societal demands.

Strategic communication in universities must accept urgent challenges: the management of intangibles and the subsequent need of *ad hoc* qualification of governance body members; empowerment of communication departments through the appointment of a qualified director with governance right; joint task of the highest executive board together with the communication department to involve the whole organization in assuming the institutional identity, innovating to improve institutional performance towards excellence. The researcher asserts that only by tackling these issues will excellence in communication management prove its contribution to make the achieved excellence visible and audible. If excellence is perceived and valued by key stakeholders, the institution should ensure that this perception is not only justified, but also strategically, widely and timely communicated. Every single member of the organization affects and is affected by intangibles as well as tangible issues. Naturally, executive managers delegate the direct management of tangible issues to experts or appointed managers of specific areas. Similarly, the executive board or highest executive authority in an institution should admit the need of an expert department capable of managing institutional communication issues.

Whatever the university organizational structure and the internal distribution of functions, tasks and responsibilities within the unit entrusted with the institutional communication management, the contribution of communication departments to the cultivation of university excellence pivots around two essential axis: excellence in the performance of specific communication-related activities and excellence in executive managerial actions beyond the internal organization of the communication department. This implies contributing a communicative perspective to decision making in all spheres. In order to achieve excellence in communication management, the institution needs an excellent department led by an excellence-oriented mission-savvy director, with strategic vision of the whole institution and team-work vision to manage his/her department.

A communication department in a university can and ought to undertake the strategic role of managing mission-driven, strategic and all-embracing institutional communication as their main contribution to the whole institution. In order to fulfil their task excellently, the institutional communication department requires a vantage point that can be granted by the

direct line of command with the highest governance body: the rectorate or rector's office.

A university that seeks excellence at all levels of performance should realize the importance of having a specialized department of communication that is also excellence-oriented and endowed with the discussed characteristics of excellent communications departments (Vercic & Zeffass, 2016). A further step is acknowledging the change that may be brought to all institutional members if the crucial communication function is placed at the highest level of organizational management. Scattered and dependant communicative services can be gathered under the integrating 'umbrella' of the communication department. An excellent communication department placed at the highest level of management in the university organizational chart is more likely to gain respect and authority for transversal work, as it would no longer execute downward orders, but cooperate at executive level in the attainment of strategic institutional aims.

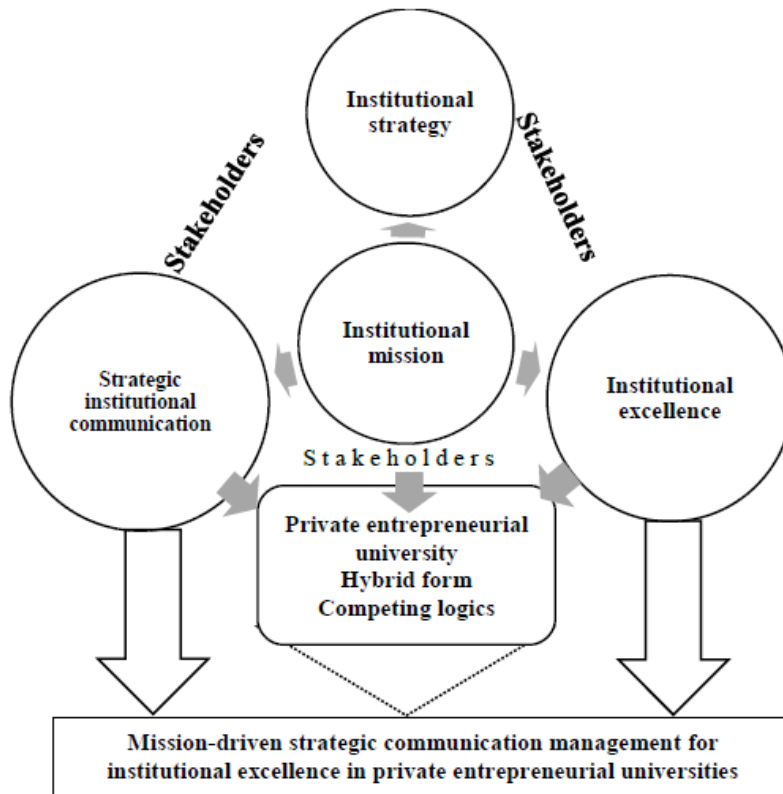
Most scholars interested in defining the scope of the interdisciplinary field of strategic communication have felt compelled to depart from the seminal multi-authored article where one of the essential features of strategic communication is its purposefulness and instrumentality in making an organization fulfil its mission by means of communication (Hallahan et al., 2007). Ten years later, Van Ruler (2018) emulates this claim: stating that "when communication helps to move the organization's mission forward, we may speak of strategic communication" and goes further to say that only communication that has the intention to advance an organization's mission can be defined as strategic (van Ruler, 2018, p. 372).

Given all these premises and contributions, the author of this dissertation has elaborated a working definition of strategic institutional communication, which serves as the basis to develop a conceptual model for the strategic management of the mission-driven institutional communication in entrepreneurial universities aimed at institutional excellence.

Thus, in this dissertation strategic institutional communication is conceived as a mission-driven dynamic process managed by an *ad-hoc* specialized institutional 'unit' (Communication Department) led by a communication executive/DirCom through whom the communication function is fully integrated into the general institutional strategy, by means of a facilitating organizational design. This strategic process is under continuous evaluation, based on research and monitoring to imbue all institutional actions and decisions with a communicative perspective that helps to deploy the

institutional mission, transmit the institutional culture and values and forge an identity in search of institutional excellence. This comprehensive definition leads to conceiving strategic institutional communication in private entrepreneurial universities as mission-driven and oriented to excellence. The conceptual models (figures 14-15) comprise the author's understanding about the key components of communication in a private HEI, where it can be managed strategically in order to contribute to the fulfilment of the institutional mission that declares a commitment to pursue the triple excellence expected from the triple mission of contemporary entrepreneurial universities.

Figure 14. Conceptual model for mission-driven strategic institutional communication management in private entrepreneurial universities



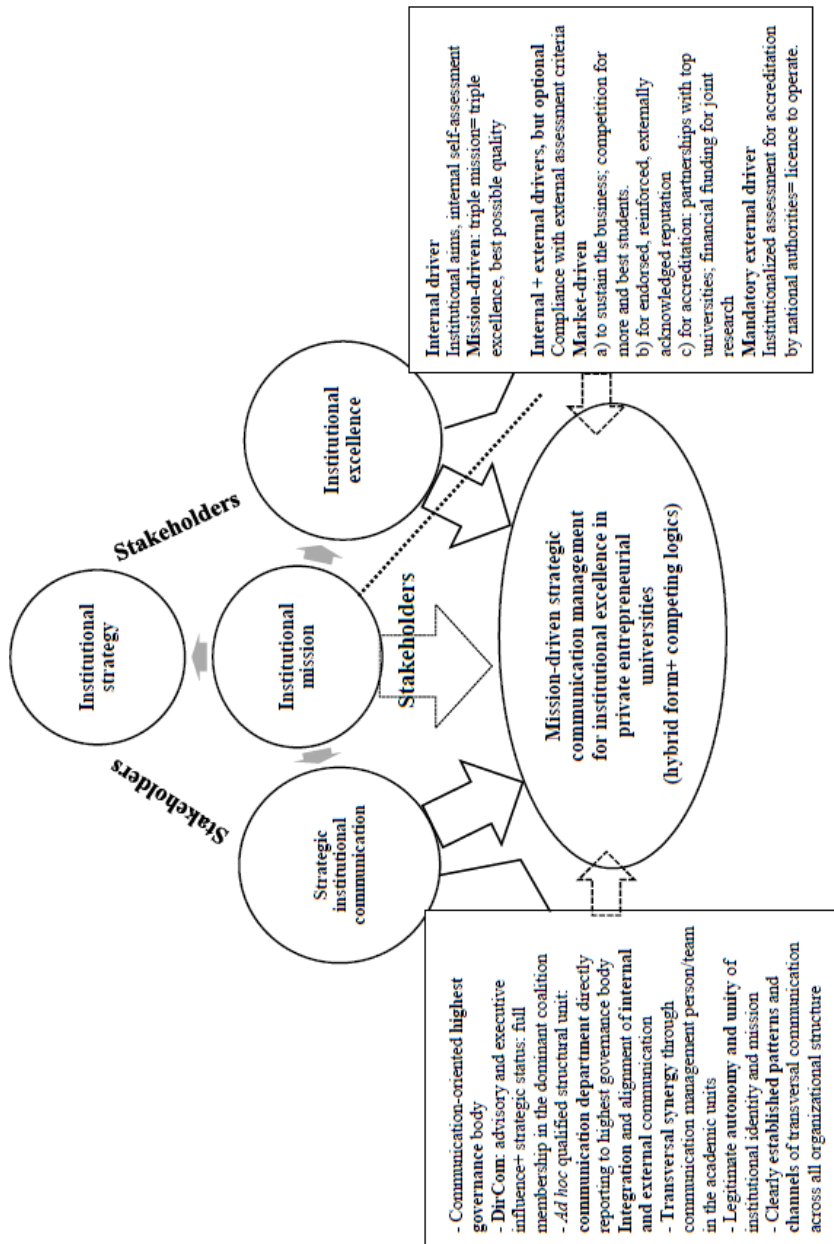
Own elaboration

More detailed descriptors of institutional excellence and strategic institutional communication in private entrepreneurial universities can be added to the previous model (see figure 15). The review of empirical findings of other authors will serve to provide a wholesome model for the empirical research proposed in part III of this dissertation.

Insights of these selected authors have been combined and included in the model:

- Institutional strategy that implies communication as an essential component: (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2007); (Butschi & Steyn, 2006); (Botan, 2006); (Raupp & Hoffjann, 2012); (J Cornelissen, 2008); (Zerfaß et al., 2014),
- Institutional mission and competing logics in hybrid forms: (Pache & Santos, 2013); (Guerrero et al., 2016); (Smets et al., 2015); (Skelcher & Smith, 2015).
- Institutional excellence, applied to HEI (Brusoni et al., 2014); (Rostan & Vaira, 2011b); (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b); (Salmi, 2009); (Altbach et al., 2009); HEI excellence related to mission: (Rodríguez-Ponce & Pedraja-Rejas, 2015); (Nixon, 2013).
- Internal drivers of institutional excellence in HEI: (Behari-Leak & McKenna, 2017); (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b); (Nixon, 2013).
- Private and entrepreneurial universities: (Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014); (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014); (Dabic et al., 2015)
- Strategic institutional communication: (Méndez, 2013) (Mora, 2009);
- Communication management unit directly reporting to Highest Governance/Presidency: (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b); (Nieto-Tamargo, 2006), (Gregory & Willis, 2013); (Dozier et al., 2013); (J. Costa & Com, 2005) (Villafañe, 2005); (Mercado Ramírez & Alvira Domínguez, 2016); (Molina et al., 2013).
- Integrated and aligned communication management (C. B. . and F. C. J. Van Riel, 2007); (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2007); ((J Cornelissen, 2008) through strong DirCom/department in the organizational structure (Matilla, 2012); (Scheinsohn, 2010); (Gregory, 2013); (Ramírez, 2014); (Dozier et al., 2013); (Vercic & Zerfass, 2016); (Zerfass et al., 2017).
- Transversal synergy: (Heide et al., 2018); (Zerfass et al., 2018).
- Conciliation and management of competing institutional logics though mission-driven governance: (Cardona & Rey, 2008); with enhanced role of mission-driven strategic communication (Rey, 2011).
- HEI stakeholder identification and prioritization (Mainardes et al., 2010); (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010); (Casablanacas-Segura & Llonch, 2016).

Figure 15. Detailed conceptual model for mission-driven strategic institutional communication management in private entrepreneurial universities



Own elaboration

Concluding remarks of the theoretical part

The competing and co-existing institutional logics of education and ‘the market’ (business sector) have given HEI governance bodies the chance to seek for stability and sustainability, instead of persisting in a fruitless rivalry (Thornton et al., 2015). ‘Pragmatic collaboration’ (Reay & Hinings, 2009) should be sought to manage these competing logics, within each HEI as well as joint efforts with other HEIs, so that HEI academia members maintain their expert roles and have a say in institutional decision making processes and the HE sector as a whole gets support from national/regional authorities, the business sector and wider society. Whether each particular university has taken its chance on this pragmatic collaboration is the proof of their own ability to integrate and adopt the best of both worlds: knowledge generator and disseminator (education), and the practical ‘know-how’ (market/business sector) to implement and strategically manage the communication of cherished knowledge.

The dissertation author believes that the HE market may be amongst those in which small differences in performance can result in significant differences in reward (Frank & Cook, 2010), so the key lies in strategically building a “unique communicative identity” (Bulotaite, 2003) and communicating it excellently. If branding does not bring fast returns on investments, excellence in institutional performance shall ultimately ‘pay off’ in dividends of sustainable reputation through strategic and integral institutional communication.

Managing communication in a university may seem at first sight very similar to managing the usual processes of any other organization: setting goals, allocating resources and assessing results of performance to make the necessary adjustments. Nevertheless, the institutional aims of a university are not only a matter of ‘*corporate choice*’. A university cannot *choose* to teach, research or transfer knowledge, neither can it only offer that to a few ‘chosen’ ones according to groundless and whimsical admission criteria. Despite the highly commoditized HE, the contemporary entrepreneurial university is not a ‘pure institutional form’ of the market/business sector. It is first and foremost an educational institution and, as it has been already discussed, a university has an imperative mission set by its institutional nature, which entails certain external demands to be met in order to maintain legitimacy.

Besides, the long-term commitment with institutional stakeholders differs dramatically from that of any other societal institution and the impact of the choice of HEI is significantly more transcendental, transformational and long-

lasting: it shapes the personality, equips the individual for the upcoming decades of occupational life, it can mark the entrance into a social position and can meaningfully determine the whole future of innumerable stakeholders.

Furthermore, stakeholders in HEIs, especially students, should not be considered ordinary customers who perform a consuming function, but rather long-term members, participants and makers of the institution and as such, contributing to institutional excellence from within, and not only as external evaluators of a service render.

The “sameness” shared by the common institutional mission of all universities must be paradoxically combined with the so badly needed differentiation dictated by the increasingly competitive HE market trends of the last two decades. These transformational waves are rapidly imposing “good” business practices from the private sector, such as performance management, managerialism, entrepreneurialism and new models of financing and governance (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009) into the heavily institutionalized specificity of universities (Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015).

Excellence in communication management is not an item included in the various existing reputation rankings; however, thoroughly examined literature lets the author infer that strategic communication management is an extremely important asset of institutional excellence and an unalienable aid to the university reputation building process, bearing in mind that this can only be done indirectly (Vercic & Zeffass, 2016). If reputation is conceived as a fruit that an institution may harvest when objective and subjective quality has been achieved and perceived, the direct contribution of an excellent communication department should focus on making quality well-known and positively evaluated. In other words, communicating achieved excellence or the institutional achievements in the quest for excellence.

II. Analytical review of previous empirical research findings on the university mission, strategic communication management and institutional excellence

Chapter 1. Review of empirical research related to the university triple mission, stakeholders and institutional assessment

1.1 Empirical research findings on the university threefold mission and declared mission statements

To start this section, it can be said that the level of empirical exploration in the specific area of institutional communication management leaves plenty of

room for further research, since few scientific papers deal with this question as applied exclusively to educational institutions, especially to universities. Some of cited sources from the theoretical framework (part I of this dissertation) are again mentioned as long as they include an empirical testing of the conceptual insights. These and several new scholarly contributions have been selected after a thorough search amongst several digital data banks of stored scientific publications, as well as printed books and published doctoral dissertations. Common key words in the topics or fields of research, as well as affinity in the methodological approach are the main criteria for search, selection and discussion.

Four scientific papers deal with the contemporary university mission and the declaration of this commitment in their mission statements. This question is relevant for the dissertation author's proposed mission-driven strategic institutional communication management, by which each university is expected to abide to its declared institutional mission inside and outside the institutional boundaries, aided by a wholesome and well-managed communication that strives for excellence and seeks to contribute to overall institutional excellence.

Morphew and Hartley assert the ubiquity of higher education mission statements, which undergo the scrutiny of accreditation agencies and are becoming the founding rock for institutional strategy (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). The researchers also argue that these publicly declared institutional commitments with society are often recrafted to meet reportedly stakeholders' changing needs and expectations. Remarkably, in the U.S.A., revising and re-crafting mission statements became a kind of fad in 80 % of colleges by the late 90s (Association of American Colleges Dc, 1994). There is a critical question (Morphew & Hartley, 2006) whether mission statements are "strategic expressions of institutional distinctiveness or organizational window dressings of normative necessities."

The researchers explored the differences in mission statement rhetoric of around 300 institutional documents formally labelled as mission statements in order to assess whether the utility and normative character of mission statements provide focus and direction to institutions, or they are simply formless generalities with little evidence of legitimacy in the eyes of internal and external audiences.

The data gathered allowed authors to consider mission statements a legitimate institutional piece of communication with external audiences of purposefully targeted stakeholders, to whom HEIs address their intended message of

reassurance: “we understand what you want and we’re going to deliver it to you.” The scholars’ textual analysis reveals some common elements that appeared in the first 2-3 sentences and thus can be considered as being of greater institutional importance, equally for public and private universities, such as instilling civic duty in students and granting a broad education through liberal arts. Some contrasting nuances can be detected in terms of public institutions’ emphasis on service to and civic engagement with the region where the universities are located and where the institution contributes to the local and state economy. Meanwhile, private universities would promote students’ personal development and preparation for the wider real world awaiting them after graduation, declaring that the institution enables “men and women of diverse backgrounds to engage and transform the world” and encouraging them to “engage in the intellectual and social challenges of their times” (Morphew & Hartley, 2006).

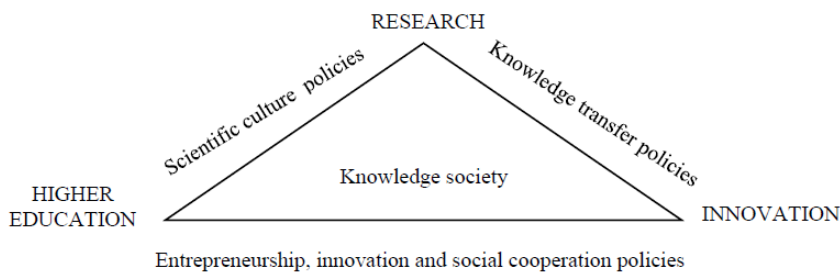
The dissertation author believes that a relevant practical implication from this study can benefit those in charge of constructing or refining mission statements, notwithstanding the suspicion raised by the use and purpose of mission statements. Amongst the main acknowledged limitations, the authors enumerate the data sources as institutions self-presentation. Extrapolation of behaviours from espoused values is not applicable, though the researchers give credit to HEIs as far from engaging in wholesale deception. Targeted site visits were suggested as a way to confirm the degree of congruency between the declared mission and the institutional actual behaviour and performance. Worth mentioning are other findings obtained through a combination of discourse analysis, sequential analysis and content analysis of the mission statements of 110 German HEIs (42 universities and 58 universities of applied sciences) (Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015). Three different interconnected layers in the text construction of mission statements drew the attention of these two scholars, who classified them into image, founding condition and the subject profile. A difference in stability level can be noticed and heavy marketing campaigns can help to replace or change the image with a reformulation of the mission statement, while some modifications are, to some extent, possible in the subject portfolio as well. Noticeably, the founding conditions enjoyed the highest stability of organizational identity construction.

Even though mission statements are meant to highlight and brand a unique image, they also reflect institutional specificities shared by all universities as institutions with historical and social tasks, missions and demands from the

political and social environment. The author of this thesis endorses the conclusions of Kosmützky and Krücken (2015) who assert that mission statements are a significant tool for universities' positioning their distinctiveness within specific niches and competitive groups of some shared similarities. Furthermore, the scholars note that branding and positioning are not exclusively tied to mission statement rhetoric and argue that international, regional, or specific group benchmarking and rankings are common organizational practices. This can obviously be found in institutional communication messages, mostly targeted at external audiences.

The 21st century is witnessing the undisputable commitment of the university as an agent of creation and transfer of knowledge and innovation and, thus accountable for a third task, beyond the traditional ones of teaching and research. Campos and de Navarrete (2007) claim the need to delimitate the notion of this third mission (see figure below) in our era of tangible and intangible assets and knowledge economy (Campos & de Navarrete, 2007). The implementation of this third mission has provoked criticism trends in favour and against the entrepreneurial university as the third mission embodiment, which implies the technological commercialization process of university resources. Under this paradigm, the university gains a new identity as the basic institution for transference of R&D, which paves the way for a strong 'academic capitalism' that draws the university out of its "ivory tower" (Etzkowitz et al, 2000, Schulte, 2004 cited in (Guerrero-Cano et al., 2006).

Figure 16. The concept of university "Third Mission"



Source: adapted from (Campos & de Navarrete, 2007)

In order to be categorized as third mission, entrepreneurial activity of universities must reach out of the academic community, since only then would R&D and innovation be of benefit to external agents. The diversity of university systems in size and approach to research, goals and local/regional

regulations pose a real additional difficulty to establish common indicators to quantify and assess the third mission.

Table 19. Conceptual frame for third mission evaluation and its indicators

Categories	Indicators: number of...	Activities and capabilities
Commercialization of technology	Patents, licences, royalties	Knowledge and skills
Entrepreneurial activities	Spin-offs, employees, invoicing	Facilities Research
Advisory activities	Invited staff	Knowledge and skills
Commercialization of use of university equipment	Income from rent, events, booked facilities, days of granted free use/access	Facilities
Research contracts with non-academic customers	Contracts, fees per contract	Knowledge and skills
Non-academic cooperation in academic research	Publications, organizations, cash value per published paper	Research
Academic, scientific and technical staff mobility	Faculty and non-academic staff membership in organizations	Research
Work internships for students	Students in internships	Teaching
Syllabus adaptation to economic and social needs	ECTS/degree programmes and graduates	Teaching
Learning activities	Income from non-degree courses; institutions	Teaching
Social relations	Faculty members attendance /participation in non-academic conferences	Research
Non-academic dissemination and outreach	Faculty members appearance on radio, TV programmes; mentions of faculty members in media	Research

Source: adapted from (Campos & de Navarrete, 2007)

As there is no mandatory model of indicators, each university may apply its own criteria to establish variables and measurements. The dissertation author agrees with the main contribution of Campos and de Navarrete (2007) regarding the need to agree on a definition and quantification of activities to design an analysis model with measurements and indicators of the third mission accomplishment. Most empirical findings derived from the cross-comparative analysis of the proposed measurements in different countries allowed the researchers to assert the existing consensus in the quantification of current exploitation and commercialization potential of generated university research by communicating the new inventions and obtained patents and start-up licences. Campos and de Navarrete (2007) group third

mission (entrepreneurial) activities into 12 categories, measurable by 65 indicators with 34 guidelines related to data collection, available information sources and costs (Campos & de Navarrete, 2007).

Naturally, the undeniable incentive for best third mission performers to get the highest quantifiable scores is the reward of public financial support allocation, which in its turn is gaining significance in terms of reputation indicator in most European countries. The dissertation author highlights the tremendous contribution of strategically managed institutional internal and external communication to the fulfilment of this third mission and the undeniable benefit for the positive institutional image, as long as there is a competent communication team able to inspire and engage the university stakeholders in long-term relations with the beneficiaries of knowledge transfer projects.

There is another empirical study where the institutional mission design is coupled with the measurement of institutional quality (Rodríguez-Ponce & Pedraja-Rejas, 2015). The author fully endorses this linkage between institutional excellence (here referred to as quality) and institutional mission. The authors resort to the conceptualization of quality in relation to higher education provided by Harvey and Green (Harvey & Green, 1993), who describe five discrete but interrelated categories and examine quality as exception, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformative. To these 5 items, internal and external consistency must be added, as required by quality, if understood as a complex system. For the empirical testing of the positive and significant mission-quality relation, 26 universities (43%) were elected amongst Chilean HEIs with a public declaration of their institutional mission in correspondence with the current national strategic plan. Three variables were used: a) institutional mission (institutional goals; corporate values; service-market definition; distinctive competences); b) university quality proxy based on accreditation years granted by the National Accreditation entity; and c) information collection (published institutional mission as included in the institutional strategy) assessed with a 1-7 score scale.

Data was analysed with a simple regression method that relates university quality (dependent variable) to institutional mission (independent variable) with the following regression equation: Number of accreditation years = $A + \beta_1 \text{ institutional mission} + \varepsilon_i$, where A: constant representing omitted variables in the model; β_1 : factor of relation between institutional mission and number of accreditation years; ε_i : random error. The results show a mean of accreditation years of 3,73 with a typical deviation of 2,40, thus meaning that

not all universities have high levels of quality. The institutional mission mean is 4,40 with a typical deviation of 1,37, significantly far from the maximum possible of 7 accreditation years. (value 7,00 ($p < 0,01$)). The high variation (85,9%) in the years of accreditation corresponds to the institutional mission of the selected universities. It can be inferred that a correct definition of the institutional mission is related to the higher levels of quality achieved by universities. Some of the examined universities had a poor formulation of their mission with commonplace, vague and meaningless wording, which denotes the lack of strategic approach and serious commitment. Affirming that a well-designed institutional mission necessarily leads to being/ becoming a good university would be temerarious and hasty. Nevertheless, a causal link from mission to quality can be supported by two arguments. First, from the perspective of internal consistency, quality emerges from and as an institutional promise (Harvey & Williams, 2010), hence the institutional mission is the base for quality assessment. Second, analytical induction from qualitative research allows the assertion of a causal link from mission to quality, but not vice-versa. Badly formulated missions would hardly permit a correct pairing of the reality with the promise. Meanwhile, well-defined missions enable a better diagnosis and design of corporate and academic strategies. Thus, quality would be the result of strategic management process, with the departure point in the definition of the institutional mission, followed by strategic diagnosis, strategy design and implementation (Rodríguez-Ponce & Pedraja-Rejas, 2015). The strategic management process impacts quality, rather than quality being the determinant of the strategic process. Otherwise, good universities would have eternal guaranty of good strategic processes. A good institutional mission formulation implies avoiding ambiguity and non-binding terms, so as to clearly define the university aims, pursued values, offered services for specific markets and distinctive competences. Hence, the relevance of this contribution to the emphasis that this dissertation places on the strategic management of the institutional communication driven by the mission as an institutional promise of quality and excellence.

Bermejo's research (Bermejo Muñoz, 2014) seeks to identify the factors that influence the definition of the institutional mission in private universities and the main systems and processes which contribute to the mission fulfilment. He justifies his choice of private HEIs explaining that private universities tend to have much more specified and explicit missions, whereas in most public HEIs the institutional mission is taken for granted as the shared mission of all universities. Bermejo (2014) also claims that the missions of private

universities are held as real commitment and a promise of service for all those involved in those HEIs at either side of the service chain. The empirical section includes the examination of mission statements from 27 private universities found in institutional webpages, thus of free access to public knowledge of internal and external stakeholders and anyone interested in the HEIs. The mission is a corporate message that can generate positive reaction on external stakeholders as well as stronger engagement of the internal community.

Table 20. Summary of empirical findings on university mission

Authors, original paper title	Main contribution
(Morphew & Hartley, 2006) <i>Mission Statements: A Thematic Analysis of Rhetoric Across International Type</i>	Mission statements as a legitimate institutional communication piece intentionally addressed to external audiences of purposefully targeted stakeholders. Disparities and similarities in public and private universities' rhetoric.
(Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015) <i>Sameness and difference. Analysing Institutional and Organizational Specificities of Universities through Mission Statements</i>	Mission statements as management tools to create organizational image, thus linked to branding. Double purpose: positioning as different; identifying as similar to other societal institutions
(Campos & de Navarrete, 2007) <i>La tercera misión de la universidad. Enfoques e indicadores básicos para su evaluación</i>	Entrepreneurial university as embodiment of the Third Mission; Relevance of more universal performance indicators
(Rodríguez-Ponce & Pedraja-Rejas, 2015) <i>El impacto del diseño de la misión institucional en la calidad de las universidades</i>	A 'correct' definition of institutional mission as related to higher levels of quality in HEIs. Quality measured by granted years of (national) accreditation. 6-criteria approach to quality: exception, perfection, goal achievement, perceived value, transformation, internal-external consistency
(Bermejo Muñoz, 2014) <i>La misión en el gobierno de instituciones universitarias de iniciativa privada</i>	Governance by mission in private universities; excellent organizations with mission-oriented leadership

Own elaboration

In the view of this dissertation author, excellent organizations tend to make a very clear distinction between essential non-negotiable values and operative strategies and practices that need adjustment and adjournment in changing environments. Hence the importance of having a firmly declared set of values and a *raison d'être* (a mission) with a long-term vision, even if they may be

subject to revision under very special circumstances. The communicated institutional mission requires alignment and commitment of all stakeholders, therefore much depends on the prosocial and mission-oriented governance of universities expected to bring their share into building the common good by fulfilling their own mission with excellence.

Only a few empirical findings related to university image will be mentioned here, as most often such studies fall into the category of HE marketing communications and branding, whereas the interest of this dissertation is on a more holistic approach to institutional communication management with a less mercantile view of HEIs as market players.

Most authors attempting the analysis of image constructs take into account the well-known adagio that different evaluators and publics will come up with different perceptions of same phenomenon (Avenarius, 1993); (Grund & Fombrun, 1996); (Kazoleas, Kim, & Anne Moffitt, 2001).

Arpan et al. (Arpan, Raney, & Zivnуска, 2003) conducted two studies: a two-factor scale with current students, and a single-factor scale for 90 non-student adults (90 randomly selected participants from the community). Their study suggests a useful conceptualization of image construction criteria applied to HEIs, identifying the direct impact of news coverage of the university as a significant question to be included in studies of university image with students as respondents. Adults with probably less recent first-hand contact with the current HE environment might have based their image ratings on good/bad memories, or news media coverage comparisons. In contrast, current students can more easily recall attributes and evaluations of universities. The researchers conclude that academic attributes (the strongest and most consistent), athletic attributes and news media coverage can be considered the three main factors of their examined sample of ten American HEIs in terms of organizational image ratings evaluated by current students, who would also be influenced by the opinion of friends and family. The dissertation author agrees with the higher importance attached to academic attributes as a core component of institutional excellence. Non-student adults would add education level and individual fanship to the influential factors list. All these criteria may prove more applicable for large universities, whereas smaller ones, or those without long-standing athletic traditions, disconfirm the supposition.

Institutional image of universities is the central focus of a case study conducted by Kazoleas et al. (Kazoleas et al., 2001) from a cultural studies approach. A qualitative perspective with a sample of external stakeholders

surveyed by telephone led to confirm a multi-image conceptualization of the university affected by several personal, environmental and organizational factors, which are more dependent on the receiver 's side rather than on the sender 's strenuous effort to shape institutional image. Intentional and unintentional messages make image construction a more complex process, thus universities must tackle this task with full awareness of this multiple ideography. This qualitative pilot study (Kazoleas et al., 2001) conducted with 123 respondents selected by quota sampling helped to create an image construct which was then quantitatively tested with 412 telephone respondents through a 30-item survey questionnaire. Seven factors accounted for 54.75 % of image variances: overall image, program image, teaching and research emphasis, quality of education, environmental factors, financial reasons, and sports programs. Out of these, organizational factors proved the most determining in shaping image decisions. Kazoelas et al. (Kazoleas et al., 2001) recommend public relations practitioners to focus image enhancement efforts on service quality based on institutional relations with key stakeholders. This connects directly with the point of this doctoral dissertation regarding strategic communication focus on building and cherishing excellent stakeholders' relations. A few pertinent empirical findings about university stakeholders will be examined next.

1.2. Scholarly empirical contributions on competing institutional logics in hybrid forms, entrepreneurial universities and HEI stakeholders

A few empirical studies have been reviewed because of their pertinence to the concept of competing institutional logics in hybrid institutional forms. The newest one deals with the growing market behaviour in public research universities undergoing a rapid transformation into industry-like organizations which compete to get external funding for their research projects and thus generate profit from the resulting patents and licenses (Upton & Warshaw, 2017). These scholars conducted an inductive multiple case study in three US research universities (University of California-Berkeley, Stony Brook University and University of Illinois-Chicago-UIC), and identified their three expressed core missions: research, teaching and engagement with external communities. Their main findings are presented following the three missions, starting with teaching: the study reveals a shift in the student body conception and what should be taught to them, ranging from the workforce benefit of education to a broader and deeper approach of research disciplines. Regarding the pursuit of research excellence, there is a perceived competitive spirit tied

to higher chances of funding and unwillingness to admit that national and international rankings matter more than they should. The last point refers to knowledge transfer that benefits the industrial sector, labour force and the economy in general. Even if the three examined universities admitted that the financial gain for engagement with external communities was far less mission-driven, the scholars claim that the competing logics (social institution versus market-industry drive) did not undermine the educational missions. However, institutional behaviour has been altered partly in response to external pressure, but also motivated by a sort of system-gaming for self-preservation of the institutional identity tied to a separate logic.

Another relevant comparative case study discusses the different organizational responses to competing institutional logics related to performance measurement systems (Rautiainen & Järvenpää, 2012). Though the Finnish scholars compared cities of Finland and not HEIs, their findings can shed some light on the purpose of this dissertation due to its relation with the performance assessment of private entrepreneurial universities which are by nature under the pressure of competing institutional logics. They conclude that business-like logic and professional health care logic followed a separation strategy with some collaboration encouraged by the performance measurement systems which promoted modernization of services. The main insight from this paper is that the more institutionalized the performance evaluation systems with their own values and measurement tools, the more pressure on organizations to conform and comply with external requirements. One more multiple case study can contribute relevant insights to better understand the impact of conflicting institutional logics, this time in the context of work integration social enterprises (Garrow, 2006). Twelve WISEs operating in large cities were examined with qualitative comparative analysis to explore the results of the internal struggle between service logic and market logic. The conclusions pivot around the potential danger for social enterprises being captured by the market and trading their original social mission for commodification of their clients. The study emphasizes the significant role of organizational leaders in protecting the enterprises by a clear positioning of their programmes based first and foremost on social service.

Another inductive case study comprising also work integration social enterprises explores the internal management of competing institutional logics in hybrid organizations where social welfare and commercial logics must be blended (Pache & Santos, 2013). The very much quoted scholars come to the surprising conclusions that organizations coming from the commercial sector

were much eager to enact social welfare demands than those institutions originated in the social sector, which in fact demonstrated readiness to adopt more commercial behaviours. The scholars advocate selective coupling as the preferred strategy to cope with competing institutional logics of hybrids so that the imposed demands of each logic can be met with the least possible conflict. The author of the thesis also considers selective coupling as the most suitable option for private entrepreneurial universities.

As already discussed in part I, private entrepreneurial universities are one of the archetypes of 21st century hybrids in the HE sector and the focus of attention of this dissertation.

Table 21. Comparison of university archetypes

Organizational dimension	Research university	Entrepreneurial university
Work integration	Loose-coupling	Tight coupling amongst sub-units and activities (internal); links with society (external)
Governance model	Collegial and democratic	Executive: strong steering core
Goals and identity	Multiple, conflicting goals and identities	Coherent institutional profile; unitary organizational identity
Legitimacy basis and resource-dependencies	Largely dependent on public support and funding	Social relevance and third stream funding
Core functions and mission	Teaching + research	Teaching, research + third mission
Dominant normative ethos	Academic freedom (knowledge production)	Strategic science (Knowledge Production and user-inspired basic research)

Source: adapted from (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014)

Empirical research allows Pinheiro et al. (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014) to state that the entrepreneurial university is indeed rising as the new organisational archetype, characterised by restructuring and re-modelling the traditional research university in order to enhance both internal collaborations and external partnerships. The critical question rising here is whether the adoption of a matrix structure will by default result in the desired strategic alignment of dependencies, culture, resources, etc. and thus become the painfully sought solution to all problems of modern European universities. Pinheiro et al. (2014) highlight the need to strike balance between work integration and required linkages while safeguarding organisational control and coherence, counting on the agency of solid academic structures.

The matrix design (adopted by Aarhus University after a strategic merger of two smaller public universities) does ensure organisational coherence and integration of functions through dual leadership structures; however, this also has formally strengthened the role of the central administration, especially the top leadership within the university. This could result in stronger organisational and social control, increasing the quantity and variety of output expected from academics. This doctoral dissertation would include the input from communication management as an additional organizational dimension to the ones suggested by Pinheiro et al. (2014).

Kantanen (Kantanen, 2012) conducted a qualitative study of the strategic documents in three universities, with an ethnographic content analysis of interviewed Finnish university key internal stakeholders (the Rector, administrators, students) as well as external ones (advisory board members, representatives of business, media and polytechnics). The selected universities have a long history and relevant role in the region's life and development. The respondents' positive attitude, first-hand knowledge and personal experience attached to these institutions may hinder objectivity and be considered a limitation, due to the short geographical and mental distance with respect to their universities. Kantanen (2012) claims that the significance assigned to institutional image is directly proportional to the closer or further distance (both mental and geographical), hence the attention and resource allocations required to maintain institutional communication and behaviour. Two important questions rise from this: do universities value the priceless asset of their stakeholders' loyalty or is it taken for granted? How do institutions benefit from and respond to this unconditional support? During interviews the willingness to overlook recently detected misconduct of high-profile professors regarding funding misuse can be understood as a token of full credit given to these institutions, notwithstanding the damage such media-covered cases can cause to the university image. In Kantanen's view, academic institutions must be more flexible and readier for change in order to adapt to emerging demands from stakeholders and the environment, with top management teams strongly focused on the sustainability of institutional identity and image (Kantanen, 2012). Weakening academic citizenship and faculty collegiality were listed amongst crucial issues, together with the critical question regarding the pertinence of corporate branding applied to academic environments, let alone a non-profit university.

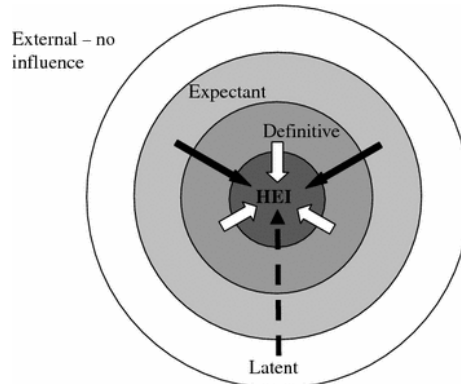
Wæraas and Solbakk (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009) defend pluralism and diversity, typical of academia, where uniformity of identity is hardly attainable

and thus perhaps problematic for communication management in universities with very wide spectrum of sciences. Nevertheless, stakeholder dialogue can bring excellent long-term results for identity co-creation, especially during or after major structural reforms, mergers, etc. This study highlights the impact of relational capital and the vital role of focusing on the quality of stakeholder communication, beginning from university leaders, aided by the expertise of a professional Public relations team. These insights are fully endorsed by the dissertation author.

Avci et al. (2015) have recently come to the conclusion that categorizing institutional stakeholders into external and internal would be an oversimplification in the case of universities. After a close look at existing taxonomies of academic institutions stakeholders, Avci et al. (Avci, Ring, & MITCHELL, 2015) confirm the dissertation author's assertion regarding the scarce analysis and application of Mitchell's Stakeholders' salience model to the specific case of HEIs. Benneworth and Jongbloed (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010) can be counted amongst those few researchers who define salience as „the degree to which HEIs' leadership prioritises claims over those of other competing interests". They mention the emergence of the knowledge economy as a factor of change in the salience of the business sector entering the HEIs and university systems. In state-owned universities, the Government remains the most important funder, thus, a definitive stakeholder; nevertheless, power, legitimacy and urgency are increasingly dynamic attributes, out of which other stakeholders may draw their different status at different national and institutional contexts. The empirical findings obtained through case studies of three policy experiments led to emphasize the networked nature of salience, defined through mutually beneficial stakeholder interactions (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010).

Thus, setting or changing institutional priorities is not simply a unilateral strategic decision, but rather bound by trends in the wider national and/or international HE contexts. The stakeholders of humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS) examined in this paper (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010) have lost the required salience to make universities value their HASS research potential. This loss can be a sign of academic capitalism in terms of decreasing chances to commercialize HASS research results. Worth mentioning conclusions deal with the need to redefine institutional approach to social engagement: whether to grant social partners a voice on the university board and gain university academic staff support for sustainable changes.

Figure 17. Stakeholders' salience model applied to HEIs



Source: (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010)

Mainardes's (2010) research on university stakeholders is an attempt to sort out the stakeholder hierarchy levels for the correct identification (Mainardes et al., 2010), claiming that stakeholders' involvement is fundamental for the development of institutional competitive advantages, the identification and satisfaction of each stakeholders' group needs (Dobni & Luffman, 2003). Through convenience sampling, middle faculty management representatives from one out of 13 typical Portuguese state universities were asked to provide their insights about the university mission, key stakeholder identification and ranking. Most responses revealed that the student is considered the most important stakeholder, followed by the region or location of the university. In decreasing order, the stakeholders list consist of students, local community and authorities, faculty and other employees, governmental entities, business sector organisations, alumni, wider society and only the last place given to other universities.

A very relevant finding from university executive management responses is the inverted order of the university role, since most presidents would first rank teaching and research, only then relations with society. Senior management attention seems evidently focused on two key stakeholders: students and teaching service 'providers', since their number is crucial for institutional financing. However, some communication uneasiness was detected across management levels (presidents, directors and programme managers) regarding the shuffling priority between these two key players: teaching staff versus students. Naturally, such vision differences may incur policy priority problems for alignment and synergies in the prevailing fierce and competitive business environment.

Table 22. Summary of examined empirical findings on university stakeholders

Authors and publication title	Main contribution
(Kantanen, 2012) <i>Identity, image and stakeholder dialogue</i>	Importance of cherishing relational capital and institutional response to stakeholders' demands Academic citizenship and stakeholders' loyalty as crucial assets for sustainable identity and image
(Avci et al., 2015) <i>Stakeholders in U.S. Higher Education: An analysis through two theories of stakeholders</i>	Oversimplification of university stakeholders categorization into external and internal
(Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010) <i>Who matters to universities? A stakeholder perspective on humanities, arts and social sciences valorisation</i>	Stakeholder's salience applied to mapping stakeholders in HEIs Salience of business sector in HEIs Academic capitalism as menace for internal stakeholder relations Networked nature of salience Institutional attitude to social engagement
(Mainardes et al., 2010) <i>An Exploratory Research on the Stakeholders of a University</i>	Traditional stakeholders' identification methods not fully applicable to universities. Differing priorities for institutional development as seen by different key (internal) stakeholders
(Casablancas-Segura & Llonch, 2016) <i>Responsive and proactive stakeholder orientation in public universities: antecedents and consequences</i>	Relevance of superior communications and improved relationships between managers of different university structures

Own elaboration

According to Mainardes (2010) traditional stakeholders' identification methods grounded on stakeholder theory are not fully applicable to universities. Spanish scholars (Casablancas-Segura & Llonch, 2016) examined the impact of responsive and proactive stakeholder orientation in 48 Spanish public universities with a total sample of 7130 university management staff members surveyed via online questionnaire. Their proposed integral model can enable top managers of public universities to align their actions and behaviours towards the desired results after assessing their institutional level (low-moderate-high) of stakeholder orientation. A barrier to this desirable stakeholder orientation is the over-traditional culture of universities. Superior communications is at the core of a well-balanced responsive and proactive stakeholder orientation expected in 'modern universities' (J. G. Mora, 2004), where good relationships all through the

university structures should be one of their worth mimicking competitive advantages and a decisive factor for stakeholders' endorsement of experienced institutional excellence.

1.3 Review of empirical research on institutional excellence and measurements of excellence, quality and reputation.

A few more contributions related to institutional excellence, rankings and reputation in HEIs will finally be discussed. Research was conducted (Kok & McDonald, 2017) to identify the behavioural and cultural features characteristic of high-performing or successful departments, as well as their possible correlation with excellence. An excellence model was designed as a result from one of the three research phases.

Figure 18. Underpinning Excellence Model



Source: (Kok & McDonald, 2017)

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data collection from 15 departments in 5 universities: semi structured interviews, fixed-response questionnaire surveys and focus groups to validate identified areas) A few outstanding areas, such as leadership, governance and management behaviours were noticed as related to different levels of departmental performance. The researchers (Kok & McDonald, 2017) acknowledge as a limitation that the effect of centralised/ decentralised organizational structures on administrative functions was not measured; nevertheless, respondents are affiliated to institutions of both structural types. Data was measured by applying four indicators of performance: RAE scores (Research Assessment

Exercise); entry standards; graduate prospects of employability and student satisfaction regarding teaching quality

Respondents of top performing departments can be described as open and proactive to change, eager to improve, having frequent and pre-established communication patterns and channels with their immediate managers, who keep the department members well-informed on university initiatives and facilitate collective discussion of objectives to be achieved. Besides, empowered staff members correspond with hands-on leaders who trust their team and set clear directions. In brief, reward structures and clear communication channels have been found as closely related to departmental and institutional excellence, stemming also from the coupling of leadership with communication, institutional values and strategy, and dynamic staff highly identified with the organizational culture. A holistic view to the interrelated eight areas plotted in the proposed underpinning excellence model is an essential prerequisite, as excellence could hardly be attained by betting all efforts and resources on a single or just a few of the eight items.

Miranda (Miranda, 2017) describes and determines academic excellence indicators through the eyes of postgraduates in a Mexican university. This qualitative exploratory and descriptive study leads to clarifying the characteristics attributed to and expected from teaching staff.

This can serve as the basis to design a measuring scale to assess the academic excellence of professors and as feedback tool that may help faculty members adjust their performance to students' expectations. The researchers share their concern with the relatively high percentage (13%) of students unwilling to take part in the assessment of their teachers.

Table 23. Frequency of mentioned indicators of academic excellence

	Criteria or indicator of academic excellence	Percentages
1	Cognitive competence	13
2	Social competence	13
3	Calling and passion for teaching	9
4	Empathy	17
5	Level of internationalization of academic work	4.3
6	Context	9
7	Financial support allocation for education	4.3
8	Assessment of achievement and learning	9
9	Training and development of teaching abilities	4.3

Adapted from source: (Miranda, 2017)

The most frequently mentioned indicators of academic excellence expected from peer professors and students' views on influential characteristics of professors are displayed in tables 23 and 24.

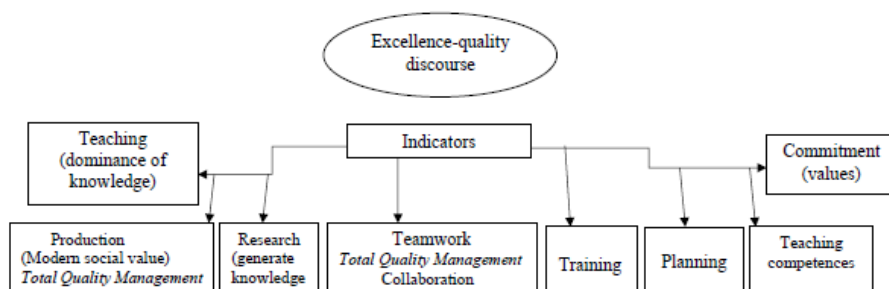
Table 24. Teaching staff characteristics with influence on students

	Criteria or indicator	Percentages
1	Learning/training	16.6
2	Professional and personal development	16.6
3	Motivation and attitude	16.6
4	Role model/referent	27
5	Social reality	7
6	Leadership	13
7	Compliance with graduation profile	3.2
8	Assessment of achievement and learning	9
9	Training and development of teaching abilities	4.3

Adapted from source: (Miranda, 2017)

Though little relevance to communication management and its relation to excellence can be noticed in this study, yet the dissertation author highlights the essential role that proactive institutional communication should have in supporting teachers and students as two key players of the relational capital. Interesting insights are shared by Uribe et al. (Uribe, Sánchez, & Yebra, 2016), who evaluate the subjective perception of teachers in comparison with the conceptualization of excellence and quality as framed by organizational theory.

Figure 19. Ideal model of indicators for excellence-quality



Adapted from source: (Uribe et al., 2016)

The items chosen for analysis are related to the three core faculty functions, i.e., research, teaching and human resources training. The research team proposed an ideal model with the possible indicators that affect the discourse of excellence-quality as interpreted by academics.

Insightful findings regarding the degree of agreement/disagreement with the proposed attributes as indicators of excellence-quality to assess academic performance can be expressed in percentages as follows:

Table 25. Results of excellence-quality indicators

Indicators from the subjectivity of academics	%
Research <i>not prevalent</i> over training and teaching	42
Teamwork and collegial work for research	90
No adherence to merely quantitative scientific production	53
Professional training/qualification	100
Performance evaluation directly related to job stability	52

Own elaboration

These and other conclusions are the result of empirical work conducted by researchers from seven Mexican universities and six from Spanish HEIs, as part of a wider study on the Academic Quality of University professors in Mexico and Spain. The pilot research was based on a non-probability sample of 19 academics representing various academic career stages, institutions, tenures and an average seniority of 26 years in the teaching profession. Most research professors reluctantly admit the link between excellence-quality and the motivation of financial reward, the subsequent professional status and job stability in detriment of the altruist academic commitment with its attached social dimension. The gathered data also allows to infer that while national assessment organisms value more the quantifiable research production than teaching activity, academics strongly believe that an excellent professor should distinguish him/herself by their continuously updated knowledge and skills required by their specific areas.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, excellence and quality as well and quite often emerge in university reputation discussions. Simpson (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b), World 100 Reputation Network Director, emphasizes the importance of university reputation in her study about the selection criteria applied by doctoral students who are considering where to study. For them, quality and reputation are two clearly different concepts. However, a university needs to communicate its internal academic quality to

a wider public, so that its quality becomes an integral part of the external reputation and both are perfectly marked with authenticity. According to Simpson (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b) a well-managed and unified university brand communication seems to be the Achilles' heel, so more often than desirable, the status and quality of a university are described by students in terms of the position held in rankings or in comparison with other institutions. This partly reveals the failure of institutional narrative and its content to reach its publics by providing the main attributes that best describe it. In order to be more than a number in reputation rankings, a university ought to 'inject personality' into its institutional communication outputs of all kinds and means.

Reputation is usually associated with international rankings or at least very often enhanced by mentioning the best scores in the criteria that places the institution at the highest or most competitive position in comparison with other institutions at similar level, or shared HE market segments. To rank or to be ranked is part of the title of Marginson's and van der Wende's publication (Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007), where the authors discuss the referential character of rankings: from data source for students 'choice of university, to guidelines for national funding allocation and food for inquisitive minds. Besides, media agencies are quick enough to spin and often reinvent the real purpose of such assessments, which may after all fail to reward institutions for their existing quality, while instead they "recycle" the reputation of already well-known university "brands" with a long-ago generated "halo" effect (Guarino, Ridgeway, Chun, & Buddin, 2005). The authors (Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007) present a deep analysis of existing global and regional HE rankings (the Times Higher Education Supplement, the Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU), U.S. Carnegie Classification, Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE from Germany), and claim that rankings seem to have become inevitable from the public policy perspective, since tax payers, governments and ultimately HE service "users" demand transparency and performance evaluation. The Shanghai and the Times rankings may enjoy the highest popularity worldwide, but they fail to provide accurate guidance on teaching quality, because global comparisons should only be made in relation to one model of institution, such as the comprehensive research intensive university, instead of imposing the standards of science-strong and English speaking universities as global criteria. Ranking systems should generate internationally accessible and comparative information for different stakeholders and then make this data

available especially for students willing to interact with their selected institutions and interrogate the data on institutional performance according to their own criteria of relevance. Furthermore, rankings are enforcing HE uniformity, where diversity and autonomy should be promoted for wider access and improved quality. For all these reasons, Marginson et al. (2007) expressed their concern about the vital need for more transparent rankings, based on coherent methodology with no other interest than higher education improvement in the core mission of HEIs. Otherwise, universities will keep reshaping their missions and setting their priorities to match the standards dictated by world rankings, instead of searching for excellence in the fulfilment of their originally declared mission and forged unique institutional identity. Already a decade ago Marginson et al. (Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007) advocated the need for a multi-scheme typology of HEIs to allow grouping and fairer comparisons amongst HEIs of similar or parallel profiles, thus safeguarding the different missions and characters of HEIs. Paraphrasing Hazelkorn (Hazelkorn, 2015), the rigor of methodology and validity of rankings criteria and indicators may still be questionable; nevertheless the acquired legitimacy is undeniable, as irrefutable are the outcomes that affect the key stakeholders of HEIs. Students are savvy ranking users and the desirable prey of university reputational ranking-buzzed branding; faculty go from victim of the status system and resource allocation to fans and spokespersons of their institutional prestige; governments strive to ensure at least one ‘world-class’ institution as a token of global competitiveness. Yet a positive consequence of university rankings can be stated (Hazelkorn, 2015): structural and procedural reorganizations, resource allocation, adjusted student recruitment programmes are all institutional strategic responses to become or remain internationally competitive, when national pre-eminence is insufficient. Rankings are widening gaps between elite and mass education; hierarchies emerge as excellence is subjected to one single norm: ranking position. The dissertation author claims that this may be noticed in the institutional communication efforts of universities that seek to prove their intentions or achievements regarding rankings positions. The reputation race seems unstoppable with rankings as a symptom and an accelerator that make the perceptions of prestige and quality more explicit. Yet, perceptions should have their real-life equivalent in achieved quality and excellence, and only then be strategically communicated. The dissertation author adheres the argument of Brusoni et al. (2014) with reference to the role played by global university rankings as key ‘makers’ and

carriers of excellence based on a traditional conception of the term, with a manifest emphasis on the research dimension disparaging teaching and learning (Rostan & Vaira, 2011a). Excellence requires continuous evaluation with rigorous criteria, as suggested by three widely-known models applied to HE excellence.

Table 26: Comparison of evaluation areas/criteria

	Evaluation areas of Excellence in Higher Education (Ruben, 2007)	Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (Brusoni et al., 2014)	EFQM 'Excellence Model' (Hides, Davies, & Jackson, 2004)
1	Leadership	Leadership	Leadership
2	Purposes and plans	Strategic planning	Policy and strategy
3	Beneficiaries and constituencies	Student, stakeholder and market focus	People management
4	Programs and services	Measurement, analysis and knowledge management	Partnerships and resources
5	Faculty/staff and workplace	Faculty and staff focus	Process management
6	Assessment and information use	Process management	
7	Outcomes and achievements	Organisational performance results	

Own elaboration from sources (Ruben, 2007) ; (Brusoni et al., 2014)

The models noticeably differ in priority, number and content, that is why they have been purposefully displayed in their original sequence. Ruben (Ruben, 2007) claims his elaborated Excellence in Higher Education model (EHE) to be the most comprehensive synthesis of previous accrediting models (such as the Baldrige assessment, Accreditation Review) and his guidelines should suit any institution aspiring to excellence. Within this framework, assessment, planning, and improvement require an integrated approach that engages the whole institution in the pursuit of organizational excellence. This translates into a cooperative attitude to set common priorities, put joint efforts and strengths and communicate transversally across academic, student life, administrative, and service functions with a common vocabulary.

The empirical work of Calvo et al. (Calvo-Mora, Leal, & Roldán, 2006) is an elaboration of the EFQM Excellence Model and also supported by TQM literature. Nine broad assessment criteria, classified into logically interconnected enablers and results can help organisations to make strategic

decisions about the activities required to maximize the positive influence of leadership management on people, policy and strategy, partnerships and resources and process management. A self-assessment questionnaire was delivered to senior staff at randomly selected 346 operational centres of Spanish public universities, with a previous pilot study of interviews with ten experienced professors, to validate the questionnaire content. The scholars' findings confirm the significance of management leadership full engagement and commitment with excellence by creating and disseminating value-based philosophy behind all decisions and actions, so that at all levels and in all processes every institutional member seeks continuous improvement. Autonomy is mentioned as a key feature of the Spanish University System, regulated by a catalogue of indicators released by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science in 2005 to ensure uniformed quality measurement and information of society. They also assert that the involvement of human resource management is mandatory to ensure the quality management process through organisational learning of the whole workforce. The concern for application of quality management and excellence model in HEIs is also shared by several Lithuanian scholars. After comparative literature analysis and data collected through a case study, they suggest gradual quality improvements in HEIs: implementaton of quality management principles in main study processes, adoption of European University Association requirements, the criteria of EFQM Excellence model and standards set by recognized international accreditation (Serafinas, 2008); (Serafinas, 2009). Nevertheless, other scholars claim that the application of Total Quality Management and EFQM Excellence Models in HEIs is controversially evaluated (Leskauskaitė & Pivoras, 2012); (Fernández & Ferrer, 2007).

International assessment methods were also the study object of Professor Tai from Shangai Jiao Tong University (Tai, 2005), who examined top 10 universities from the US (public and private), top UK and other European universities, and added top 7 in the Asian-Pacific region in order to provide a refined feature list of world-class universities. This Asian scholar explained that data collected by national bodies is less accurate than information found in institutional websites of individual universities.

Though remarkably less cited, Webometrics Rankings motivate institutions and scholars to reflect their activities accurately through web presence and release the data of 26368 universities from all over the world. These rankings may be considered an alternative to the Top 500 biased analysis and can be

useful for economic-related examination of HEIs web performance assessed with other indicators.

Table 27. Indicators used in Webometrics Ranking

Indicators	Description	Source	Weight
Presence	Institutional web-domain size, includes all subdomains and all file types	<i>Google</i>	5%
Visibility	Number of external networks (subnets) originating backlinks to the institutions webpages	<i>Ahrefs</i> <i>Majestic</i>	50%
Transparency (or openness)	Number of citations from Top authors according to the source	<i>Google Scholar Citations</i>	10 %
Excellence (of scholars)	Number of papers amongst the top 10% most cited in 26 disciplines Data for the five year period (2011-2015)	<i>Scimago</i>	35 %

Based on source: (Aguillo, Bar-Ilan, Levene, & Ortega, 2010)

The key elements in HE excellence and quality models may have found their place with different names and priorities in re-elaborated and complex assessment systems, such as QS (WUR, 2017), The ARWU or Shangai rankings, Webometrics (Aguillo et al., 2010) and the Times Higher Education world university rankings (THE).

One of the latest attempts to make the set of assessment criteria used in university rankings more inclusive and befitting the triple mission and triple excellence expected from HEIs is the Europe Teaching Ranking launched by the Times Higher Education so far at pilot stage and not applicable for all European universities.

In response to the well-grounded criticism against rankings for their failure to include teaching excellence measures, in June 28, 2018, the editorial director of global rankings at Times Higher Education admitted that all global rankings “fail to properly recognise perhaps the single most important aspect of any university: its mission to teach.” (Baty, 2018). The representative of THE

rankings justifies this partial failure explaining that “*THE* rankings are not exclusively designed for student consumers”, though prospective students and their families do right in consulting rankings data for their choice of university. However, governments, HE policymakers, university leaders and faculty are reportedly the main target audience of THE data and insights. Once again, the same vindicating argument of research excellence being easier to capture and quantify is given here with the additional explanatory statement of national and individual differences of HEIs across the world.

Table 28. Times Higher Education Europe Teaching rankings

Engagement – 40%	%	Resources – 20%	%
Student engagement	10	Staff-to-student ratio	7.5
Student interaction	10	Papers-to-staff ratio	7.5
Student recommendation	10	Quality of services	5
Student career preparation	5		
Links to labour market	5		
Outcomes – 20%	%	Environment – 20%	%
Academic reputation	10	Gender balance of academic staff	10
Skills development	5	Gender balance of students	10

Own elaboration based on source (Ross, 2018)

Unarguably, no single model of excellence will suit all universities; nevertheless, the *Times Higher Education* Europe Teaching Rankings claim that they “use a balanced scorecard approach, with 13 individual performance indicators combined to create an overall score that reflects the broad strength of an institution” (Ross, 2018).

These indicators grouped into 4 key areas measure engagement with students, resources allocated for effectively delivered teaching, outcomes generated for the benefit of students and the inclusion level of the learning environment. Full membership in the European Higher Education Area and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development as well as the United Nations authorized label of “developed economy” are prerequisites for the countries where teaching rank- seeking HEIs operate. Besides, there must be a certain number of HEIs from the same country applying for this ranking to allow fair comparison. In terms of institutional eligibility, candidate universities must have officially recognised HE bachelor’s and master’s degrees in more than one narrow subject area and an enrolment of least 5,000 at bachelor’s students

level. All these criteria leave out smaller and specialized institutions in small countries where perhaps few HEIs would be willing or ready to be ranked yet. In 2017 England launched a national governmental assessment of the quality of undergraduate teaching in HEIs called the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF). The assessment team comprises academics and students who measure three areas of HEI teaching performance: teaching quality, learning environment, and student outcomes and learning gain. The ratings distribute assessed HEIs into gold, silver and bronze award winners. Scholars and practitioners are already critically reacting to this initiative and expressing their concerns. Some state that the governmental Teaching Excellence Framework can be considered “a multi-purpose evaluation tool, not merely designed by the imperatives of teaching excellence or quality assurance, but also by the need for a measure to provide market information to consumers and allocate fee increases to institutions, and this is reflected in its content and character” (Gunn, 2018). However, controversy did not take long to pour as soon as results were published because of the potential threat felt by some top universities regarding the reputational damage which could outweigh potential gain (Fazackerley, 2016). Appeals were filed against the TEF by universities dissatisfied with the ratings, but almost none was regraded for a better medal. Many top universities question the validity of some metrics as not applicable measures of teaching, for instance, student satisfaction and employability rate (Ratcliffe, 2015). The link between the TEF and tuition fees has been criticised mostly by enrolled students and prospective ones mainly because all English institutions that met basic standards would be allowed to raise tuition fees.

The few empirical findings studies specifically related to teaching excellence and rankings have been compiled for their relevance to actual stakeholders of HEIs. One thought-provoking contribution from the student perspective is the study conducted by Louise Simpson (Director of World 100 Reputation Network) on how international doctoral students of the top world universities chose where to apply for their PhD (Simpson, 2014);(Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b). Over 100 in-depth live interviews and 600 more online surveys allowed Simpson to arrive at the conclusion that universities must communicate the internal academic quality to a wider public so that it becomes an integral part of the external reputation, but ensuring that both are authentic and tightly fused. Doctoral students define reputation in terms of its amplifying effect of the university name and of research quality: being well-known internationally, having a high position in rankings and a long history,

with high calibre academic staff awarded Nobel Prizes and the list of factors goes on. When it comes to the final decision criteria, the supervisor proved to be the most determining factor followed by the reputation of the institution, which sheds light on the importance of personal branding of the academic staff and high academic performance rates to attract the best students. Another interesting finding relates directly with the pertinence of a broader and more unified communication of the brand, since most interviewed doctoral students could hardly describe their university differentiation features and relied instead on the data available in world rankings. Recommendations in this respect call for injecting personality into institutional Websites and other institutional communication pieces so that universities stop being a mere number. Alumni and enrolled students ambassadorship is mentioned as one of the most persuasive tool, hence the vital need to provide them with a better and wholesome explanation of the university brand.

Sara Bahia et al. (2017) explored the emotions of twelve university teachers in relation with the changes implemented by the Bologna Process regarding the emphasized pursuit of quality (Bahia, Freire, Estrela, Amaral, & Espírito Santo, 2017). Naturally, most positive emotions arise from the teaching process in as much as it means relating to students, whereas the subsequent bureaucracy, marketization and career changes that the new system has brought into the academic life is seen as an obstacle for the so-much-sought quality. Official regulations for quality and excellence are exerting an increasing pressure on teachers whose experience and beliefs are neglected for the sake of urgent adjustments to externally imposed measures.

If universities are societal institutions established for the public good, teaching excellence must be more explicitly defined and measured to grasp the extent of their transformational contribution to all those seeking HE. Empirical research has been conducted in 13 South African universities with reference to national Teaching Excellence Awards in order to examine the understanding of and 'excellence in a context of social inequality (Behari-Leak & McKenna, 2017). Findings reveal that awards have partly enhanced the status of teaching in institutions, however, the existing guidelines and criteria seem to favour a notion of excellence that the authors compared to a gold standard valid for all contexts, disciplines and institutions, notwithstanding the needs of particular students and the conditions for teaching. Another study claims that world university rankings tend to reward large and research-oriented universities because of the fixed weighting schemes, because universities differ in strengths and so should the weights on

the ranking. Most medium sized universities in English speaking countries usually benefit from benevolent ranking, but so did Swiss and German universities (De Witte & Hudrlikova, 2013). Collins and Park (Collins & Park, 2016) present a critical position against the new imaginaries of reputation and reshaping of institutional behaviour that has resulted from the proliferation of academic performance ranking systems and so many other metrics pervasively conquering the HE world. These scholars examined the impact of the competing institutional logics and the altering landscapes of two leading universities in South Korea in terms of adjustment of institutional behaviours to the demands of rankings and reputation policies. After interviews with officials from the leading private and public universities, they come to the conclusion that reputational ambitions have become the driving force in the restructuring policies of the examined universities with ranking systems as the sole and key reputation measurements.

Šontaitė (2011) discusses the preferred attributes or indicators selected by *customer segments* of higher education institutions in order to design a corporate reputation measurement model (Šontaitė, 2011). Focus groups and surveys with 'customers' of four Lithuanian universities with the highest positions in media rankings led the Lithuanian scholar to acknowledge the disassociation of her empirical study from the examination of the reputation-performance relationship, but instead this is recommended as further research. This dissertation author claims that the main challenge is to keep navigating through the waves that sway the institutions from setting their minds in improving one aspect at the detriment of another from the mandatory success items listed on the ranking criteria. The rank-seeking institutional behaviours have generated a growing corporatization and internationalization that are evidently altering the institutional mission and inter-institutional relations in the HE sector and the whole country. Reputation should not become and end in itself. However, the truth is that with it come the potential rise in Alumni scholarship funding and other donations as well as national funding for research. Both individual and organizational behaviours are markedly oriented towards enhanced visibility through higher ranking positions.

Seeing these tendencies, one may ask whether every university must and can seek the title of 'world-class university' by the standards set in world university rankings that measure all by the same rod. Is it still possible for new players to reach even a modest place at the top? Can these quality assessment methods ensure that students will get what they expect as quality? Should only students be the main referent and addressee of quality endeavours?

Table 29. Summary of empirical contributions on HE excellence, quality, reputation and world rankings

Authors	Main contributions
(Hides et al., 2004)	Implementation of EFQM excellence model
(Calvo-Mora et al., 2006)	Elaboration of EFQM excellence model with TQM approach
(Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007)	Referential weight of university rankings and validity criteria of global comparisons
(Alden & Lin, 2004); (Tai, 2005); (Salmi & Saroyan, 2007); (Altbach, 2004); (Altbach, 2006)(Altbach & Knight, 2007)	Characteristics of leading (world-class) universities
(Salmi, 2009)	Factors of excellence for world-class universities
(Altbach et al., 2009);	Four types of private HEIs: elite, semi-elite, identity, demand absorbing and for-profit.
(Altbach, 2010); (Marszal, 2012)	Praise and critique of the three most well-known and preferred world university rankings (QS, THE, ARWU)
(Brusoni et al., 2014); (Ruben, 2007)	Comparison of excellence assessment criteria and models
(Hazelkorn, 2015)	Rigor of methodology, validity of criteria and indicators used in university rankings
(Simpson, 2014); Simpson in (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b)	Selection criteria of doctoral students who choose a HEI; quality or reputation.
(Uribe et al., 2016)	Excellence-quality discourse model and indicators
(Miranda, 2017)	Academic excellence indicators from postgraduates' view
(Ratcliffe, 2015); (Gunn, 2018) (Fazackerley, 2016)	Metrics and methodologies for teaching excellence framework
(Kok & McDonald, 2017)	Underpinning excellence model: behavioural and cultural features of successful departments in HEIs
(De Witte & Hudrlikova, 2013); (Collins & Park, 2016); (Bahia et al., 2017); (Behari-Leak & McKenna, 2017)	Critical positions regarding the concept of teaching excellence and its evaluation in rankings
(Baty, 2018); (Ross, 2018)	Times Higher Education pilot project of Europe teaching rankings
(Šontaitė, 2011)	Corporate reputation measurements in HEIs

Own elaboration

Unarguably, the current HE market displays a wider variety of institution types and HE service providers, who coerced by external goals, may opt for more compromising institutional development strategies, thus depriving key stakeholders and society from unique ways of fulfilling the common missions of universities. Evaluation criteria should be more inclusive and flexible to safeguard diversity and institutional commitment to affordable and more realistic excellence.

Conclusion of chapter 1

Some questions will still remain unanswered: if quality is relative, whose relation should prevail to establish quality assurance mechanisms that allow valid comparisons? Because of the availability and accessibility of information and understanding of what is a world-class university, leaders of HEIs and anyone interested in evaluating institutional performance cannot ignore the requirements; however, decision makers on both sides of the counter should better make sound judgement about what rankings actually measure with multiple indicators, the weight each may have on institutional strategic planning, quality improvement, branding purposes, and public mediated debates (Salmi & Saroyan, 2007).

This review section can be concluded referring back to a cited publication (Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007), wittily titled “to rank or to be ranked”. This is the ultimate choice of each university, because world ranking positions should not be the only piece of strategic information to prove one’s achieved quality. The dissertation author highlights the vital role of strategic institutional communication for transversal cooperation and participation of the whole university community in the fulfilment of the institutional promise of quality and excellence declared in the institutional mission. Governance by institutional mission beyond externally imposed evaluations should lead to decisions and pertaining fruits of excellence that is really sought, perceived and strategically communicated.

Chapter 2. Review of empirical research related to communication management

2.1 Noteworthy findings on strategic communication management

In order to empirically test the contribution of communication management to corporate strategy, Dolphin and Fan (Dolphin & Fan, 2000) conducted a survey in 20 British corporations of varied industrial sectors, where the

communication directors are becoming increasingly influential for the formulation of corporate strategy. The study focused on the background, academic field, experience and skills of the communication director. A 50-question questionnaire was designed to explore areas such as the concept, role and tasks of corporate communication, its impact on strategic decision making, the Director of communication standing/status in the organisation. Subsequent personal interviews with flexible format were conducted. According to worth mentioning findings, more traditional organizations revealed a lower level of structural and mind-set changes as well as little awareness regarding the full potential of strategic communication. There is some evidence of top companies with strategic committees where no communications executives enjoy full-right membership, though consulted, if needed. Noticeably, CEOs with sufficient Public Relations knowledge or communication background showed a much better understanding and appreciation for the contribution of communication directors to the success of the corporate strategy, both at formulation and implementation level.

Invernizzi et al. (2011; 2013) discussed the strategic role of communication in the organizational structure of a company, stating that the role of company communication has evolved and become increasingly more complex (Gregory et al., 2013); (Invernizzi & Romenti, 2011). The data obtained from a research project conducted in 2008 allowed Italian scholars to highlight the progressively growing importance of the communication function within the organisational structure of large Italian companies, which emphasizes the strategic contribution that communication makes to the management and organisational development of an enterprise. Plenty of newly created corporate communication departments and appointed communication managers (from 22% in 1994 to 78% in 2008) directly accountable to CEOs and integrated in executive boards are the most relevant findings.

One of the most recent studies seeks to broaden the understanding of strategic communication and organizational complexity advocating the use of a wholesome communicative perspective supported by the constitutive role of communication in organizations (sometimes quoted as the CCO framework). Heide et al. (Heide et al., 2018) present the results of a 3-year research project consisting of quantitative surveys in several organizations and around 150 interviews with managers, co-workers and communication professionals. The main empirical goal of this research team was to disclose the relevant role of different level of managers and co-workers as key agents in the enactment of strategic communication in contrast with the usually restricted choice of

respondents consisting of communication professionals directed entitled to manage the communication functions in their organizations. This study successfully illustrates the notion that strategic organizational communication should pay far more attention to everyday employee communication, highlighted as sometimes even more constitutive and effective if it is properly managed and not neglected, as it often occurs.

Interviewed senior managers admitted that there are more negative results due to poor dialogue amongst managers themselves than between managers and the other employees. Middle managers are often ill-informed and little empowered to lead their own teams or unable to prioritize strategic issues before operational and less urgent ones, mostly because they are mere receivers of strategic messages from higher levels of management. Another relevant finding is related to pre-established organizational listening practices as reported by one of the interviewees who works in a municipality and referred how they set up dialogue meetings with local citizens to fulfil their institutional mission of serving the public interests. Another noteworthy example enhances the significance of co-workers' willingness to create and maintain a supportive and open communication climate to resolve conflicts and contribute to the positive reputation of their organizations through ambassadorship, either by refuting misleading rumours or saying positive things about their workplace and colleagues. The longitudinal project also throws light on the relatively low position that leadership communication holds on the list of priority areas mentioned by the vast majority of the communication professionals, who allocated the best of their time, energy and attention to internal meetings, external web, customer relations and media relations. The concluding remarks could be that in order to explore how communication contributes to the fulfilment of overall missions and goals (how it is strategic), a core idea needs revision to be more inclusive and focused on relevant organizational stakeholders and their activities, and not only on the direct communication work of the officially appointed organizational communicators. The dissertation author fully agree with the remarks of Heide et al. (Heide et al., 2018) and believes that communication departments could do much better if they counted on communication-oriented executive leadership. Only then will it permeate the whole organizational structure and count on key internal stakeholders to enact the institutional mission and reach their excellence goals with transversal joint efforts. Verčič and Zerfass (2016) applied their conceptualization of communication excellence as framework to operationalize and assess excellence of internal

capabilities and external performance through the examination of the competence, skills and personal attributes of the communication department members. Comparisons were drawn between overall performance and the competencies available in competing organizations and the extent to which their job as institutional communicators has contributed to the set institutional goals (Vercic & Zerfass, 2016). On all 4Ps (people, partnership, process and products) of the organizational excellence model the analysed excellent communication departments significantly differed from non-excellent ones (Dahlgaard et al., 2013). The former employed people with better experience, granted them higher positions in more strategic roles; they also had closer collaboration with the CEO, other executive managers and units in the organization; more listening and research were detected; more products are created at the strategic level. Summing up, an organization in search of excellence should hire well-trained and experienced practitioners for an excellent communication department with a senior communicator integrated in the overall strategic management, characterized by more listening and continuous evaluation. Self-assessment is vital for excellence and this 4-indicator framework can help to monitor excellence at departmental level, which in due turn could result in organizational excellence.

Verčic and Zerfass (2016) conclude that communication executives (DirCom in this dissertation) can have advisory influence when they are able to make recommendations to senior management, as well as executive influence, when they are invited to senior-level meetings dealing with strategic planning on the organizational level. The dissertation author fully adheres to this characterization of excellent communication departments and considers it applicable to entrepreneurial universities, where communication has been for decades a significant support function that should gain momentum.

Empirical findings related to the strategic communication management in museums may seem not fully applicable to HEIs as societal institutions. Notwithstanding the differences, studies in Spanish museums also reveal the growing need for an *ad hoc* organizational unit in charge of the communication function. A study corpus comprised all Catalanian museums (around 425 institutions) where quantitative survey method was applied with an online questionnaire addressed to the persons in direct charge of the communication function (Capriotti, 2013). The main objectives were the exploration of the communication management *status quo* in museums: the existence of communication departments, their staffing and resources, research on key publics, institutional image, information content,

communication tools, current communication programmes, their planning implementation and evaluation. Fairly representative results (around 70 % of answers from all the selected institutions) lead to these conclusions: Communication departments or similar units were found in only 45 % of examined museums, where the person in charge was a specialist (30%) or the museum director. Around 71 % of museums have only 1-year communication plans, but dedicated practically to the activities for their identified key publics (visitors from schools, local/regional community, mass media, tourists and others), whom they reach via low-budget Internet information contents, outdoor and mass media advertising. Internal communication is less dynamic, since most museums have few employees, for whom direct meetings, emailing and team meetings seem enough to handle their ongoing tasks. From all this, Capriotti (2013) deduces that museums management has not discovered the strategic value of corporate communication, therefore the communication function still awaits structural consolidation, professionalization and resources allocation for communication planning and evaluation, which may lead to broadening the spectrum of publics, whose communication habits, cultural interests and entertainment needs may be increasingly satisfied or covered by social media tools and other alternative sources (Capriotti, 2013). An exploratory case study from the Spanish banking industry praises the crucial role of communication to upgrade strategic management (Garcia & Garraza, 2010). The authors present analysed data from the annual reports and official statements available in the corporate website of a Spanish savings bank, Caja de Navarra (CAN). This financial institution successfully introduced the novelty of civic banking through a shift in its organizational understanding of strategic communication with customers and other stakeholders, which led to the integration of publics' demands and interest into the company's strategic design. With 380 branches, almost 2,000 employees and 650,000 customers, CAN managed to establish direct communication channels between the company, its willing customers (around 580,000) and social organizations (over 2100), which would be chosen by the customers as beneficiaries of financial support from the customers' profit. Soon the mass media echoed this civic banking initiative and thus joined the bank's key stakeholders' spectrum. The scholars coined the expression "communicative reaction" to explain how this bank decided to comply innovatively with the increasing demand for transparent stakeholder engagement and its branding value, amidst other Spanish financial institutions, which are generally considered still opaque (Garcia & Garraza, 2010). In this case study, they

validate communication models that favour integration and dialogue beyond mere notoriety and self-interested media relations. The question of value and effectiveness of such communication management models is posed together with the challenging assessment of the communication process quality. Research methodologies with ad hoc achievement indicators are required and the dissertation author attempts to make a contribution in this respect.

Gómez (Gómez de la Fuente, 2013) presents an „Integral Communication Auditing Model“ (ICAM, when translated into English from the Spanish original „MACI, modelo de auditoría de comunicación integral“). The model was designed and tested in two Mexican organizations (one from the public sector and a private enterprise) as a tool that enables the identification of growth areas in the organizational system in terms of internal and external communication. It is especially meant for enterprises in search of efficiency and effectiveness of communication capabilities, defined as the degree of effectiveness achieved by an individual or a system to fulfil his/its tasks and attain goals with the least possible costs (Ostrowiak, 2012).

The research conclusions are presented by the 13 factors analysed in both audited organizations with combined data collection methods: survey, interviews, and focus groups, direct participative and non-participative observation applied during the auditing sessions. Gómez (2013) concludes that both organizations have good internal and external communication practices; nevertheless, several growth areas were detected, therefore a full-fledged and competent communication department is considered essential to maintain direct relation with the top management team and liaise with all organizational actors. The Director of Communication must take full responsibility for research, integration, planning and management of efficient internal and external communications using diverse resources and counting on the full support of the CEO, who should also consider the relevance of auditing, planning, implementation, follow-up and control of efficient communication policies.

The ICAM model allows a communication analysis across several fields of activity within the organizational system and paves the way to the third level suggested by Ostrowiak (2012) as productive communication, referred to competitiveness through innovation and system improvement. This or similar models could be of certain benefit for communication audits in entrepreneurial universities as well, as long as there is sufficient political will to implement the results and a communication department with the necessary standing, staff and other resources.

Martínez's (2004) relevant study provides extensive analysis of the status and performance of communication departments (Martínez, 2004). Documental analysis (statistics, agendas), direct non-participative observation, in-depth interviews and survey methods led to several significant findings: out of the 666 communication offices registered in Andalusia, 39,18% operate in the public sector, followed by 32,88% of private business and the remaining 20,87% in social organizations, trade unions, etc. Communication consultancy agencies make a 7 %. Over 1300 individuals work in this field, which means around two or three per office. In most cases, the communication office reports directly to the executive board or CEO of the organization, and in very few cases the interdepartmental relations were good enough, which reveals sore internal communication. Unfortunately, the study proved that internal communication is underdeveloped and barely 30 % of the examined communication department have some share in the management of this function, limited mainly to emailing and intranet administration.

The choice of name given to the communication management unit may seem a matter of candidness; however, the term self-assigned or imposed to this essential management function will denote the spirit and status granted or gained by those who will render the communication service in the organization. Terminological confusion is not a light question: a certain uniformity of term would be welcome for the clear delimitation of task and covered areas, and ultimately for the consolidation of this organized structures, so that they bet on excellence with full executive support. New needs are emerging together with technological and ensuing social changes, thus the communication departments should as well broaden the spectrum of service and functions: good media relations are simply no longer enough, therefore, communication offices and their members should engage in continuous professionalization and updating of skills, tools, devices, etc. Thus, broader communication knowledge is indispensable to meet the requirements of a highly specialized and competitive environment.

Research conducted in six non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of varied spectrum operating in Valencia started from the premise that the communication departments of this kind of organizations tend to focus most of their efforts on media relations (E. R. González & Estevan, 2014). NGOs seem to count on mass media as key external stakeholders for their undeniable capacity to shape public opinion and reach larger publics. In-depth structured interviews were held with the persons in charge of the communication department, most of them graduates of Journalistic studies, a token of the

concern for press office work over other communication functions. The selected NGOs have been working for over 50 years with communication offices established in the 90s. Three of them have their own resources, others combine internal and external services from communication agencies. Communication practitioners coordinate internal communications, press office, institutional publications, social media and some marketing and advertising activities. External relations (humanitarian diplomacy, protocol, events, sponsorship, and fundraising) are tasks coordinated by only three of the communication departments in examined NGOs, while others outsource them. Media clipping is monitored usually daily, in some NGOs this service is outsourced, but all in all, the attention is more focused on quantity of appearance than on the content. The NGOs do have a communication manager, yet the usual spokesperson before the media is the executive manager, with less frequency the DirCom or other experts when required. In brief, there is an observed trend towards the professionalization of an integral communication department with a visible priority on media relations.

Beorlegui (Beorlegui, 2016) and Mazo re-elaborates on Nieto's (Nieto-Tamargo, 2006) model of institutional communication process and explores its functioning in the Catholic Church with content analysis based on time-frame media clipping. Beorlegui (2016) points out the distinction between subjects (actors or agents) taking part in the institutional communication process either as mediators, immediate and addressees and asserts that communication and governance must a cohesive management tandem rather than two separate unconnected worlds. Governance decisions formulation have inherent communicative implications and communication is a requisite instrument of that same governance, hence the crucial importance of organic continuity through one single process: executive decision-making implies the strategic choice of communicative form required for each decision to adequately reach the intended publics.

Spanish researchers Molina et al. (2013) elaborate on a previous study where 187 top-level executives come to the conclusion that the importance of corporate reputation and the need to manage this crucial aspect will grow by 64 % in multinationals, with a prognosed 48 % in Spain. This will require an excellent Dircom as reputation guardian, the *Chief Reputation Officer*, capable of advising top management on stakeholders' relations and sound mapping of expanding publics.

The resulting move towards a more complex management of intangibles (brand, reputation, communication, CSR, and so on) requires a new outlook

to the person in charge: a *corporate reputation strategist* fully engaged in decision-making and governance. Only this way will modern organizations be fit for wholesome sustainability through long-lasting relations, built on trust and transparency with self-empowered and demanding publics.

Table 30. Summary of empirical findings related to communication management

Authors	Main contributions
(Dolphin & Fan, 2000)	Status and profile of Communication Directors
(Gregory et al., 2013)	Strategic role of communication in the organizational structure of a company
(Heide et al., 2018)	Constitutive role of communication in organizations (CCO framework); relevant role of middle-level managers.
(Vercic & Zerfass, 2016)	Advisory and executive influence of communication managers; excellent communication departments.
(Capriotti, 2013).	Communication management <i>status quo</i> in museums
(Garcia & Garraza, 2010)	Role of communication in upgrading strategic management in the Spanish banking industry
(Martínez, 2004)	Status and performance of communication departments
(Gómez de la Fuente, 2013)	Integral Communication Auditing Model
(E. R. González & Estevan, 2014)	Communication departments of non-governmental organizations mostly focused on media relations

Own elaboration

Several other scholars converge in the view of the human factor as the most valuable asset and sustainable source of competitive advantage (Englehardt & Simmons, 2002); (P. A. Argenti & Forman, 2002). Universities are institutions by essence dedicated to knowledge generation and transfer, therefore internal stakeholders should be the first to benefit from knowledge sharing aided by integrating function of well-managed institutional communication.

2.2 Communication management research findings related to the HE context

The following papers provide empirical findings more closely related to the specific topic of this dissertation, i.e., strategic communication issues in the

HE sector. The first study discusses HE reputation building through content analysis of one-stop portals. All the selected universities can be found amongst the top 150 according to the Times Higher Education rankings for 2015. Out of the 21 examined countries, 17 had one-stop portals mostly owned and funded by the national government (ministry of education or foreign affairs) and they all clearly targeted stakeholders seeking information about HE in that particular country (Sataøen & Wæraas, 2016). Some variety in portal administration was also detected: either as single purpose agencies with links to larger public diplomacy organizations, private companies entrusted with this official task, or an association of all universities operating in that country. The scholars disconfirmed the presumption that portal set-ups would differ from one to another organization. However, the analysed portals were all focused on providing foreign students with all pertaining information about the national HE system. From a strategic communication stance, it is worth mentioning that 4 countries resorted only to prescriptive data about their HEIs, while 13 portals engaged into more promotional and persuasive arguments to attract potential students. The omission of flagship universities may seem paradoxical in a fierce competition for more and better students, notwithstanding the fact that all represented countries had at least one HEI amongst the 150 by the Times HE 2015 ranking. The researchers interpreted this purposeful exclusion as a clear intent to shape the HE sector reputation as a whole, without extolling some institution in detriment of others with lower competitive advantage. In brief, the study sheds light on the central governments' strategic communication tool for HE reputation building via one-stop portals, where practically little differences can be found in terms of content and format, such as concepts and references to rankings and global standards that give credit to their academic and scientific excellence.

The authors (Sataøen & Wæraas, 2016) assert that strategic communication for reputation building of HE and other public subsectors with deeper cross-cultural comparisons are definitely underexplored terrain.

A scholar team conducted internal communication research in a private Spanish university (Universidad Europea Miguel de Cervantes) in order to explore several issues: how the internal publics perceive the institution; the satisfaction level regarding descendent, horizontal and ascendant communication; the communication tools most valued by internal collectives (José María Herranz de la Casa, Tapia Frade, & Vicente Lázaro, 2009). Through quota sampling a survey questionnaire was delivered to members of Research and Teaching Staff (RTS), Administration and Services Staff (AST)

and students. The results show that internal publics have a positive institutional image, however they doubt whether the same image is perceived by external publics. Students 'engagement and identification with the university proved too low to transmit a positive image outside their Alma Mater, thus their sense of belonging needs reinforcement. Students were also the most critical internal public with respect to descendent communication, as they feel insufficiently informed by the university administration. Satisfaction level of horizontal communication differed significantly, which raises difficulties to find a solution that suits all internal publics in real need of integration. Ascendant communication with academics, mentors and deans got favourable assessment, whereas the rectorate seemed more distant. The three surveyed internal publics favoured virtual communication tools, mostly the institutional website and email, while students additionally mentioned posters and TV screens. It is worth mentioning that this research was initiated by the communication department of the university in order to implement ad hoc improvement measures, such as the launching of weekly newsletters specially addressed to students and sent to their individual institutional email box in immediate response to their request for more and better information. Relating this finding to the dissertation topic, it can be once again stated that a proactive and well-managed institutional communication department can bring clear-cut and timely benefits to all stakeholders and to the university strategic management.

Another relevant contribution belongs to Simancas (Simancas-González, 2016), who analysed the performance of communication departments in 33 randomly selected public Spanish universities in terms of design, functions, staffing and role of the institutional communication function in the public HE context. The study emphasizes the social function of HEIs in the defence of participative communication and the responsibility of public university management to implement and guarantee dialogue processes and spaces where the university community members can interact. Content analysis was applied to gather data on the design, functions, structure, staffing, position in the organigram and role of the institutional communication function in the public HE context. Semi-structured telephone interviews held with communication directors led to go deeper into the managerial work of the communication departments. A Delphi panel was conducted with social change experts to discuss the basic principles of participative communication in universities. Finally, SWOT analysis was used to draft action guidelines for the participative communication proposal. Simancas's (Simancas-González,

2016) three hypotheses were substantiated with empirical findings: first, communication management in public universities aims at competitive image and brand differentiation; instrumental and commercial purposed-driven corporate communication models prevail over institutional communication. Second, the communication departments of public universities prioritize external communication, especially media relations; and third, internal and external communication are unidirectional, mostly informational, with no room for dialogue and participation of institutional publics. The main weakness revealed through SWOT analysis was the starchy hierarchical structure, with low level of representativeness of stakeholders, especially academic staff and students. Strategic planning and overall communication management is practically non-existent: 55% of DirComs admitted having no communication plan or strategy, since their main job was supporting governance policy and executive decisions.

The dissertation author shares Simancas's (Simancas-González, 2016) suggestion regarding the need for strategic planning of communication based on collaborative processes, starting from training of the communication department staff with participative communication workshops. Delegates could be appointed in each university department, school, or unit so they can also take part in those workshops and thus ensure a cascading effect that will ultimately reach all institutional publics and raise awareness of the benefits ensuing from participative communication for the university itself and for society.

The dissertation author concludes that changing the attitude of internal publics towards the communication department in public universities implies first and foremost re-considering the role assigned, assumed, or earned by this neuralgic function and the organizational unit responsible for it. In brief, communication in public HEIs is not ready to engage key interest groups, because no interaction is encouraged and dialogue is not their priority. Corporate communication objectives predominantly centred on image and brand are pushing public universities into serious mercantilization, which can be considered both a cause and consequence of this trend.

Tauber (Tauber, 2009) conducted a diagnostic study on the scope and role of communication in the planning and management of public HEIs in Argentina and then specifically in the National University of La Plata (UNLP in Spanish). Management models of organizational, corporative, informative and participative communications were analyzed as well as the institutional structures, tools, means, staffing and functions distribution. Quantitative

methods (extensive documental comparative analysis of institutional Websites and hemerographic archives, conference audio-visual materials, email consultations) were supported by qualitative 45 structured and unstructured interviews with UNLP deans and other staff representatives. All staff involved in management and administration of the UNLP were surveyed. Tauber (2009) firmly states that internal and external communication still remains the shortest leg of the table regarding the development of public communities and institutions, because governance bodies fail to consider communication a key strategic and optimal component to validate management processes. Marked differences between public and private universities are evident: the former see communication as dissemination through own formal structures, while the latter tend to focus on promotion and sales outsourced communication of university products. Private HEIs are usually smaller and have fewer students though they may get more media coverage. Private HEIs are usually smaller and have fewer students though they may get more media coverage. Catholic universities seem to give more importance to the communication function and are more usually keen on transmitting the institutional culture (related to and moral/religious values) than mere academic information.

A closer look inside the actual and potential influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the management of internal communication in organizations is explored and plotted in a model for a new internal communication, based on the findings of his empirical research in 7 universities (5 state-owned, 2 private) located in Valencia, Spain (Fernández Beltrán, 2007). This model was designed after extensive literature review, then validated with a panel of experts and supported with assumptions obtained from interviews with university employees in direct charge of the internal communication (IC) function. The dissertation author adheres to most of these postulations, however the central role of the Institutional Website in internal communication need not be so overestimated as the unique tool and panacea of all institutional communication ailments. A well-designed and properly managed institutional Website is undeniably useful and may certainly appease the spurring and well-grounded stakeholders 'demands. Nevertheless, too much emphasis on the technicalities of institutional communication may lull university management away from the pursuit of truly excellent institutional communication, which is much more on the human factor.

A relevant study analyses the CSR in a public university of Valladolid, Spain (Quezada. G, 2010). Codification of interview transcripts enabled the

researcher to arrive to the four conceptual categories: concept of university CSR; university-society relation; university responses to social needs; impact of university performance on society. Three main ways of implementing university CSR related to the very essence of HEI activities were identified: cooperation for social development, knowledge transfer to society, and graduates' insertion in the labour market. Two negative factors were noticed about the Spanish universities in general and thus applicable to the case in question: the endogamous nature of the university that fails to reach out and engage in society, and the excess of theoretical knowledge imparted by academics. The long-standing tradition of this public university and its behind-the-times organizational structure were other issues mentioned by the interviewees considered as neuralgic for university CSR programmes. The three crucial agents for university CSR were the Rector, the Burgos Fund (*Caja de Burgos*) financial injection after signing a cooperation agreement initiated by the Rector, and the Social Affairs Service, a new office integrated into the organigram of the university for CSR issues. Institutional communication initiated and managed from the rectorate would add value to the positive perception and relations of the university with its stakeholders, together with the participation of academics in the diverse local/regional social organizations. All respondents strongly agreed with the social mission attached to all universities, let alone public ones with an inherent duty to revert to society the financial support received from it through national funds allocation.

A strategic communication model for universities is proposed after a comparative and longitudinal study was focused on sustainability issues, carried out through primary qualitative research in three universities (Mazo & Macpherson, 2017). The authors claim that universities with well-established institutional strategic plans directly influence the design and implementation of a strategic communication plan, where communication strategies for sustainable initiatives can find their place. Even though the particular focus of this paper has little to contribute to this dissertation, the author has decided to include it in this review as one more sample of research done in this emerging, yet underexplored sub-field as applied to the HE context.

This analytical review of previous empirical studies can be concluded by endorsing the expressed need for a more collaborative and participative approach to stakeholders relations and strategic communication management in HEIs. This requires a communication-oriented governance and a proactive communication department with a broader view of the communication

function beyond instrumentalized media relations for positioning and self-promotion of the institution.

Table 31. Summary of empirical findings on strategic communication in HEIs

Authors	Main contribution
(Sataøen & Wæraas, 2016)	Governmental one-stop portals as strategic communication tool to promote national HE sector and build its reputation in the international HE market
(José María Herranz de la Casa, Tapia Frade, & Vicente Lázaro, 2009)	Exploration of internal communication flows and tools to enhance institutional image consistency, encourage integration of Research and Teaching Staff (RTS), Administration and Services Staff (AST) and students through improved ascendant, horizontal and descendent communication.
(Simancas-González, 2016)	Performance of communication departments in public HEIs. Participative communication. Methodology: content analysis; semi-structured interviews, expert Delphi panel, SWOT analysis.
(Fernández Beltrán, 2007)	Institutional Website as key tool for internal communication management. Methodology: triple content analysis through navigation of institutional Websites; interviews with communication managers; expert panel for data triangulation.
(Tauber, 2009)	Role and scope of communication in planning and managing public HEIs in Argentina. Methodology: semi-structured interviews, surveys of all administration staff, content analysis of institutional documents.
(Quezada, 2009)	University relations with society; stakeholders approach. Methodology: single case study.

Own elaboration

III. Empirical research methodology

Chapter 1. Methodological framework for empirical research

1.1 Choice of philosophical paradigm, research design and logic of inquiry

For the research design and methodology of this doctoral dissertation, the author has taken into consideration and applied relevant insights gathered

from examined previous empirical studies in part II, such as: online questionnaires, case studies and HEI middle management interviewing to explore HEI stakeholder identification and prioritization (Mainardes et al., 2010); (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010); (Casablanacas-Segura & Llonch, 2016). Self-assessment questionnaires to senior staff and content analysis of HEI institutional Websites to assess governance by mission in private universities as excellent organizations with mission-oriented leadership (Calvo-Mora et al., 2006); (Bermejo Muñoz, 2014); textual content analysis of institutional mission statements as management tools and legitimate institutional communication piece in entrepreneurial university (Morphew & Hartley, 2006); (Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015). Case study in communication management (Garcia & Garraza, 2010);(Quezada, 2009); in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews and surveys with communication experts and communication directors (Dolphin & Fan, 2000); (Gregory et al., 2013); (Vercic & Zeffass, 2016); (Heide et al., 2018); (Simancas-González, 2016); surveys and qualitative interviews with HE key stakeholders, such as faculty, Alumni, administration, university leadership: (Fernández Beltrán, 2007); (Quezada, 2009); (José María Herranz de la Casa et al., 2009); (Tauber, 2009). Also, qualitative interviews on performance and assessment of communication departments (Martínez, 2004); (E. R. González & Estevan, 2014); (Simancas-González, 2016); Web-based content analysis of HE portals and university Websites (Fernández Beltrán, 2007);(Tauber, 2009).

This dissertation is based on a multiple-case study, or multi-case design, including more than one unit of analysis: three private entrepreneurial universities in Argentina, Lithuania and Spain with their own very specific and original settings. As the context is different for each of the cases, a multiple or collective case study is more suitable than a holistic case study with embedded units.

The author of this dissertation has decided to use the case study approach partly inspired by the four main questions posed by Yin (Yin, 2009), regarding when a case study design should be considered:

- 1) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; 2) the researcher cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; 3) the researcher seeks to cover contextual conditions, because he/she considers them relevant to the phenomenon under study; or 4) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context.

Easton (Easton, 2010) proposes six conditions for a critical realist case study.

Table 32. Requirements for critical realist case study

1	Dynamic and complex phenomenon
2	Research question raised on the causes associated with the phenomenon
3	Identifiable objects /entities and their contingent relations to the phenomenon
4	Various data collection techniques, considering causal mechanisms
5	Reductive logic for data interpretation; double hermeneutic
6	Alternative explanations compared with judgemental rationality

Own elaboration, adapted from (Easton, 2010)

The retroductive logic of inquiry chosen in this dissertation seeks to answer research questions with the help of hypothetical models built as means to uncover the real structures and mechanisms, which are assumed to produce empirical phenomena (Berth Danermark, 2002);(Blundel, 2007); (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2005);.(Easton, 2010);(B Danermark et al., 2002); (Marschan-Piekkari, R., & Welch, 2011); (Morais, 2015). Retroductive research models (designed with ideas borrowed from known structures and mechanisms in other fields) may resemble or not the phenomena in question, yet they attempt to account for the observed reality. After empirical testing, further consequences of the models need additional explanation that can be further tested to prove the existence of the selected structures and mechanisms. Thus, the search is focused on evidence of the consequences and on proving them to predict certain events or similar situations and results.

No matter which mode of inference one may choose, Givón would validly state that data not defined by theory would be empty, while theory not driven by data would simply be blind (Givón, 2014). As a result, the research design based on a multi-case study can provide exploratory as well as explanatory insights, especially taking into consideration the dynamic, systemic, and multidisciplinary phenomena of organizational communication processes. Putting it all together, this research is a critical realist multiple case study with mixed research methods: an Alumni survey conducted as a pilot study, experts survey and expert interviews, numerous in-depth interviews with representatives of the three selected HEIs. The author counts on the additional data from Web-based content analysis. Retroduction has been applied to examine the phenomenon of institutional communication in entrepreneurial universities and its relation and contribution to institutional excellence, with a special focus on the strategic management of stakeholders' involvement in the institutional communication processes.

1.2 Sampling methods and selected units of analysis

This dissertation is designed as multi-case study for which three private entrepreneurial universities have been selected through triple non-probability sampling, i.e., purposive or judgemental, convenience and typical case (Treadwell, 2013); (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This kind of sampling responds to the specific criteria set by the researcher as most convenient for data gathering in accordance to the examined topic and raised questions, supported by the before-mentioned vast methodology scholarship. The three chosen HEIs institutions are

- a) Private entrepreneurial universities
- b) ranked first/best in their respective countries (Spain, Argentina and Lithuania) by international and/or national university rankings;
- c) accredited by international and national agencies;
- d) showing some evidence of an institutional communication management department (or equivalent unit) in the organizational structure;
- e) offering the three study cycles (Bachelor, Master, Doctoral) as well as Executive Education;
- f) Founded in the second half of the 20th century (important socio-cultural, political and economic circumstances for modern HEIs).

The three selected institutions are: Universidad de Navarra (hereinafter-UNAV), Universidad Austral (hereinafter-AustralArg, to distinguish it from Universidad Austral de Chile and Universidad Peruana Austral) and a private entrepreneurial university from Lithuania (hereinafter, PEU-Lt). Even though individual names and specific held positions of interviewees are not mentioned and not formal written request was issued by the institution, the dissertation author has decided not to disclose the official name of the selected Lithuanian institution in order to respect their preference to remain anonymous as individuals and as an institution.

The thesis focuses on private entrepreneurial universities as the most prominent hybrid institutional form amongst HEIs (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014); (Altbach et al., 2009). Due to their dynamic capability of adaptation to shifting social contexts and their ambidexterous organizational design, this kind of universities are usually better prepared for restructuring and remodelling in response to the need for enduring internal and external synergy with institutional stakeholders and long-term partnerships (Tahar, Niemeyer, & Boutellier, 2011);(O'Reilly III & Tushman, 2008);(Huang, Baptista, & Newell, 2015); (Chang, Yang, Martin, Chi, & Tsai-Lin, 2016).

For further acquaintance with the three selected universities, systematized information is available in Appendix 1a-d: key institutional information; characterization of the selected universities either research (R) or entrepreneurial (E) according to Pinheiro et al (2014); characterization of the selected universities according to the 5 types of private universities described by Altbach et al.(2009); applied .

features of the contemporary private universities (Altbach et al., 2009) and three defining factors of excellence attributed to World -Class HEIs (Salmi, 2009).

Summing up, the three chosen units of this multiple case study can be classified as private entrepreneurial universities with acknowledged levels of research, academic and knowledge transfer, hence on route towards excellent HE organizations.

Purposeful and snow-ball sampling has been applied to gather respondents for Alumni survey, experts surveys and interviews and in-depth interviews with institutional key stakeholders. The notion of saturation, the intended cross-case analysis and the quality of responses with information power condensed in the samples have all been combined to select the required number of respondents, in accordance with principles of sampling size for qualitative methods (Jansen, 2013);(Fink, 2003) (Madureira, 2007);(Boddy, 2016); (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). The dissertation author considers that collected data with the selected number of respondents is sufficient and satisfactory to address the purpose of this study. For a single case study, usually 15-20 interviews are recommended, depending again on the research paradigm and kind of data required; besides the average number of annual Google citations from top scholars reaches around 30 interviews (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Hence, around 20 interviews from each selected institution have been conducted, in proportion with the size of the organization, the type and variety of respondents. In total, 56 interviews were conducted personally by the author in the language chosen by the interviewee (English, Lithuanian or Spanish). Being a native speaker of Spanish language, a holder of a university degree in Translation Spanish-English and having an official certificate of Lithuanian language proficiency are suitable conditions for back translation of all the hand-typed transcripts of audio-recorded interviews held on site in the respective universities.

An average of 20-30 Alumni per university have responded the exploratory survey. Alumni have been selected as former students, who are now professionals successfully integrated into the labour market. They constitute

a special institutional stakeholders group, who have become increasingly addressed by their Alma Mater and researchers for benchmarking, customer satisfaction, reputation and educational assessment studies (José María Herranz de la Casa et al., 2009); (Tasopoulou & Tsiotras, 2017); (Hsu, Wang, Cheng, & Chen, 2016); (Dumford & Miller, 2017). Alumni were volunteers (Treadwell, 2013) p. 140-141) whom the dissertation author contacted through Alumni networks in social media accounts, as well as by email to the Alumni managers or similar contact person from information available institutional websites. As this Alumni survey is a kind of exploratory pilot study and not the main instrument of the whole empirical research, a sample of 20-30 respondents can be considered sufficient, bearing in mind that the standard minimum number for exploratory and pilot studies can be settled at 10, according to Saunders et al., (2007).

Regarding the number of communication management experts, around 25 candidates were contacted out of whom a total of 10 submitted the complete questionnaire and the other 6 preferred to hold an oral interview. For a group of informants-professionals, an average of 10-15 respondents is a sufficient sample size (Marshall et al., 2013); (Guetterman, 2015); (Malterud et al., 2016). Therefore, 3-5 field experts per case (per country= each HEI and its geographical location) is proportional for an expert sample in a multiple case study with triple triangulation: data sources, data gathering methods and three units of a multi-case study. This group of experts has been selected out of communication management experts, who at the same time are representatives of the HE market without affiliation or personal connection to the selected universities and some CEOs who endorse governance by mission with a communicative perspective to management. Expertise data have been collected through interviews and survey questionnaire for comparative analysis.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the empirical research

Aim: empirical research has been conducted to assess how the identified prerequisites of strategic institutional communication management affect its contribution to the mission-driven institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities.

Grounded on the considerations and statements presented in the theoretical framework and supported by evidence provided in the analytical part, the dissertation author believes that empirical research is relevant to assess how

mission-driven strategic institutional communication management contributes to institutional excellence by exploring:

- a) the status quo of institutional communication management in private entrepreneurial universities;
- b) the extent to which institutional communication management is considered a strategic function by the Highest Governance Body, integrated into overall institutional strategy and driven by the institutional mission;
- c) how the present conditions and mechanisms facilitate/hinder the strategic management of institutional communication, integrated and aligned with the institutional mission;
- d) the role and status of the organizational unit in charge of institutional communication management;
- e) how key internal stakeholders are engaged: transversal projects, training, coaching, information plans/programmes, etc.;
- f) the mutual dependence of institutional governance and communication management in setting and achieving institutional mission and institutional excellence;
- g) how the institution portrays itself and how it is seen by key institutional stakeholders.

The author has formulated these empirical research objectives:

1. Analyse how private entrepreneurial universities manage their institutional communication in relation to its contribution to institutional excellence and the institutional mission
2. Discover the criteria that underlie the way institutional communication management is managed by the institutional department(s), and/or staff in charge of this function in private entrepreneurial universities.
3. Discover how governance body members understand the role of institutional communication and the management of this function in relation to institutional excellence.
4. Find out how the communication management staff perceive their own role in the management of institutional communication as related to institutional excellence.
5. Get to know how administration, academic staff and students perceive the role of institutional communication in relation to institutional excellence.
6. Find out how and whether the communication management unit in private entrepreneurial universities manage the institutional communication

processes and resources with a clear reference to and awareness of the institutional mission and pursuit of excellence.

7. Investigate whether and how the communication management unit in private entrepreneurial universities engage key institutional stakeholders.

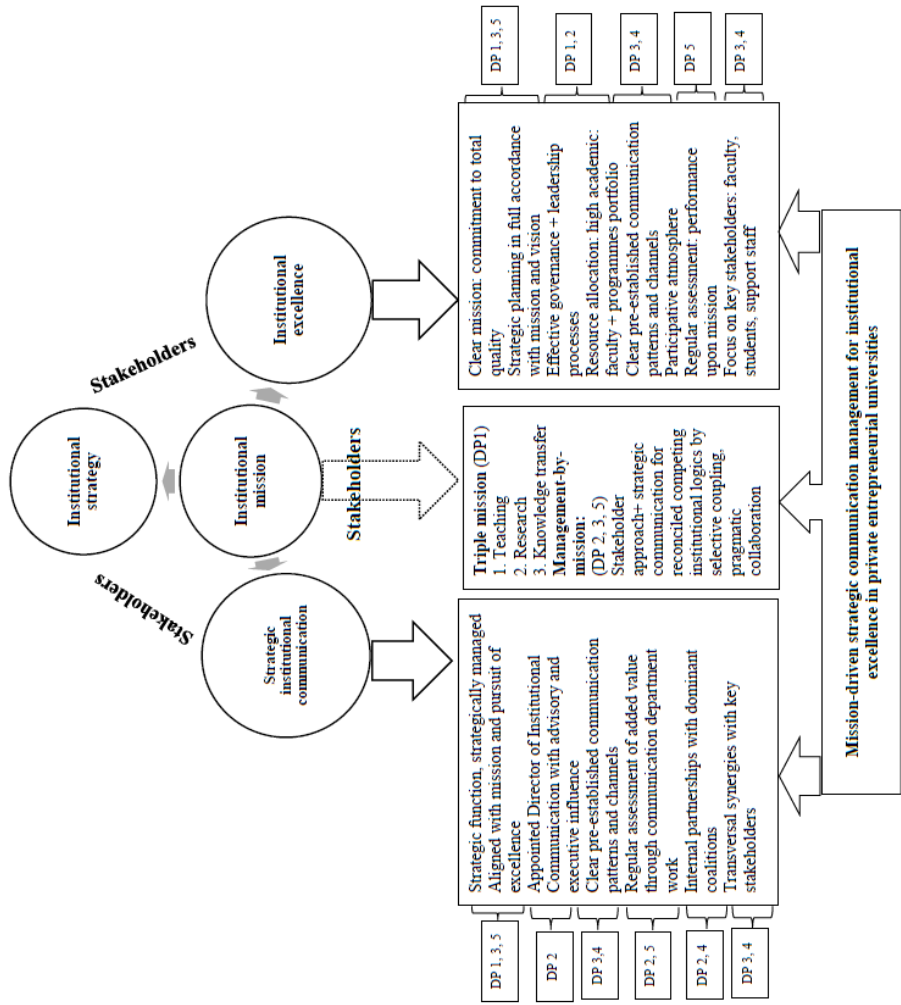
8. Get to know about the internal organization of communication management unit in private entrepreneurial universities: functions and task distribution, resources, reporting lines, transversal synergy with other organizational units.

9. Inquire into the status and position of the DirCom or equivalent appointed responsible for institutional communication.

The dissertation author has merged key theoretical insights from extensive review of scientific literature and contributions from thorough analysis of previous empirical findings into a comprehensive summary table of the essential prerequisites and expected characteristics of excellence in communication management and institutional excellence to be explored empirically in the three selected private entrepreneurial universities (table 33). These contributions have been assembled into a comprehensive empirical research model (figure 20) together with the insights on the triple mission of contemporary entrepreneurial universities and the management-by-mission approach to conciliating competing institutional logics and favouring stakeholder involvement in mission-fulfilment and pursuit of institutional excellence.

The conceptual model for empirical research displays the compilation of theoretical and analytical insights from part I and part II, with the 5 defended propositions assigned to the different items.

Figure 20. Conceptual model for empirical research



Own elaboration

Table 33. Comprehensive summary of prerequisites and characteristics of excellence in communication management and institutional excellence

Pre-requisites and characteristics for excellence in communication management and institutional excellence	
1. Participative atmosphere. 2. Clear pre-established communication patterns and channels within and amongst departments across organizational structure. 3. Institutional members well-informed on university initiatives. 4. Facilitated collective discussion of set institutional objectives.	
Excellence in communication management	Institutional excellence
5. High identification with institutional culture + mission	5. Clear mission: declaration of total quality
6. Commitment to quality	6. Effective governance + leadership processes
7. Coupling with communication-oriented HGB	7. Mission-based/driven strategic planning
8. Highly-qualified communication management staff (for sub-functions)	8. Resource allocation for high-quality academic offer
9. Expertise in strategic planning + advising senior management	9. Qualified and dedicated faculty a) Cognitive and social competence (empathy) b) Role model for students c) Continuous professional + personal development d) Teamwork for research
10. Alignment with governance through Dircom directly reporting to CEO/ member of HGB	
11. Well-developed listening structures + techniques	
12. Self-assessment of added value	10. Regular review/assessment of performance
13. Strategy for overall communication: listening and messaging	11. Rich relational capital
14. Internal partnerships with dominant coalitions in structural units= integration +intensive collaboration	12. Focus on key stakeholders: a) Faculty b) Students
15. Transversal synergies & common projects	

Own elaboration from: (Ruben, 2007) ; (Salmi, 2009) ; (Dozier et al., 2013); (Brusoni et al., 2014); Naval (cfr. (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015a) ; (Vercic & Zeffass, 2016)(Uribe et al., 2016); (Kok & McDonald, 2017); (Miranda, 2017).

Table 34 comprises defended propositions of this thesis and the prerequisites and characteristics with the assigned numbers: the four common features 1-4; excellence in communication management (5-15) and institutional excellence (5-12).

Table 34. Defended propositions and prerequisites for excellent communication and institutional excellence

Defended proposition	Excellence in communication management	Institutional excellence
1. Communication function strategic + integrated into mission-driven strategy.	5,6	5,7,8
2. Communication management function entrusted to empowered and qualified structural unit whose DirCom directly reports to HGB.	7,8,9,10	3,6,9,12
3. Clearly identified institutional stakeholders + established patterns and channels for engagement and alignment with the institutional mission and strategy.	1-4: 11,13,14,15	1-4; 6, 9,11,
4 Organizational structure facilitates balance between centralization and autonomy and the integration of internal and external communication	1-4: 11,13,14,15	1-4; 6,12
5. Regular assessment of mission-oriented generated contents and stakeholder relations.	12	10,11,12

Own elaboration

With an open declaration of the institutional mission as a commitment to pursue total quality (excellence), the institution publicly promises its stakeholders and wide society to strive for excellence in all its performance areas, including communication management. Thus, the parallelism and interrelation emerging from the prerequisites number 5 under both headings. Effective governance requires leadership in all areas of performance and ad hoc processes with sufficient resources. Thus, having a full-fledged institutional communication management unit with a qualified director (Dircom) is a strategic decision that demonstrate effective governance to ensure professionalized communication management and alignment of the whole organization with a mission-driven strategy. Hence, the need to regularly assess identification of key stakeholders and their engagement with

the institutional mission and continuous alignment of all structural units with the institutional strategy designed to fulfil the mission and enact the institutional values. In the case of a university, this requires a sound equilibrium between the inherent diversity and required autonomy of academic units with an intelligent degree of centralization in order to maintain consistency, cohesion and safeguard the unique institutional identity. This balance demands coordination, synergy and integration, hence the significance of integrated and management of internal and external communication with a certain level of formalization in terms of structure, established patterns and channels as these demonstrate openness, trust, transparency and a serious commitment with clearly identified stakeholders and their legitimate needs and rights. All these aspects have been assembled in the 5 defended propositions to be empirically tested.

1.4 Research methods and data gathering techniques

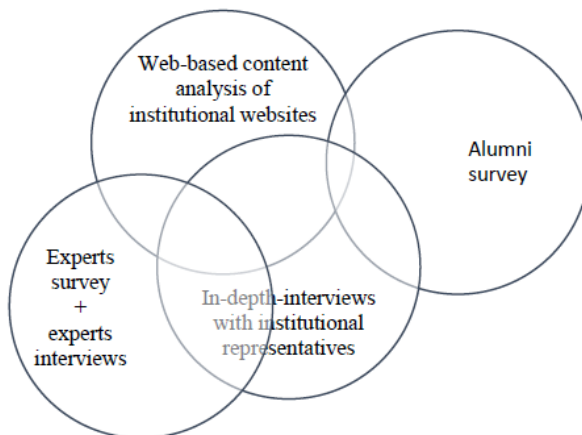
The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods enhances the solidness and reliability to findings and conclusions (Conde, Rosa, & Ruiz San Román, 2005); (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2001);(Jenner, Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004). These two methodological approaches with diverse data collection techniques from different sources corroborate data and methodological triangulation, which help to gain a better understanding about complex social phenomena like institutional communication in contemporary private universities and to strengthen the researcher's stance.

Data source triangulation implies using a variety of sources to increase validity (Baxter & Jack, 2008). To this end, the researcher collected primary data through interviews with different stakeholders of the selected universities: executive board members, communication department staff members, Directors of communication, other administrative employees of different areas, departments and levels, academic staff representatives and students. Alumni of the three examined institutions were surveyed. Besides, experts external to the universities were consulted through qualitative interviews and survey questionnaires. Secondary data was gathered from institutional portals or websites, institutional social media, printed institutional materials and on-site observation (billboards for special events, settings, buildings, offices and facilities on campus). Other sources include webpages of world university rankings, digital news media items about the chosen universities.

Methodological triangulation defined as the “observation of a research issue from at least two different points” (Jenner et al., 2004) is also applied as a validation strategy through the use of various data collection methods to compare results and cross-check similarity, repetition or deviation. Survey research has been used to collect data from Alumni and experts. In both cases, self-administered questionnaires were designed (Check & Schutt, 2012).

The author has applied at least two combined methods to examine all the identified prerequisites and characteristics of institutional and communicative excellence included in the mentioned table 33 under the light of their mutual interdependence mediated by the management-by-mission paradigm to conciliate competing institutional logics. Alumni survey shares the exploration field with Web-based content analysis and in-depth interviews; expert survey and expert interviews share the exploration field examined through Web-based content analysis and in-depth interviews with institutional members. Finally, the 56 interviews held with different stakeholders of the chosen universities allowed the dissertation author to compare and contrast the secondary data obtained through web-based content analysis. Therefore, methodological triangulation has been achieved by applying at least to two different methods to explore the same phenomena, as illustrated in figure 21.

Figure 21. Achieved methodological triangulation



Own elaboration

The author conducted an exploratory study through Alumni survey in order to corroborate the main features included in the conceptualization of institutional excellence and some of the shared features with excellent communication management (summarized in table 33) and also to explore how these features

are applicable to the university the respondents represent. The experts survey and additional expert interviews have been conducted to explore the phenomenon of communication management in universities and the strategic level it should have to correspond to the conceptualization of excellent communication management summarized in table 33 as well as additional insights from the literature and analytical reviews in part I and part II. The Web-based content analysis of institutional websites and the in-depth interviews with institutional representatives were conducted in order to corroborate the consistence and coherence between the portrayal of the institution via their official Website and the institutional reality disclosed by its members.

The individual in-depth interviews were conducted on campus during visits to Argentina and Spain in two consecutive years at different times (Spring and Autumn); fieldwork in Lithuania was conducted during summer and Autumn of 2018. The duration of interviews ranges from 40 to 90 minutes, all of them recorded for further qualitative thematic latent content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013);(Braun & Clarke, 2006); (2007; Vaismoradi, M. et al.(2013); Žydzūnaitė, V. (2017). The dissertation author held in-depth interviews with key internal stakeholders of the three selected universities: faculty members, students' representatives and administration staff. University governance representatives and institutional communication department staff members have been also included. The Directors of communication are considered internal experts, thus interviews with them were usually longer. The number, length and kind of interviews vary according to the size and scope of each institution, with an average of 20 interviews per institution.

Research techniques for secondary and primary data collection used in this dissertation will be briefly presented with more detail.

Descriptive content analysis (CA) has been implemented to examine Web-based information of free access in the Internet. The institutional portals of the three selected universities have been analysed prior to the interviews and later on re-visited for data confirmation, tracking of changes and deeper acquaintance with the institutions. CA is a research technique widely used by communication and management research (Neuendorf, 2016);(Jenner et al., 2004). Observable content (ranging from texts and images to real objects) can be coded and thus become measurable and verifiable data. This unobtrusive, unstructured and context-sensitive technique is suitable to operate with large quantity of data and focused on the observed communication artefact itself

(text, images, object) rather than on individuals involved in the communication context (Wester, 2005). One more advantage of CA is the unbiased outcome, compared to other techniques like questionnaire surveys, where the questions may be obtrusive, misleading or misunderstood and the answers less objective or unwilling. A distinctive element of this method is the coding scheme and the pertaining code book with categories and measurement specifically designed for the sample units. The coding process comprises the development of classification rules by which categories or concepts are assigned coding units. Data is replicable and systematic with the help of code books or forms. CA can be applied to Web-based content when researchers seek to examine trends and patterns that may change rapidly, but data can be registered and downloaded in a given period of time (from two days to five months (McMillan, 2000). Rose et al (2014) highlight the benefits of Internet as a facilitator of CA application to business communication and management research (Rose, Spinks, & Canhoto, 2014).

Web-based content and its analysis is of vital importance in contemporary organizational research. Organizational management is facing a cultural shift where internal communication has a key role to play and the corporate website is considered as the axis around which internal communication can pivot (Fernández Beltrán, 2007). Most institutional Websites can cater for both (internal and external) publics by placing links to an Intranet or Institutional Portal for registered institutional users. The dissertation author considers the institutional Website a relevant communication tool for all stakeholders, not only internal ones. In fact, institutional Websites are usually addressed to general publics and at the same time allow segmentation and re-direction to more specialized contents.

The author conducted Web-based CA under the assumption that institutional websites have become online entrepreneurial projects per se and can be considered an electronic extension of the enterprise, like a reflection of the corporation. Jankowski et al. (Jankowski & Makela, 2010) adhere to the idea that institutional Websites are becoming an increasingly popular tool of self-presentation. This medium is a kind of window into institutional performance, information on students' academic performance and the implemented measures to assess learning outcomes. One more proof of the pertinence of analysing university Website content is the mismatch of visual and textual elements of institutional websites in the communicated message referred to HE purposes: consistency can be only found with private institutional purposes rather than with public ones (Saichaie & Morpew, 2014).

These are just a few examples to illustrate the pertinence of conducting content analysis of university Websites as a mirror that may reflect institutional communication management, assuming that there is an organizational unit responsible for the generation, coordination and management of institutional Web content. The Website can constitute an entrance into institutional identity, mission, culture, the relational capital of each community, the organizational structure and processes by which the different stakeholders interact, the outcomes of these interactions and their impact on the institution and society.

Thus, Web-based content analysis of secondary data is conducted to disclose these aspects:

- Existence of a communication department, its composition, position, status, internal organization, function distribution, interaction with the rest of the organizational units;
- Evidence of coordination and management of institutional communication across the institutional structure (academic units, departments);
- Degree of transversal synergy and integration of communication management with stakeholders across organizational structure;
- Consistency with mission, vision, values and strategic goals in the discourse across different structural units, communication tools, channels.
- Evidence of institutional cultural aspects: inclusion, transparency, openness, enacted institutional values; search for excellence, quality.
- Degree of communicative input related to institutionalization of quality measurements and external evaluations, such as accreditations and rankings;
- Level of stakeholders' engagement with the institution through available interactive communication channels

The dissertation author believes that Web-based content analysis can reveal *how* the institution chooses to present itself to the public, *who* addresses the targeted institutional stakeholders (*to whom*); *what* it chooses to tell them, and the means used (discourse style, tone, channels) to communicate its commitment to a shared university mission combined with its institutional unique promise.

Secondary data can be interpreted, contrasted and validated by the selected categories and coding schemes derived from theoretical supporting framework, as well as primary data obtained from interviews and experts'

panel survey questionnaire and interviews. The author has designed her own forms for the analysis of Web-based contents available institutional Websites of selected universities.

The author has also designed a brief questionnaire for a survey addressed to Alumni of the three selected HEIs to obtain data from former institutional members with the perspective of a graduate already working in leading positions in other organizations with particular missions and understanding of quality and excellence. This Alumni survey can be considered an exploratory research as explained by Shields and Rangarjan (2013) who state that such kind of research is used to establish priorities and improve the final research through informal and formal approaches, ranging from interviews, case studies, focus groups, to pilot studies (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013). As focus groups were logistically impracticable, a survey questionnaire was been designed with prompts and questions that could help in the development of an operational definition of institutional excellence by testing the identified prerequisites derived from the literature sources and previous empirical studies summarized in table 33. In this particular case, the study was not meant as a pre-test for a further questionnaire, but rather as an exploratory study prior to the use of other methods in order to corroborate conceptualizations that would add strength to the conceptual framework applied in the empirical research model and the elaboration of coding themes for the descriptive content analysis of interviews (Shields & Tajalli, 2006)s.

The author has also designed a 20-question survey questionnaire for communication experts to be answered with Likert-scale disagreement-agreement options and the possibility to make additional comments. As not all contacted experts were able or willing to fill in the survey questionnaire, six of them were interviewed in person.

The author has elaborated descriptive coding systems for the thematic analysis of the qualitative data gathered from additional expert interviews and in-depth interviews (Treadwell, 2013). These coding systems consist of tables with categories and subcategories or codes derived from theoretical conceptualizations and analytical findings contained in parts I and II as well as some inferred by the author from the data itself along the data collection process analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013);(Braun & Clarke, 2006); (2007; Fox, N.J. (2004); Vaismoradi, M. et al.(2013); Žydzūnaitė, V. (2017).

In-depth and expert interviews have been chosen to compare and contrast secondary data and get a deeper understanding of the phenomena of communication management and its impact on excellence in each examined

institution. This dissertation resorts to theory-driven interviewing within the critical realist approach to research methodology (Smith & Elger, 2014).

Table 35. Empirical research objectives, methods and defended propositions

Research objectives	Defended propositions (DP)	Research techniques & methods
1. Analyse how private entrepreneurial universities manage their institutional communication in relation to its contribution to institutional excellence and the institutional mission	1, 2, 4	Web-based content analysis Document analysis; Thematic content analysis In-depth interviews; expert interviews; surveys
2. Discover the criteria that underlie the institutional communication management of private entrepreneurial universities implemented by the institutional department(s), and/or staff in charge of this function.	1, 3, 5	Web-based content analysis Document analysis; Thematic content analysis In-depth interviews; expert interview; surveys
3. Discover how governance body members understand the role of institutional communication and the management of this function in relation to institutional excellence.	1, 2, 4	Web-based content analysis Thematic content analysis In-depth interviews; expert interviews; surveys
4. Find out how the staff of the communication management unit perceive their own role in the management of institutional communication as related to institutional excellence	2,3, 4,5	In-depth interviews; expert interview Thematic content analysis
7. Investigate whether and how the communication management unit in private entrepreneurial universities engage key institutional stakeholders.	1, 2, 4, 5	Web-based content analysis In-depth interviews Thematic content analysis
8. Get to know about the internal organization of communication management unit in private entrepreneurial universities: functions and task distribution, resources, reporting lines, transversal synergy with other organizational units.	2, 3, 4,5	Web-based content analysis Document analysis In-depth interviews Thematic content analysis
9. Inquire into the status and position of the DirCom or equivalent appointed responsible for institutional communication.	1,4,5,6	Web-based content analysis In-depth interviews Thematic content analysis

Own elaboration

In the field of organizational studies, senior managers may be mistakenly considered as the most knowledgeable informants on key issues of

management policies; however empirical and theoretical contributions seem to prove that more often than expected middle and junior management may have better knowledge of the current state and specific matters of the organization (Macdonald & Hellgren, 2004). The selection of key informants as primary source of information on various topics implies strategic rather than random sampling, since the researcher looks for specialized knowledge and specific contexts.

Regarding the structure and script or scenario for key informant interviews, it is often said that there is barely no structure or the minimal guidelines, thus the denomination of unstructured or semi-structured. In-depth expert and/or key informant interviews imply plasticity and flexibility and this is one of the main distinguishing features if compared to questionnaire surveys.

The author has sought to enact the key traits of a critical realist interviewer (active, investigative and analytically-informed orientation) in order to generate relevant data by focusing on specific events and examples; enquiring for details and implications questioning possible inconsistencies with other data sources; surveying the chosen position or stance of respondents to speak about certain issues; holding interviews sequenced according to the roles and mutual influence of key informants in the examined organization. Guidelines and prompting questions have been used to facilitate a fluent process during key informants interviewing (cfr. (Blackstone, 2012);(Flinders, 1997). This kind of flexible script stems from the dissertation's author conceptualization of strategic institutional communication in entrepreneurial universities, thoroughly discussed in part I and analysed in part II.

All the empirical research instruments created by the author (content analysis forms with their coding schemes, qualitative interviews scripts, survey questionnaires) are available in the Appendices.

As an important asset of this methodological framework, the author highlights the vantage point from which the three institutions chosen for this multiple case study are examined: the information each institution displays about itself through various means and channels (Website, printed material, campus settings, social media); the independent information available about the institutions in external sources (governmental organizations, international accreditation and ranking agencies, etc.) and the first-hand and original information the researcher is able to collect during personal visits to the institutions, personal contact with several institutional community members through the held interviews. The researcher believes that the methodological proposal can guarantee solid data gathering and analysis, with the added value

of data and method triangulation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The empirical research methodology based on retroductive inquiry and multiple case study allows replicability and applicability to other similar cases both quantitatively and qualitatively (Gibbs, 2018, pp. 6-7); (McEvoy & Richards, 2006); (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015).

IV. Empirical findings, contributions and conclusions

Chapter 1. Empirical findings

1.1. Findings from web-based content analysis

Findings are presented in this section beginning with the results of analysis secondary data collected from institutional websites of the three explored universities of this multiple-case study, namely Universidad de Navarra (UNAV), Universidad Austral (Austral Arg) and PEU-Lt. Then follows the thorough analysis of primary data collected through surveys with Alumni of the three explored universities, expert surveys and expert interviews. The last section contains analysis of data obtained from in-depth interviews with institutional members of each explored university.

1.1.1 Web-based descriptive Content Analysis of the selected HEIs

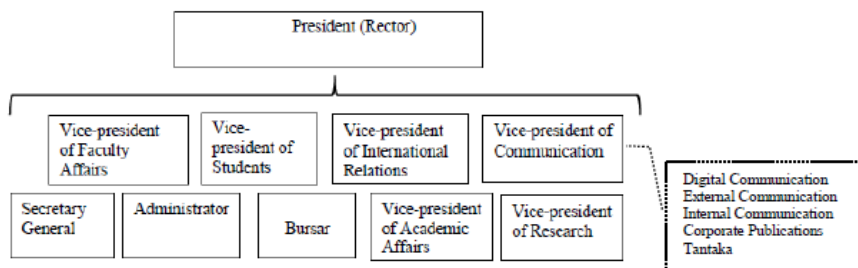
Organizational members and external publics can easily access information on what organizations say about themselves by visiting the institutional Website, the digital face of the institution. Visual identity norms stipulated in brandbooks are available only in UNAV institutional Website. AustralArg has a full media kit for internal use and PEU-Lt t is preparing a new brandbook, also for internal use.

The organigrams of the three examined HEIs are not available for download either, but information from Websites has been used to present the current organizational design, as relevant for the topics discussed in this thesis.

UNAV governance organigram is the most complete and fully available with active links to access each Board member's brief biography and their supervised areas.

As expressed in UNAV Website, managers at all levels follow the principles of joint responsibility and participation, with central services reporting directly to the Office of the Executive Council.

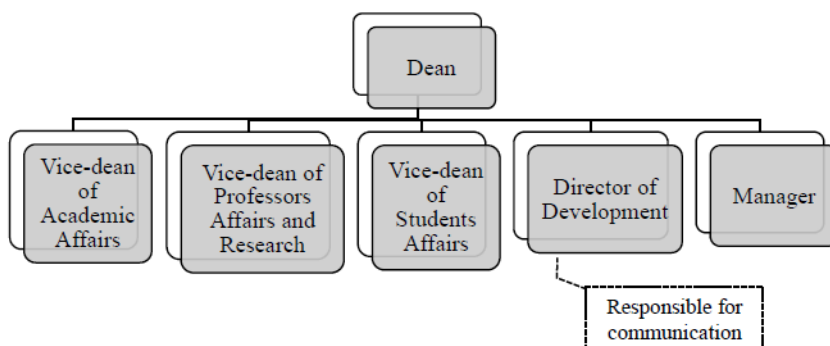
Figure 22. Structure of the Office of the Executive Council of UNAV



Source: own elaboration from UNAV Website information

The management of academic units is entrusted to a Board (with the same structure in each unit) consisting of a dean, Director of development, a manager and 3 or 4 vice-deans.

Figure 23. Board of Management composition in UNAV academic units



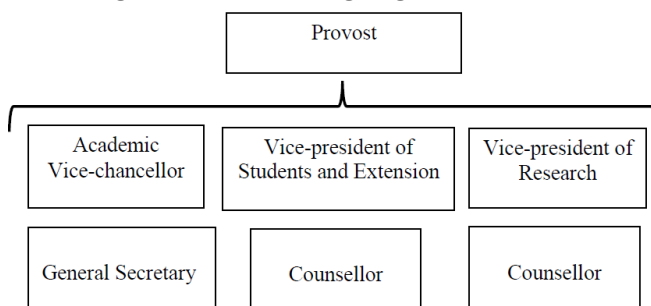
Source: own elaboration from UNAV Website information

Each academic unit may distribute the areas assigned to vice-deans according to its needs or to the personal skills and competences of the vice-deans. Qualitative interview data allowed the author to know that the persons responsible for communication assigned to each academic unit do not belong to the Board of management. Instead, they report directly to the Director of development of their unit.

AustralArg leadership is in the hands of the Higher Council Permanent Commission consisting of seven members.

Other members conform the full Higher Council: 8 school deans, 1 head of institute, the hospital general head and head, plus two counsellors.

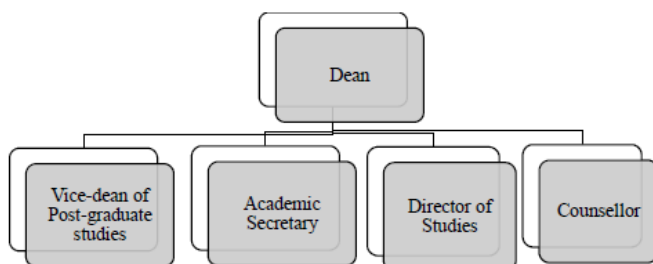
Figure 24. AustralArg Higher Council Permanent Commission



Source: own elaboration from AustralArg Website information

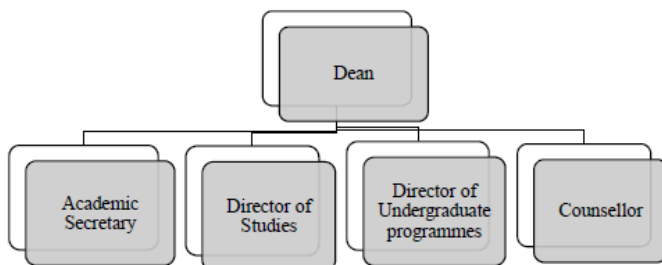
Differently from UNAV, the academic units in AustralArg do not follow the same structures: some have vice-deans (school of communication, IAE Business School), others have directors of undergraduate studies or programmes.

Figure 25. Leadership structure of AustralArg School of Communication



Source: own elaboration from AustralArg Website information

Figure 26. Leadership structure of AustralArg School of Business Administration



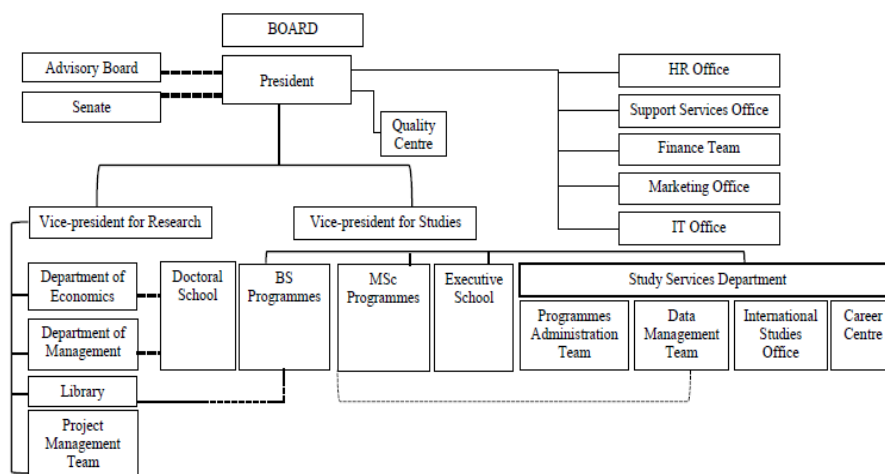
Source: own elaboration from AustralArg Website information

Each academic unit has a Dean, and Academic Secretary and one or two counsellors, but the areas entrusted to them are not mentioned. The fact that each academic unit can make decision on their own leadership structure is a visible sign of their autonomy.

The number of members in AustralArg leadership teams of the 9 academic units is in most cases the same, but the ranks and positions vary in accordance with the seniority and size of the academic unit.

Regarding PEU-Lt, the whole university is like one academic unit, where undergraduate and graduate study programmes have directors and the doctoral school and the executive school have their own deans. This structure has been undergoing several changes. Figure 27 displays the last available information.

Figure 27. PEU-Lt organizational structure (until December 2018)



Own elaboration

According to the information available in the Website, the board is elected for 4 years, has 7 members, who are not included in any of the structural units. This Board elects the President, approves the university's strategy and assesses the information on the university performance.

The institutional Website also mentions the Rectorate as the Management Group consisting of nine members (President, vice-president for Studies, Head of Personnel, Marketing Director, Corporate Relations Director, Head of Economics department, Head of Management department, Quality director, Dean of PhD Studies. The Senate is an advisory body on the University's strategy for studies and research and is formed by members elected for three years: four PEU-Lt Professors, four professors from other higher education

institutions and/or renowned business representatives and three students delegated by the Student Association for one year and three invited professors from institutions of higher education. PEU-Lt also has a Fund, but it is not placed in the official structure.

As the author claims in her DP 4, the organizational structure can have a significant impact on the engagement and alignment of all structural units when there is balance between centralized and autonomous management of communication functions. This can be seen in UNAV and AustralArg, though with certain differences. Noticeably, UNAV displays autonomy of the different structural units (schools, research centres, institutes, hospital, Business School) regarding contents (emphasis on certain issues, timing of news release, approach). At the same time institutional visual identity is safeguarded with unified templates and the same structure and sections. Meanwhile, each structural unit in AustralArg (schools, research centres, institutes, hospital, Business School) has its own homepage with differences in design, structure and contents. However, all of them have an active link to the institutional Website of the university. PEU-Lt is a much smaller organization with a different structure all in one single structural unit with one institutional Website. However, each department apparently administers its own contents in the assigned sections of the shared webpage. In terms of design, UNAV Websites may appear as the least modern and least attractive, but it has better content management, which is coordinated and supervised by centralized digital communication services directly accountable to the Vice-rectorate for Institutional Communication, thus cohesiveness and consistency are safeguarded.

To sum up this subsection, it can be stated that the communication management function in UNAV appears to be the most centralized and aligned in terms of structure and design of the Website of the whole university and that of each academic unit. This visual homogeneity strengthens unified institutional identity and reinforces the brand recognition, while preserving the autonomy of academic units in their contents. Besides, the unique visual digital identity facilitates navigation of internal and external users who can easily search and compare the required information displayed in the institutional websites with the same format.

1.2 Web-based content quantitative analysis results

Appendix 2 contains all the Web-based CA forms filled in with the data collected from the three institutional Websites. The main findings are commented next.

1.2.1 On the Institutional Communication Department (ICD) of the selected private entrepreneurial universities.

UNAV has a very well-established ICD, with a clear internal organization and all the required information for anyone interested in interacting with the institution (see Appendix 2 a).

The status and position of the ICD is proved by the fact that its head is the Vice-rector for Communication, therefore a member of the highest governance body. This also proves the formal coupling with supportive and communication-oriented leadership, as well as alignment with governance through a Director of Communication (in this case a vice-rector) who reports directly to the executive board (the rectorate). This allows to confirm the DP 2 regarding the empowered and qualified structural unit to whom the communication management function is entrusted.

Having a full-fledged team under the leadership of a vice-rector for communication is a strong evidence of the relevance granted to the institutional communication. These facts confirm the status and position gained by the DirCom and the communication management unit, as stated in DP 2.

The institutional communication team manages centralized internal, external and digital communication functions with a head for each of these areas, in coordination with communication appointees in each academic unit in charge of the communication function and in direct reporting to the different areas (internal, external, digital). This fact serves to support DP 4 referred to the impact of organizational structure on centralized management of communication functions. The clear pre-established communication patterns and channels within and amongst departments across organizational structure guarantee the formal paths for participative atmosphere, considered one of the key features of institutional excellence (Ruben, 2007); (Salmi, 2009); (Brusoni et al., 2014); (Kok & McDonald, 2017).

Other features of excellence in communication management can be inferred: integration of all structural units through transversal synergies and common projects, coordinated by the ICD, as a centralized service. The analysed data also reveals that there are pre-established communication lines with key

institutional stakeholders (faculty, students and administration staff) to interact with the ICD and reach highest governance body for communication-related issues. All this can be considered sufficient evidence for the DP 3, by which the dissertation author states the vital need to provide communication channels and patterns that satisfy the legitimate needs of clearly identified stakeholders.

Openness to the institutional community is also evident with the release of a Newsletter accessible to all, together with real time communication tools and suggestion box. Provided active links and personal contacts of each responsible person in the rectorate and the different academic units facilitates immediate interaction of all institutional stakeholders and any person willing to contact the institution for specific questions. Qualitative primary data will allow a closer and more detailed look. In brief, these features correspond with the elements enumerated as prerequisites for excellence communication management that contribute to institutional excellence, as supported by multiple scholars (Ruben, 2007); (Salmi, 2009); (Brusoni et al., 2014); Naval (cfr. (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015a); (Vercic & Zeffass, 2016);(Uribe et al., 2016); (Kok & McDonald, 2017); (Miranda, 2017).

Evidence to confirm DP 2 can be found in the three explored universities, regarding the DirCom's full-right membership in and direct reporting to the Highest Governance body. AustralArg displays some features of institutional communication management similar to UNAV, with an appointed Director of Communication as head of the ICD. However, this person is not a full-right member of executive board and the team is smaller, it does not cover the digital area, presumably left to the autonomous management of each structural unit, though there is no evidence of communication appointees in each academic unit. An interesting feature is the direct access to the ICD sub-site straight from the homepage a scrollable drop-down menu, where institutional communication has its own section under the first header "institutional areas", together with mission, values, history, quality, development.

PEU-Lt does not have an ICD and there is no mention of institutional communication management neither in the main menu, nor in the other headers. The Corporate relations director and the marketing director are members of the rectorate, but their functions and areas of work are not described. Under the first header "University", the scrollable drop-down menu offers 21 options, and none of them mentions communication or any related term. The first option in this menu is "about us", with 7 sub-options, PEU-Lt Management structure being the 5th option. Once here, the Rectorate is the

first option on the list, where a Corporate relations director appears as a rectorate member in the English version, but the updated Lithuanian version does not include it, simply because this position no longer exists. As it will be revealed later on through qualitative primary data analysis, the marketing and sales department is partly in charge of the communication function (mostly marketing communications oriented to external publics) and the director of this department is also a member of the rectorate. To access this information, it is necessary to click the first header “University” on the Homepage and in the scrollable drop-down, go to option number 5 labelled “PEU-Lt community” and once there, click on “Administration” and keep scrolling until the marketing and sales department appears on 12th place with full names and email-addresses of the 10 team members, two of them with communication-related positions. No embedded links or telephone numbers available to facilitate contact. Putting it bluntly, it takes many steps and persistence to find the contact person responsible for institutional communication in this HEI.

This subsection has provided some insightful evidence for an initial confirmation of defended propositions 1, 2, 3 and 4. Further analysis will shed more light on the current state of communication management in the three explored HEIs.

1.2.2 Available communication resources with key institutional stakeholders
Institutional Websites may also provide access to pre-established communication lines with key institutional stakeholders (faculty, students and administration staff) as a sign of the participative atmosphere and openness of the institution towards its own community and society at large. These constitute the core of the defended proposition 3 about the relevant contribution of strategic communication management to institutional excellence when universities count on well-developed and regularly monitored communication channels and patterns with key stakeholders.

A table in Appendix 2b displays results on the available communication resources for stakeholders who wish to interact with the institution. UNAV has a very established segmentation of information addressed to different stakeholder groups, including a personalized search tab on the Homepage with 7 profiles. Meanwhile, AustralArg offers 4 profiles and PEU-Lt only 1, for prospective students. Another interesting fact is the Newsletter available to all publics, compared to PEU-Lt newsletter addressed only to employees and at the moment no longer released. As primary qualitative data will reveal, the

marketing department intends to recover this communication tool. PEU-Lt has the widest offer of social media choices, including VKontakte (a leader in Russian territories), to cater for the needs of Russian-speaking stakeholders. Although more does not unambiguously mean better, a wider variety of available channels to make communication with stakeholders more fluent is advisable. Even more so, taking into account the need to cater for preferences according to the range of various cultures, location and time zone, age groups and technical possibilities of the university community members and other stakeholders. Institutional relations with students should occupy a prominent place in the strategic agenda, thus it is relevant to see how this is reflected in the attention paid to this neuralgic communication work in the institutional Websites.

As discussed in previous parts of this thesis, one of the key primary stakeholders of a university should be students, addressed as the same persons who engage in a relationship with the institution along their different life-cycles: as prospective students, enrolled current students and graduates (Alumni). Besides, these same individuals may later on become employees and parents of future students, hence the vital importance of building a rich and enduring relational capital from the first moment of the university life experience. Appendix 2c displays a table where available communication resources specifically focused on students. The first subcategory (presence of a student-focused section) shows an ad hoc header in the Homepage of the Website and the number of clicks or sub-sites the students need to navigate through until they find and tailored resources and relevant information addressed specifically to them.

PEU-Lt appears more information-oriented and the university life portfolio is entirely self- governed by the PEU-LT SA (students' association), with the support of the institution. AustralArg and UNAV again demonstrate well-developed institutional channels to make not only information, but also formation opportunities available to students. Significant attention is paid to students' engagement in CSR and volunteering activity, a mission-driven trademark of institutions at the service of society. From this the author infers a supporting argument for DP 5, which deals with the strategic generation of institutional communication contents in UNAV and AustralArg, which reflects their sense of the broader institutional mission expected from contemporary universities.

1.2.3 Media relations

This part of the Web-based CA shows the approach of the examined institutions regarding media relations from the point of view of making themselves easy to find and open to provide requested information. The subcategories selected by the author attempt to reflect the inquiries that media representatives may have before requesting personal contact with the institutional spokesperson.

Appendix 2d contains a table with the information that media representatives could find in order to contact the institutions without previous personal contact. The results do not mean that the institutions are more or less actively engaged in media relations in terms of quantity of news released; neither does it reflect a more positive or negative opinion formed and then broadcast to the public. The different media may or may not contact the examined institutions to cover emerging issues of potential interest to society and about which the university could contribute expertise of researchers and academic staff. Nevertheless, the more available information in the Website, the better for both sides, the media outlet and the institutions: it saves time and efforts; it demonstrates openness and transparency, it positions its human resources as referents and experts in different fields and it allows the institution to provide ready-for-quote branded material, in accordance with their institutional culture and style.

Excellence in institutional communication cannot do without proper relations with media representatives, who most often act as the bridge between organizations and society. This external communication function is vital for the reputation of any institution willing to be known for their responsible performance and the quality of their services. Long-term relations with a third voice to endorse the institutional excellence is an extremely important part of institutional communication management. This requires the achieved excellence as the content to be communicated and established channels to be reached. Thus, the information available in the institutional Website can reveal a more proactive approach to relations with these vital external stakeholders, as stated in the defended propositions 3 and 5, referred to communication patterns and channels with stakeholders and carefully chosen channels to disseminate generated contents. Primary qualitative data will provide more details on how the three chosen institution approach this neuralgic task.

These CA sections have provided a first impression about how and what the selected HEIs choose to present themselves in their digital version. The information available in the Website and subpages sheds light on the presence,

structure and functions of the institutional communication department, its status and position in the organizational structure and the interaction possibilities granted to institutional stakeholders. All these explored elements constitute the object of empirical analysis by which the author can initially confirm the statements expressed in defended propositions 2 (DirCom appointment, status and empowerment for decision-making), 3 (stakeholders clearly identified and addressed through ad hoc channels and patterns), 4 (the influence of organizational structure on centralized and autonomous communication management), and 5 (wholesome contents that disseminate information and formation, beyond market-driven selling propositions).

1.2.4 Web-based CA of textual references by selected categories

References to university rankings and accreditations

The triple excellence and triple mission of the university (teaching, research and knowledge transfer, already discussed in part I) has also been the object of Web-based CA by including key words mentioned in this respect. Tables available in Appendix 2 display the results regarding the presence and place of these key words in the institutional Websites, sub-sites and pages. Understandably, an institution includes these references as a token of external acknowledgement of institutional achievements assessed by widely known entities after thorough examination and providing evidence of serious commitment with the declared purposes. These textual references partially confirm the author's DP 5 about the generation of contents that reflect the triple institutional mission, in this case communicated via digital platforms. The seniority, size and wider range of disciplines and fields of science are logically relatable to the higher level of achievements and recognition. UNAV is the largest and oldest, Austral is heading towards its 28th year of performance and PEU-Lt is celebrating its 20th year. More years do not necessarily result in higher quality or achieved excellence, since both UNAV and Austral hold similar positions in some world rankings and have obtained similar accreditations, notwithstanding the fact that UNAV has been operating 40 years longer than AustralArg.

The difference may lay in the way the institutions choose to communicate their achievements to their publics. It is worth noticing that AustralArg Website has a tab dedicated to rankings and accreditations in the scrollable drop-down menu of the first header in the front-page, concretely in the tab labelled "institutional", right after introducing the mission, values and brief history of the institution. It can be observed that academic authorities (rector, deans) do

not mention rankings in their welcome addresses; however, references to ranking positions held are explicitly mentioned with active hyperlinks in the enrolment sub-sites and social media posts of the different academic units. Hence, it can be inferred that rankings are being increasingly mentioned and tinted with a market-oriented communication. UNAV places the “Rankings” tab in the sub-section labelled “International Dimension” which comes as the 2nd option in the scrollable drop-down menu of the header “About the University” on the front-page. Rankings at institutional level are mentioned as an aspect of internationalization for a university located in a remote and rather small city in the north of Spain, with a large proportion of Spanish undergraduate students with tuition in Spanish language. However, this university enjoys worldwide recognition and is chosen for master and doctoral studies by the most varied nationalities of Spanish speakers and the academic offer in English is growing.

Appendix 2e displays a table with the references to rankings found in the Websites. Noticeably the Schools of Communication and Economics and Business in UNAV and AustralArg seem more engaged in this issue and assigned a prominent space for these items in their own Websites. Including also regional and by subject rankings seems a logic decision, bearing in mind the competitive regional HE market, where the most prominent universities are public entities with much longer history and visibility. These two universities hold fairly good positions in the most well-known world rankings (top 300-350) and provide well-thought introductory notes on the role and relevance of rankings, together with a brief explanation of the assessment criteria.

References to accreditations

World, regional or national rankings are not mandatory for any HEI, however accreditations may be a required license to operate in some countries. Other specific accreditations, such as those granted to excellent business schools or hospitals grant the right of admission to exclusive leagues and boost recognition, positioning and prestige. UNAV does not include in its institutional Website the information on the accreditations of its worldwide known business school IESE, nor on its prestigious clinic. Even though these strong structural units belong to the institutional set, due to their size and particular fields, they are more autonomous in their management, so rankings and accreditations for these specific units are mentioned in their own Homepages.

Contrastingly, AustralArg mentions all achievements of its different structural units in the general Website, because they are attributed to the whole institution as proof of acknowledged excellence. Logically, the same information is also available in the pertaining Websites of IAE (Austral Business School) and Hospital Austral.

Appendix 2 also contains results about explicit references to accreditations. AustralArg includes additional information on regional accreditations that may prove its acknowledged superiority amongst Latin American institutions. UNAV is at the moment an accepted candidate for AACSB and mentions other mandatory national accreditations of study programmes, but they have not been counted as adding value to acknowledgement of institutional excellence.

References to excellence

Other key words related to achievements or aims to reach higher levels of performance have been analyzed, namely: excellence, quality, success, graduate employability rate. The fact that these items are mentioned in the Websites demonstrates a certain degree of commitment to the rankings-measured excellence. By declaring their intentions in a communication channel of public access like the institutional Webpage, the institutions accept their accountability in the eyes of institutional stakeholders and society at large.

Logically, simply mentioning excellence does not imply having achieved it. Thus, the focus here is on the context and number of times the word is used by the institutions, as this may safeguard the real value of the concept or, on the contrary, its overuse may mean puffery with the subsequent loss of real worth, when not supported by actual performance and external official acknowledgement.

Appendix 2 (references to excellence) shows that the same academic units of UNAV and AustralArg have included rankings information and use the word excellence in their Website homepage to introduce their schools. Direct references to excellence were in fact fewer than the author expected to find in the institutional discourse of universities with excellent reputation and relatively high positions in rankings. On the other hand, it may a good sign that excellence does not reside in mere declarations, but rather on tangible results.

References to quality

In the conceptualization of excellence, the word quality is very often used as a synonymic or even in replacement (Brusoni et al., 2014). There are more mentions of the word 'quality' in the three Websites.

AustralArg and PEU-Lt even have a special tab in the Homepage menu; however, PEU-Lt does not use this word anywhere else, while UNAV and AustralArg academic units reflect the significance that the institution grants to quality. In Appendix 2 (references to quality) it can be seen that AustralArg stresses the institutional concern for quality as a trademark of this private university that ranks high worldwide and its gaining reputation as a demanding place with high requirements. The three HEIs have a Quality department or similar unit as a centralized service for the regular assessment of the whole institution, with a wider range of tasks in UNAV and Austral. Meanwhile, in PEU-Lt the Quality Direction is mostly focused on securing mandatory national accreditation of study programmes and the preparation for AACSB membership for executive education.

References to successful graduates and employability rate

As the theoretical insights revealed in part I, sometimes excellence and quality are mistakenly assessed in terms of success, even though universities, brands and individuals may have achieved success without outstanding quality and no real pursue of excellence (Chapleo, 2010);(Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015b). References to successful career or high employability rate of graduates have been also collected, because of their inclusion in some university rankings, the subsequent increasing attention paid by HEIs to these indexes and the benchmarking use of the terms to attract new students and persuade their parents.

UNAV rector's address refers to this issue in the following terms: “ *We strive to offer a well-rounded formation that encourages students to be more creative, innovative, caring, and relate better with others; for these reasons, this formation is also useful in finding a good job.*” Noticeably, the rector does not stress employability as the main aim of UNAV, but rather the opposite: the all-embracing formation (and not only specialized training) is the best endowment a university can grant. The rest (looking for a job, getting a good one and having a successful career) cannot be a fully guaranteed service. A similar spirit is echoed by the references made in the academic units analysed, with a particular emphasis on research-based education and the networking possibilities for internships as potential bridge to employability.

In AustralArg and PEU-Lt the context and phrases differ. PEU-Lt highlights very detailed statistics of career indicators of successful alumni on the Homepage and in the enrolment sub-site. Besides, it has dedicated one of the main headers (the 4th one) to ‘success stories’ in the main menu of the Homepage.

References to knowledge transfer

Knowledge transfer is one of the three pillars of the university’s triple mission, therefore excellent universities are expected to pursue the highest possible results in this area of performance. Thus, references to knowledge transfer have also been searched. Knowledge transfer to society implies a more disinterested kind of entrepreneurial activity related to R&D and innovation that reaches out of the academic community and benefits external agents. In this respect practically all AustralArg academic units run such kind of activities in their specific fields of expertise and have assigned a header on their front-page menu to disseminate the pertaining information. In the case of UNAV, prominent research centres and institutes have reached worldwide recognition in the biomedical sciences and engineering. Both AustralArg and UNAV offer Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and are members of Coursera platform. PEU-LT indirectly refers to “sharing knowledge and experiences of modern business” in the header “university”, but no concrete references to institutional action in this respect.

References to social mission

Closely related to the triple mission fulfilment is the concern of universities to make direct contributions to society by encouraging institutional members to take part in social care projects promoted by the university or in cooperation with other local or international organizations. Noticeably, only the school of Economics and Business management in AustralArg makes direct references to their social mission, compared to the analogic academic unit or study programmes in UNAV and PEU-Lt respectively. Again, in UNAV and AustralArg most of the academic units mention the social responsibility of their institutions and also echo the institutional declaration of mission, vision and values. On its front-page menu in the header ‘about the university’, UNAV includes a tab labelled ‘social commitment’ with 9 sub-categories ranging from socially-inclusive campus for the disabled, through environmental issues to solidarity.

Mentioned tools for CSR and social mission dissemination

The last category recorded for Web-based CA of the institutional Webpages is related to CSR and the tools implemented by the three examined HEIs. The subcategory included in this category expands the previous references to social mission by adding tangible proofs of action in this respect, like publishing reports in a transparency portal, having a well-developed fundraising structure for grants, and including a wide range of non-academic activities oriented at disinterested service to the community.

The three examined HEIs have partnerships with sponsors mostly in the form of study grants. UNAV and AustralArg also are recipients of donations for research and other projects, like new buildings in the Campus, the university hospital or clinic, a museum as cultural centre, etc. Knowledge sharing is highly institutionalized and made accessible to all digital platforms. UNAV and AustralArg have an overtly declared social commitment, which they instil in the institutional members through Third Mission projects considered as an integral part of their academic offer. In fact, these social commitment actions are available in the front-page menus under the header ‘academic offer’- university life (AustralArg) and under the header ‘university life’- events-solidarity (UNAV). PEU-Lt reveals a serious commitment with efforts to make quality private education accessible for lower income and talented youth, but the institution is not yet fully engaged in direct services to the community with other kinds of purely non-profit oriented Third Mission projects.

The analysed textual references allow the author to infer that defended propositions (DP) are validated: DP 5, as chosen contents to be explicitly mentioned in the institutional Webpages. References to quality were more numerous than those to excellence, which once again proves the interchangeable use of these two terms in the HE environment (Ruben, 2007) ; (Salmi, 2009) ; (Brusoni et al., 2014). The author asserts that UNAV and AustralArg have not overused the term “excellence” to avoid its trivialization; on the contrary, their careful choice of context where externally acknowledgement of excellence is mentioned comes with an explanation of the role and relative value of rankings for the institution. Explicit mentions of knowledge transfer and social mission are evidence of purposefully communicated triple-mission contents, which strike balance between market-driven tendencies to highlight positioning through employability rate and subject rankings. The fact that only certain academic units include information pertaining their achievements in by-subject rankings proves DP4 regarding

the degree of autonomy in handling contents that each school considers strategic: competitive advantage factor for their specific target audience and external acknowledgement of achieved excellence. In brief, textual references collected in this subsection reveal the strategic choices of content generation and contextualization in the digital channel of institutional communication, which allows to confirm DP4 (centralization and autonomy of academic units); DP5 (mission-driven contents disseminated in chosen means).

Concluding remarks

Web-based content analysis has been conducted under the assumption that institutional websites have become online entrepreneurial projects *per se* and can be considered an electronic extension of the enterprise, like a reflection of the corporation. A clear and moderately stable organizational structure signals continuity and sustainability of organizational processes and services beyond employee rotation or disruptive external factors. The continuous update of information is a sign of professionalization and image management, while the availability of complete information in a foreign language demonstrate readiness for internationalization. Accessibility of contact persons for inquiries proves the willingness of the institution to engage in cooperative dialogue and attend to the emerging needs of stakeholders. In other words, the information available, the choice of layout with a certain order and inclusion of specific options in the menus provided in institutional Websites, are all elements that respond to strategic decisions regarding what the institutions say about themselves in their digital version.

Chapter 2. Findings from Alumni surveys, experts surveys and experts interviews and in-depth interviews with institutional stakeholders

2.1 Findings from Alumni survey

This empirical research instrument has been chosen to reveal the relation between communicative excellence and institutional excellence as seen by Alumni and more particularly, to corroborate the key features of institutional excellence already discussed in part I. This stakeholder group has been selected under the presumption that Alumni of excellent HEIs are already successfully immersed in the labour market and have already acquired some work experience in different organizations, thus able to grasp the role of communication management in their own companies or institutions and to

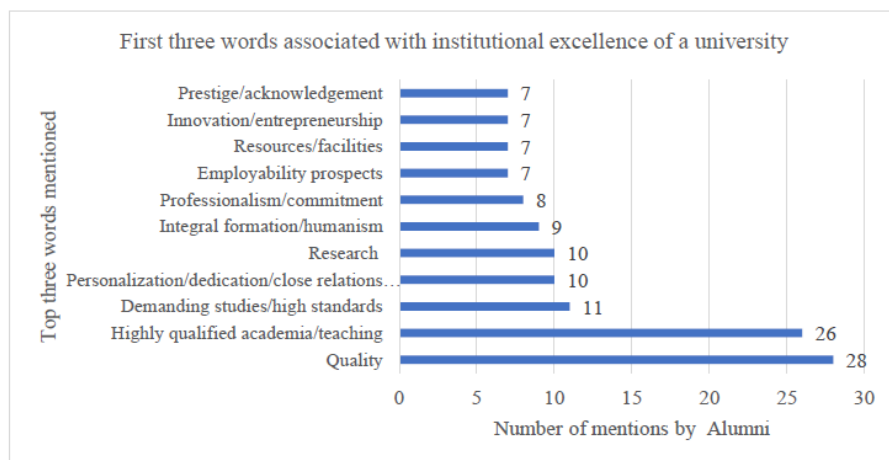
understand the impact of mission-driven strategies to achieve overall excellence with the aid of well-managed communication.

For this survey, purposeful and snow-ball sampling has been applied to get the answers from 20-35 Alumni from each of the three examined universities (Jansen, 2013);(Fink, 2003). The two initial open questions aimed at disclosing the terms that Alumni associate with institutional excellence and their evaluation of their own university as excellent with examples or evidence of achieved excellence. The next 17 close questions consist of statements followed by Likert-scale options to express the degree of importance assigned to each item. The content of these 17 statements correspond to the summarized prerequisites and characteristics for excellence in communication management and institutional excellence discussed in part I (see Table 33) of this dissertation and supported by scholarly theoretical and empirical expertise (Dahlgaard et al., 2013);(Vercic & Zerfass, 2016); (Tench, Verčič, Zerfass, Moreno, & Verhoeven, 2017);(Zerfass et al., 2018); (Ruben, 2007); (Brusoni et al., 2014); (Calvo-Mora et al., 2006); (Uribe et al., 2016). The survey includes these contents in deliberately random order: questions 4, 6, 8 and 11 refer to the common features for excellence in communication management and institutional excellence applicable to HEIs. Questions 3, 5, 7, 12-18 make direct references to institutional excellence features. Question 19 can be considered again as pertaining to the interconnection between excellent communication work that impacts the overall institutional excellence by directly supporting the creation and maintenance of a rich relational capital. Questions 9 and 10 are not derived from the mentioned comparative table of excellence features. Nevertheless, the dissertation author has included explicit references to officially assessed quality and achievements with external standards that apply to all universities at national and international levels.

Alumni of the three examined universities were contacted in several ways: individual emails, links via WhatsApp groups, posts in LinkedIn, posts in institutional Facebook accounts, emailing the person responsible for Alumni in each university and emailing personal contacts of faculty and administration staff members that the dissertation author managed to make during her scholarly visits to the sampled HEIs in the period 2016-2018. Repeated requests were sent several times by different emails and other digital channels. The final number of respondents is 81: 32 from UNAV, 22 from AustralArg and 27 from PEU-Lt. With an intentionally sought psychographic variety of respondents: males and females from a wide range of age, professions, degrees, disciplines and held positions in their current jobs.

Question 1 aimed at listing the main factors or descriptors of institutional excellence as applied to a university in order to compare the results with the main elements of excellence mentioned in the theoretical framework.

Figure 28. Alumni survey Question 1



Own elaboration

There is a significant gap between the top two most often mentioned words or elements referable to excellence and the diversification of all the other scattered choices. As it can be seen in figure 30, a large number of mentions (28), corroborate the theoretical insight that very often excellence is equalled to quality and understood as synonymic to excellence (Brusoni et al., 2014); (Harvey & Green, 1993). Then, the same word is used to characterize the expectations of an excellent institution: teaching quality, high quality of professors, of study programmes and so on. In this case, the high quality of teaching, academia or best professors and their good lectures were all added together and amount to 26, very close to 28 mentions of ‘quality’ as the most used word. As it has been already discussed, excellence and quality have become interchangeable terms indistinctively used by reputation and accreditation metrics and raising increasing awareness in current and prospective students, their families and also Alumni in search for further studies.

Question 2 aimed at a critical assessment of the surveyed Alma Mater as deserving the adjective ‘excellent’ , including a request to provide one example that illustrates their response based on their personal experience as

students. In this second question, 16 out of 27 PEU-Lt surveyed Alumni (59%) expressed a definite 'yes' and then provided examples, other 6 Alumni explained why they considered PEU-Lt the best university compared to other Lithuanian HEIs. In the case of UNAV, 28 out of 32 surveyed Alumni (87,5%) started their answer with a categorical 'yes' and provided supporting examples. Only one respondent said that excellence implies a superlative degree of quality and not all professors managed to satisfy students' expectations and not everything was so perfect. Out of the 22 AustralArg Alumni, 15 (71%) responded with a clear 'yes' followed by praises for their university for the top academic quality, high calibre of faculty and extraordinary achievements in only 26 years since foundation. From the remaining 5 respondents, only one said it could not be considered excellent yet, but for sure the best of all universities in Argentina by far. Amongst the provided examples based on personal experience, most of the Alumni mentioned the really high calibre of their professors and the extraordinary good faculty-student relations, highly respected diplomas and relevant study programmes for their future career.

PEU-Lt Alumni praised the international faculty, whereas AustralArg and UNAV focused more on the received integral education beyond mere professional specialization.

Appendix 4 contains the Alumni survey answers and statistical data applicable for questions 3-19.

Question 3 reached an average of 86 % Alumni choices adding the first 2 options (essential and quite important), meaning that when a serious commitment to offer quality is declared as the institutional mission, it is binding for all the parts involved in the educational process. The importance of mission-driven overall institutional strategy to pursue excellence is supported by this high homogeneity in the respondents' agreement. The degree of support for the statement in Question 4 is again quite high adding the first 2 options, with added results reaching up to 72 % of all surveyed Alumni who attach top or vital importance. Responses to question 5 gather almost 97 % of Alumni who consider effective governance and leadership process as essential or very important for the excellence of the institution.

Regarding question 7, it is so far the statement with the utmost consensus in the first choice as an essential element of excellence (81,5 % of all surveyed Alumni), which added to the 16% of the second scale option (quite important) reach up to 97,5 % of the high degree of significance attached to academic quality. Results from question 8 again display a more scattered pattern of

choices ranging from essential to less important. However, the scores are higher for the first two options, which grant a relatively high importance (76% of all surveyed Alumni).

The patterns of responses for question 9 match the lower number of mentions of words like ranking, rating, reputation or achievements in the open question 1. Noteworthy is the higher percentage of Alumni (83%) who favoured international and external measurements of institutional achievements (ref. question 9), compared to lower scores (68%) attributed to the importance of recognition by national authorities in question 10. Yet, official recognition weighs significantly in the minds of Alumni mostly because of the better prospects of employability attached to well-respected diplomas.

The added scores of responses to question 11 make a relatively high percentage of adherence to the statement, with a total of 78% of all surveyed Alumni. Almost all the surveyed Alumni assign the highest degree of importance to the professional and personal calibre of their professors with a score that reaches a 100 %, adding the first 2 options. This again confirms the choice of key words to describe an excellent university, as discussed in the open question 1 of this Alumni survey.

Alumni of the three examined universities express support for their professors and allocate an average high percentage (93%) to the proposition in question 14, because the more attention granted to the needs of professors, the better potential quality of teaching and research achievements.

In question 17, around 83 % of Alumni responses confirm the undeniable significance of socially and empathetic academic staff. Question 18 should naturally relate with the idea suggested in question 3, referred to mission-driven effective governance and leadership. Therefore, the high level of adherence (80%) is coherent with the added percentages of the first options, even though lower importance is attached to mission-driven *planning* (question 18) than to *having* (question 3) a clear mission that inspires performance. In question 19, almost 70 % of respondents consider stakeholder relations as essential or quite important. On the other hand, the response patterns match those of question 4 referred to participative atmosphere, which again reveals that the takeaway memory for most students seems to be their personal relationships with their teachers and not so much with other members of the institutional community.

Having applied statistical data methods (Stata), few relevant differences amongst responses from the three country HEI/groups have been found. In question 3 (clear institutional mission), UNAV and AustralArg Alumni

attached higher importance to the declared institutional commitment of quality than the Lithuanian counterparts. Data from the Web-based content analysis and institutional interviewees also corroborate that UNAV and AustralArg ascribe higher importance to the institutional mission and this is reflected in the institutional communication and naturally perceived by students who purposefully may have chosen these particular HEIs precisely because of their declared commitments expressed in their mission statements, as a premise of quality and excellence (Rodríguez-Ponce et al., 2015). Meanwhile, the PEU-Lt responses revealed that these Alumni attach higher value to international recognition of achievements (question 9) and are also more concerned for official recognition of quality by national authorities (question 10). This also supports the evidence gathered from open question 2, where PEU-LT Alumni mostly appreciated the internationalization factor; besides this viewpoint may be understandable for Lithuanian Alumni of this relatively young private HEI striving to prove its value in a country where private education at all levels does not have a long-standing tradition. Contrastingly, private HEIs are not the exception in Spain and Argentina and both UNAV and AustrarArg have deeply rooted institutional missions and already enjoy consolidated national and international high reputation indexes and ranking positions. No highly significant differences can be found amongst responses from the three HEIs in the remaining 14 questions. Data from this exploratory study can be considered valid and reliable.

Concluding this data analysis section, it can be stated that the main goal of this survey has been attained in as much as responses implicitly back the author's suggested linked conceptualization of communicative and institutional excellence (see Table 33). The results also provide evidence of the indistinctive use of the terms *excellence* and *quality*, which is highly tied to *academic* excellence and more specifically to excellence in teaching, which by the way is not a core ingredient of all international rankings criteria and seem hard to measure with indicators of international validity.

Questions 7 and 13 highlight the prominence of academic quality (both of faculty members and of the offered of study programmes); these are key indicators of institutional excellence to which 97% of all Alumni attributed the highest importance. Astonishingly, this is still the most neglected of the three pillars in the triple excellence backbone Naval (cfr. (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015a) regarding quality measurements in rankings.

Mission-driven institutional excellence and effective governance have also received high scores (86% and 89% in questions 3 and 5 respectively).

Findings serve as well to back up some of the defended propositions regarding the significance of clearly identified stakeholders and prioritization of their needs and the importance attached to institutional mission as a governance factor.

Having confirmed the main attributes of institutional excellence, the next section deals with the relationship between excellent communication management that can support and enhance institutional excellence from the standpoint of communication experts who have practical experience and some working relationship with HEIs.

2.2. Findings from Experts survey

An expert survey was conducted with selected communication experts from the three countries where the three HEIs are based, namely Argentina, Spain and Lithuania. Argentinean and Spanish experts were purposefully chosen by the dissertation author on the basis of their professional expertise as communication directors/managers in other HEIs or other organizations combined with partial involvement in academic activities as guest lecturers or part-time faculty members. These 10 experts (4 experts from Argentina, 3 from Spain, 2 from Lithuania) answered a 20-question survey questionnaire available in Appendix 5. The main themes covered in the survey questions were as follows: how they perceive the role of communication in contemporary universities, whether there are significant differences between managing communication in other organizations as compared to university communication, who should be in charge of this vital organizational function, the profile and status required from a modern university DirCom and how communication should be managed more strategically, so that it can contribute to the overall excellence pursued by the organization.

Most of the experts expressed either strong agreement (5) or agreement (4) to 14 questions. Since the highest level of full agreement can be seen in responses to questions 5, 7, 11, 13, some remarks will be made about each of them.

Even though a general consensus was predictable in question 5, the dissertation author highlights the high level of strong agreement. Question 5 claims that institutional communication is a key element in the implementation of institutional plans and essential factor to achieve institutional goals, hence the need of inclusion and integration of this managerial function at the highest strategic level, and not as a merely tactical, supporting function. So far, the responses to this question display the largest consensus of experts, which validates the claimed propositions that the more

the Highest Governance Body of the university is aware of this, the sooner institutional communication becomes an integral and fundamental component of the whole institutional strategy.

The outstanding strong agreement with question 7 proves the urgent need of serious evaluation of institutional needs and priorities before designing an adequate strategic communication plan. This validates the author's claim referred to the importance of regular self-assessment beyond mandatory evaluation for national accreditations, let alone driven by external non-mandatory prescriptions of reputation rankings or similar partial accreditations. The pressure of highly competitive HE market is pushing HEIs to juggle with their priorities and rely on short-term marketing campaigns to boost immediate enrolment results that may be at odds with the long-term institutional needs.

Answers to question 11 also reveal an extremely high consensus of experts' support for the strategic role of communication management and stresses the significance of communication which should gain its place at the small table together with decision makers at same executive level of other neuralgic areas, such as infrastructure, finance, human resources, etc.

The degree of acceptance expressed in question 13 regarding the status of the senior communication in the university is again high. The author firmly believes in the conditioning factors for the appointment and empowerment of the DirCom: personal skills and sufficient competence to have executive and advisory influence on his/her team and to counsel the Highest Governance. Understandably, such excellent features are hard to find, hence the reluctance to allow the DirCom too much power. Almost unanimously, experts state that communication should be a direct concern of the highest governance in the university. To ensure this, the communication department should have a manager in direct accountability with the leadership team, usually the rectorate. This extremely high consensus as well corroborates the statement made by the author regarding the strategic decision of university Highest Governance to allocate sufficient resources for this strategic function and foresee a position for an ad hoc unit in the organizational structure.

Questions 1,4, 6, 15 and 16 also received high levels of agreement. Question 1 covered *the expected main objectives* of institutional communication management in the contemporary university. All experts advocate stakeholder relations and dialogue as one of the main communication objectives in HEIs, confirming insights from scientific literature and ideas expressed by stakeholders interviewed for this dissertation. Question 4 dealt with the social

mission of the university and its accountability to society, which should be reflected in strategically generated and disseminated contents. Again, surveyed experts fully supported the author's claim regarding the vital role of institutional communication management in making universities relatable and accountable to society.

Question 6 tackles the communication-orientedness of university governance team as a prerequisite for an ad hoc integration of communication into the institutional strategy that cannot bear long-term results without proper communication management. The full agreement expressed by experts advocates the high status of the communication management in shaping and grounding the institutional strategy of the university, which recalls the communicative perspective of the constitutive role of communication in organizations (the CCO perspective (McPhee & Zaug, 2009);(Putnam & Nicotera, 2009);(Zerfass, 2008);(Gregory, 2013);(Craig, 2000).

Question 15 is extremely important for this dissertation, as it lies at the core of the integration efforts to consolidate long-term and stable transversal management of institutional communication across the whole organizational structure. The positive answers of experts imply support for a solution suggested by the author for the coordination, delegation and supervision of both internal and external communication functions under one single unit, namely the communication department with a matrix of double reporting delegates in academic units. Finally, stakeholder relations should be a priority task of the institutional communication management team, as claimed in question 16, to which 100 % of experts also gave full agreement.

The prioritization issue is still unsolved, with some HEIs shuffling between placing faculty first mostly in their rhetoric, though focusing on students for pragmatic reasons. This currently ongoing debate on who should be number 1 is an evident proof the competing institutional logics in HEI management: faculty or students? Institutional stakeholder mapping and prioritizing is a key issue that has also been discussed with in-depth interviewees and the findings will be revealed in a later section.

Some final remarks will be provided as well for questions where considerable agreement of experts can be seen. Unanimous agreement of experts in question 2 puts forward the vital need of a more transversal internal communication management coordinated by the same structural unit, the communication department. This is already an increasingly common practice in Argentinean and Spanish universities and companies. By contrast, in Lithuania internal communication is still usually understood as a task of the

Human Resources department, but unfortunately rarely managed by or entrusted to communication specialists, as in-depth interviews will later on confirm. The place and relevance given to internal communication management is still a 'grey area'.

With question 9 the author directly tackles the issue of organizational structure as a facilitator of transversal communication and synergetic projects that the High Governance or the communication department can initiate and coordinate to disseminate mission-driven policies, instil the institutional identity, the joint attainment of specific institutional goals upon which the particular goals of each academic unit should depend. Transversal communication is essential in large HEIs and one of the ways to ensure this is the appointment of institutional communication delegates with double accountability, i.e., reporting to the communication department and the unit they represent. Experts advocate the urgent need for a more inclusive and integrating management that ensures the participation of key internal stakeholders in the communication process.

Question 17 is more focused on the resources allocation to take on several communication functions under the leadership of an empowered Dircom. The responses show that none of the experts utterly disagree with the suggestion that the communication department should be self-sufficient to cover all communication management areas; however, there is a certain degree of scepticism towards assigning them to other departments in the university or instead outsourcing some functions, for instance, a separate marketing office (discussed in question 18). One of the experts provided additional comments on her preference for an internal and self-sufficient communication office, however she advocates the possibility of ordering some specific tasks to be occasionally performed by an external specialized agency.

The final questions 19 and 20 of this experts' survey deal with the position a Vice-rector for institutional communication as the most suitable one for a fully empowered university Dircom. Though more than half the experts agree with the statement in question 19, having a vice-rector may not be possible in all universities (due to their size or the mandatory composition of the rectorate or governing body, like professorship). The author argues that securing the highest strategic status may be more important than the title itself, and this has also been supported by the full consensus of experts to the statement in question 20: if there is no vice-rector for communication, the Director of communication should take part in decision-making together with the rectorate.

Some further comments made by the surveyed experts are worth mentioning: the importance of a global institutional communication for the whole university that integrates the promotional activities and advertising campaigns to ensure that they are fully aligned with the institutional communication and the institutional strategy. As a priority issue, experts again highlighted the inclusion of internal communication amongst the functions managed by the communication department.

Appendix 6 contains the Experts survey answers and statistical data obtained after application of Stata programme. This enhances validity and reliability of the experts' concordant opinions, especially amongst the Argentinean group, consisting of strategic communication management scholars (PhD holders) and practitioners with vast experience in the HEIs from the public and private sectors. Additional insights from interviewed experts will complete the expertise sought by the dissertation author and provide more supporting evidence to the obtained data from the survey.

Putting it all together, the collected data provide evidence for the defended propositions (DPs). DP 1 received 100 % support in the responses to questions 5 and 6; DP2 was ratified by responses to questions 4, 21 and 23 and was also almost fully endorsed by 90% agreement to question 22. Question 26 displays again 100% agreement level to ratify DP 3. DP4 was validated by a 100 % agreement to questions 12, 19 and 25. No disagreement level was higher than 10 or 20 % in the questions referred to the requirements for strategic communication that contributes to excellence. DP5 was supported by high agreement responses to questions 14 and 11. It has been as well was validated by experts' advocacy to question 17.

2.3. Findings from expert interviews

In this section relevant results are presented on the basis of the qualitative data analysis conducted through descriptive coding of transcripts from the interviews with 7 audio-recorded experts (three Lithuanian and two Spanish and two Argentinean). The coding system for data from interviews with experts is displayed in table 36.

The data analysis is presented with reference to coding themes by categories and subcategories available in appendix 7. In these coding tables, the responses taken from the transcripts appear *in italic font* between inverted commas and, at the end of each quote, the pertaining information about the expert is indicated between parenthesis: the country of origin (Argentina=Arg;

Lithuania=LT or Spain=ES), number of interviewee and name initials, e.g., *LT exp 1-AK*.

Table 36. Coding system for interviews with experts

Categories	Subcategories
1.Symptoms of competing institutional logics	Balanced double vision required Implementing business principles in HEIs
2. Relevance of institutional mission	Linkage with communication Adjustments to change in HEIs
3. Status of communication function	HGB approach to communication Strategic + entrusted to ad hoc department Centralized or autonomous
4. Dircom in HEIS	Status/ Qualities
5. Identification of HEI stakeholders	Student/ Faculty / Poor identification
6. Relevance of internal communication	Formalized with established channels Unsolved issue, gaining importance
7. Management of content generation and dissemination	Triple mission-oriented contents Consistency of contents Only Media monitoring Mechanistic managerialism

Own elaboration

The data analysis is presented with reference to coding themes by categories and subcategories available in appendix 7. In these coding tables, the responses taken from the transcripts appear *in italic font* between inverted commas and, at the end of each quote, the pertaining information about the expert is indicated between parenthesis: the country of origin (Argentina=Arg; Lithuania=LT or Spain=ES), number of interviewee and name initials, e.g., *LT exp 1-AK*.

Symptoms of competing institutional logics: experts commented on the evident signs they perceive in public and private HEIs in terms of the increasing amount of sales-oriented contents in Webpages, institutional messages of competitive positioning based on rankings that then do not match the institutional reality stakeholders experience. They also provided examples of communication management as an essential feature of leadership that should permeate the whole organizational culture and structure, as well as the transforming power of communication management in shaping and grounding the institutional strategy of the university. They emphasized the vital

importance of counting on communication-minded executives who consider communication as a strategic management function that must be part of the overall institutional strategy.

In order to strike the required balance, experts highlighted the need for professionalized institutional communication management capable of the balanced double perspective (entrepreneurial and educational institution) to harvest as much produce out of all communicable university activities that can support the long-term institutional excellence and reveal the differentiation of a university based on very clear attributes. This entails **strategic mapping of the university publics (stakeholders)** to see where and how to position those attributes and then plan the communicative actions. This requires a **highly qualified DirCom** and as experts claimed, the better qualified and skilled the Director of Communication, the more authority and self-sufficiency for decision-making on how to manage the communication management unit. In the case of a university Dircom, most experts advocate the idea that it is a major challenge to please academia, hence the advantage of having a scholar and practitioner Dircom who can handle the specificity of university stakeholders and their expectations.

Experts also commented on ways of **empowering the DirCom** autonomy for his/her managerial decisions, either by granting him/her **full membership in the rectorate, direct reporting to the HGB** or a stand-alone position side by side with the rector for strategic decisions and advisory. They also emphasized the importance of a closer relation of the Dircom with the HGB and the communication staff in academic units through an **ad hoc matrix structure** that at the same time allowed **enough autonomy while preserving the necessary alignment**. Thus, significant joint efforts required from the DirCom and the executive team of a university, hence the importance of communication-orientedness of HGB to allocate sufficient resources for **transversal communication work across the organizational structure**.

Additional and relevant insights have been also collected with reference to the essential **integration and coordination of internal and external communication** and the growing awareness of internal communication as an organizational sustainability factor amidst the increasing competition in the HE context. Unfortunately, most experts could not praise the mission-driven approach to governance therefore communication contents often fail to reflect this essential differentiation component, especially in the public HEIs.

Interviewed experts share similar views on the **importance of integrated management of institutional communication** so that every communication

action involves the internal and external stakeholders through synergetic projects that should be beneficial for all: attracting more students is necessary for professors as much as for the administrative staff to preserve their jobs. Such pragmatic and rather utilitarian reason is evident when the communicative efforts are more market-oriented and the internal stakeholders may be neglected or simply kept informed, but not actively engaged. In such case, internal information is usually disseminated via Human resources or Personnel department or the administration of the corresponding academic unit, but most experts agree that communication staff should take on the internal communication function and work in coordination with HR teams. With reference to stakeholder dialogue, all experts stressed that it is extremely important to talk with employees because every employee is an ambassador, an important channel that can have a lot of influence.

Stakeholder mapping and prioritization was also discussed; some experts shared their views on the priority of professors and researchers as key internal stakeholders, at the same time advocating the urgency of tailoring communication messages to satisfy the legitimate needs of often neglected enrolled students and Alumni, because universities are too much focused on attracting future students.

The importance of **pre-established channels for internal communication** was also mentioned as a sign that communication function is taken seriously and given a visible place in the organizational structure with effective processes.

Experts also commented how all the **institutional communication of an organization creates identity and culture**, some experts explained that for the reputation of giant public HEIs to converge into a shared and unified reputation, the greatest challenge is to unify large academic units, to find common ground for synergy and make some sort of unity grow between separate academic units. Otherwise, academic units end up operating as completely separate worlds and develop their own organizational sub-culture. This is not necessarily wrong or harmful, however, it would more than desirable that all the different academic units of the same university reveal some evident and well-managed brand features, institutional culture traits. Unfortunately, Lithuanian experts said this seems to be poorly managed in most large public HEIs in Lithuanian.

The vital role of institutional communication management in making **universities relatable and accountable to society** was also commented by experts who share some insights on how society should be informed about

scholarly activities. Competitive advantage could be reinforced by giving more visibility of expert faculty members as authorized opinion leaders who explicitly acknowledge their affiliation to a specific HEI and speak on its behalf. They can at the same time help HEIs to position themselves and make their outstanding faculty well-known as opinion leaders who share their knowledge with the wider society. In other words, a living and binding institutional mission and vision should be the guideline for all institutional performance, let alone for all communications emanating from the institutions inwards and outwards.

Finally, **regular assessment of communication management** was discussed. Experts claim that the **assessment of communication work** should reach beyond mere media clipping and favoured a more **integral mission-oriented approach** so that there is a stronger identification with the particular identity and values of the institution. As an example of timely revision of the institutional strategy aided by communication management, one of the Argentinean experts mentioned a paradigmatic case of a very market-oriented private HEI that grew very fast and soon reached incredible geographical and demographical coverage in Argentina. This entrepreneurial university positioned itself as exclusive and targeting future leaders, but the narrow segmentation soon proved unsustainable for their business model, so they re-made their communication strategy to disseminate their new focus: to become the largest, farthest reaching (geographical coverage), inclusive (no longer exclusive, because anyone wishing to study should have the chance), and mostly chosen by all Argentines (quantity versus quality). The motivation for such radical change of strategy was that they could no longer cope with the functional benefits, so emphasis on the emotional and self-acknowledgment had made the business model unsustainable. The lesson to be learned is that universities fall in the trap of communicating what all HEIs are expected to do as a basic attribute: to grant diplomas after study cycle completion. Instead, university communication should manage the existing tension between which attributes to communicate and which to leave aside as too obvious. Universities do have a great advantage, because if they manage to saturate the functional benefits with high quality academic offer, then they can focus more on enhancing the professional communication of the emotional attributes. By smartly developing a sense of relational closeness and capturing the target audience feelings and emotional requirements, it is much easier to move on to the communication of self-realization and self-recognition **that internal stakeholders need to be motivated and identified**

with their institutional mission and at the same time it could attract prospective students.

Summing up the valuable data gathered through survey and interviews with experts, it can be asserted that institutional communication is regarded by all experts as encompassing all communications emanating from the organization and thus requiring a full-fledged organizational unit in charge of this strategic function and regular performance evaluation under the light of mission-driven institutional strategy towards institutional excellence.

2.4 Findings from in-depth interviews with representatives of selected HEIs
The author has applied descriptive coding to establish categories and subcategories that summarize central themes in the data. Coding has been flexibly adjusted and used to categorize and classify selected quotations from interviewees of the three examined universities, as suggested by research methodology scholars (Creswell, 2012); (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 37. In-depth interviews respondent classification

Position/function	Description	Abbreviation
Executive management /Highest governance body	Rector, vice-rector	HGB
Academic management	Dean, vice-dean, programme director, etc.	AcdMng
Academic-research (faculty)	Professor, lecturer, researcher	Acd
Administration senior management	Department director, general manager	AdmSrMng
Administration middle management	Manager of sub-units/departments	AdmMidMng
Administration support staff	Support service employees	Adm
Institutional Communication Department staff	Communication department staff, but not managerial position	ICD
Senior Communication management (DirCom)	Managerial position (in the whole university or in large structural units like business school, hospital)	ComMng
Communication management support in academic units	Responsible for communication in academic units	RespComUnit
Current students	Students (some work ICD)	Stud

Own elaboration

The data collected through 56 in-depth interviews with different members of the institutional communities of the three explored private entrepreneurial universities is presented in this section. Interviews were held prior to the issuing of personal data protection regulations, but in any case, personal data

of interviewees that could make them easily identifiable is not disclosed. The author has designed denominations to refer to each respondent by affiliation to the one of the three examined universities and by positions and academic unit, whenever applicable.

Table 38. Affiliation and position of interviewees

Position/function	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
Executive management /Highest governance body	3	1	1
Academic management	2	5	2 *
Academic-research (faculty)	1	3	(Same 2* apply)
Administration senior management	1	1	2
Administration middle management	3	2	1
Administration support staff	2	2	
Institutional Communication Department staff (in PEU-Lt=Marketing office)	4	2	3
Senior Communication management (DirCom)	4	3	1
Communication management support in academic units	2	5	-
Total number of interviewees	22	22	12

Own elaboration

The direct quotations from interview transcripts are again presented italic font, between double inverted commas and at the end of each quoted fragment, depersonalized data of the respondent is provided between brackets, explaining institutional affiliation and held position.

In Appendix 10 the author has included the selected responses that illustrate each category shown in table 39.

The first-hand experience of institutional stakeholders corroborates either by efficiency or deficiency or failure how the institutions have managed to deal with the inherent competing institutional logics to pursue and achieve a certain degree of institutional excellence counting on the irreplaceable aid of well-managed institutional communication.

Table 39. Coding system for in-depth interview content analysis

Categories	Subcategories
Relevance of institutional mission	Linked to excellence Basis for institutional strategy Basis for communication Mere formality; detached from everyday life
Competing logics (market for-profit vs educational/social)	Sales-oriented external communication outputs Mission-based (triple mission contents)
Communication linkage with institutional excellence	Excellence at all institutional levels Disclosing achieved excellence Insufficiently disclosed achieved excellence Overrated excellence; puffery
Status of communication function	Highest strategic level Integrated in general institutional strategy Mission-driven, but no clear strategy Highly dependable on HGB approach to communication Highly dependable on resources (human and material) Short-term tactical and market-driven
Status and qualities of Dircom	Full membership in HGB (vice-rector or DirCom)Qualities Directly reporting to HGB but not full member Advisory and executive influence Suitable but insufficiently empowered by HGB Lack of leadership for the position
Internal communication	Integrated and centralized Integrated and centralized in coordination with HR Integrated but autonomous at academic unit level Assigned to HR with little inference from communication staff Fluctuating location in organizational structure Neglected function
Identification of HEI stakeholders	Clear identification Poor identification Priority of students Priority of faculty Neglected key stakeholders
Communication patterns and channels for stakeholders	For students For faculty For all staff For Alumni No established patterns
Balance between centralization and autonomy	Full centralization of functions and contents Centralization with double reporting Centralized supervision of institutional brand Autonomous communication staff reporting to governance body in academic units Recommended aligned use of visuals Waste of resources and loss of created value Lack of alignment Claim for self-sufficiency
Regular self-assessment of performance	Evaluation of communication department Status and competence of communication staff Stakeholder relations (satisfaction with communication) Contribution to reputation Only media clipping, monitoring social media account

Own elaboration

Various responses from interviewees allow to assert that **the institutional strategy should emanate from a clearly stated mission** and it should aim at its fulfilment, with communication as a strong allied force. Respondents agree with this statement and share their views on the existence of such strategy and the role of communication in supporting what the Highest Governance Body sets as the priority for the institution. A mission-driven strategy will naturally cascade into decisive, mission-oriented and mission-supportive communication outputs. Again, **communication enhances excellence** through adequate dissemination of achievements that boost internal self-awareness and the sense of belonging that redounds to generated institutional excellence perceivable by external observers. **Regarding external acknowledgement of institutional excellence**, such as world university rankings, some respondents mention achieved world rankings positions as a tool to boost institutional confidence for a more daring communication, even if they admit that rankings are neither the ultimate nor the most valid token of institutional excellence.

Regarding the **empowerment required for ad hoc qualified communication management unit** and the need to be in direct reporting line with the HGB, the responses showcases UNAV as an example of best practice. The full support of UNAV highest authorities is reflected in the status and resources granted to the communication function in the institution, where there has been for decades a vice-rectorate for communication with a very well-equipped department for centralized functions and appointed **delegate in all academic units and more autonomous DirComs** in larger units, like the university hospital and the Executive School. The internal organization of the vice-rectorate described by one of its senior members reveals wholesome approach to institutional communication at the core of mission-fulfilment endeavours with subdivisions for internal communication, external communication, media relations, digital communication with social media and the Websites, corporate publications, a knowledge transfer social project and recently created unity for reputation monitoring. Thus, UNAV communicators do not need to explain the importance of their job to get support and resources, because UNAV authorities have since its very beginning rooted their performance on the building and maintenance of institutional relations through strong communication management teams.

The Dircom advisory and executive authority and influence was as well discussed. The expected competences of an ideal DirCom reveal how extremely demanding this position is, since it requires a versatile person, with

expertise in several areas. Colleagues endorse the high calibre of the vice-rector for communication in UNAV, while the same cannot be fully applied to senior communicators in the other institutions. And this has to do lack of personal endowment for the position, or because their position is not focused on institutional communication, but marketing and sales.

One of the most relevant insights for this dissertation is the **importance of having a highly qualified university DirCom** that is also a scholar. **The personal** qualities condition the higher or lower status and empowerment of the senior communicator, since the Highest Governance may have neither an ad hoc candidate for this neuralgic position nor the possibility to replace the current person; the rectorate may also lack the political will, the right managerial mind, the resources, or sometimes all of it, to make the best decision. This can be arranged in a more or less centralized manner, a similar structure can be replicated in **more or less autonomous structural units**. In any case, this function requires an ad hoc unit with resources proportional to the scope of work expected from the communication team.

It can be asserted that a fully equipped communication management unit duly integrated in the decision-making process is vital. Excellent communication departments have ad hoc qualified and skilled leaders who must count on the acknowledgement of their executive leaders and the endorsement of their teams. It seems to be one of the major current concerns in most organizations whose leadership is fully aware of the impact of communication on the organizational sustainability.

Balance between centralized and autonomous communication management was also an important theme. Balanced centralization and autonomy have proven two significant factors, which depend to a great extent on the choice of structure for the whole institution and for the units, since the structure may facilitate or hinder alignment and engagement, an essential feature of communicative excellence that affects institutional excellence, as stated in the theoretical part.

UNAV is highly centralized in terms of structure. All the academic units have the same structure of governance body, which facilitates transversal work amongst units and with the central administrative services, with common communication channels and patterns that everyone knows well. This also makes the management of internal and external communication easier at general and unit levels, because there are clear paths and reporting lines inside the units and from the units to the rectorate, where each member is in charge of a certain function or aspect of university life. However, not everything

works as much by the clock as it seems. The dissertation author has explored how things are perceived from by the academic units, since **centralized management of communication contents and channels** may hinder or favour the timely dissemination of excellence in certain academic units compared to others. The broad vision of vice-rectorate for communication has been questioned and considered slightly blurred, because communication should emerge ‘from those below’, i.e., from the academic units who claim to know best than anyone else how to run their own business.

Both UNAV and AustralArg have **appointed communication delegates in the academic units**, they are called “responsible for communication” and they work under **double reporting** to the governance body of their unit and to the institutional DirCom. However, the empowerment, resources, degree of autonomy of the units and of these appointees differ from one to another institution. These differences are also determined by less or more centralized overall structure and the organizational culture that has been cultivated with more or less incidence from the rectorate and by the gained authority of the DirCom.

In AustralArg, unit communicators admit there is little synergy with the other counterparts responsible for communication in the other academic units, as they got used to working as completely independent units. They feel pressurized by the **market-driven demands to concentrate efforts on marketing communication** of study offer to increase enrolment, which often leads to neglecting other communication-related issues and creates a certain tension, internal competition amongst units to attract students, to mind their own business, instead of synergizing and sharing resources that would benefit them all and the whole university in the end. This also leads to dissonance in communication outputs of the different structural units.

The integration of internal and external communication has been mentioned by several interviewees, thus emerged as a key concern. Since UNAV is a typical case of best practice in communication management, noticeably most of the quotes about **problems with internal communication** come from the other two examined institutions. UNAV has a full-fledged Direction of Internal Communication established synergy paths, channels and means to communicate with clearly identified internal stakeholder groups and are constantly monitoring and implementing new projects for improvement. Internal communication has emerged as one of the greatest concerns and unsolved riddle in PEU-Lt. AustralArg has at least taken some measures to manage this neuralgic function. In UNAV there is a full-fledged centralized

service called the direction of internal communication included in the vice-rectorate for communication. **The existing structure facilitate this, but integration work depends on the persons.** When the structure does not foresee it, the senior managers have learnt to seek for transversal work, because excellence in communication has been internalized

When asked where this **internal communication function** should best belong in the structure, PEU-Lt interviewees expressed evident disparity of opinions, while this question is quite clear for UNAV and AustralArg respondents: this is a communication management function that should depend on the Direction of institutional communication which coordinates and establishes liaisons and synergies with the Direction of Personnel and the academic units. The author attributes this lack of coherence with respect to clear boundaries, structure and resource allocation for institutional communication per se reveal to the lack of executive focus, political will or simply, a matter of priority to set a clear path yet. For some executive leaders, the decision to start doing something about internal communication is only tied to the size of the organization, hence the usual neglect or delay. In any case, the place for the internal communication function remains an open issue of scholarly and practitioner debate.

It can be concluded that university communication is characterized by the permanent need to strike **balance between centralization and autonomous management of communication** (and other managerial functions) in academic units. This has proven to be hindering the excellence of the whole institution in AustralArg, where the two strongest and best known units are very independent and do not show any willingness of integration and centralization of communication and other processes. PEU-Lt is also growing and lack of efficient centralization is becoming a problem as well.

Integration and alignment of internal and external communications in large separate structural units is also mentioned as an important aspect to maintain a unified identity and culture that is also visible in a unified portrayal of the brand in different communication formats. Some communicators favour centralizations, even if their direct superiors advocate independence. Similarly, some academic units struggle with centralization actions, while others support them. The challenge for AustralArg and PEU-Lt rectorate lies ahead to design a proper institutional strategy and implement it with the support of communication management.

A crucial topic for strategic institutional communication is the **stakeholder identification and prioritization**. Even though stakeholder identification is one of the key issues of **mission-driven governance and communication**

management, at the same it also reflects the overall understanding of the institutional mission and the commitment to embrace it. Regarding the growing tendency to put students first, the author does not deny the **centrality of the student** in the learning process. Nevertheless, the **primacy of faculty** is decreasing as marketization of HE overruns the acute needs of financial sustainability, dragging university governance to shuffle priorities. Institutional communication efforts would contribute exponentially in **cultivating the professor-student relations**, as wisely suggested by one of UNAV respondents, who highlights the long-term and short-term gains of this interaction. AustralArg and PEU-Lt faculty overtly express their utter disappointment in the communication work regarding **established patterns, channels and more transparent communication** flows that badly need the attention of the Highest Governance, with the subsequent decision to allocate resources and instil a healthier, more constructive communication culture. Unarguably, contemporary students may also be under the same mercantilist effect of short-term goals and pragmatic relations, thus institutions must constantly try new ways to reach this ever savvier and demanding stakeholder group. However, considering **students only as external stakeholders like customers of paid educational services** is a manifestation of **market-driven approach** to institutional management, which will be reflected in the sales oriented communication outputs. In contrast, UNAV emphasizes the idea of the students being the same person who go through successive stages in their lifecycle: from prospective students to enrolled students who, on completion of a programme, become Alumni. Hence, **the importance of a more coherent, integral and sustainable approach to stakeholder relations management with students**, and not just addressing Alumni as a target public out of mere fundraising goals. PEU-Lt respondents did not mention any communication action regarding Alumni, as in this institution the Career centre has recently incorporated this function and they coordinate Alumni relations with little or no inference from the communication management unit. **The management of content generation to reflect institutional mission and excellence** was an important topic for interviewees, who expressed their concern for **over-centralized content monitoring** or the opposite extreme, **no control and the resulting lack of alignment**. In UNAV, content generation is absolutely monitored, centralized for the general institutional Website and extremely well-organized in terms of variety of channels and means to keep all identified stakeholders updated and engaged. In contrast, AustralArg is an evident example of deeply-rooted autonomy, marked by

inter-unit competition for resources. Most PEU-Lt respondents claim that 90 % of all external communication is sales-oriented; contrastingly, those directly in charge of generating and managing communication contents assert that their communication outputs have broader aims.

Regarding the vital need for **regular institutional communication assessment**, the author has detected it as the weakest area that needs urgent solutions, counting on the contributions of communication management scholars and practitioners. Very few respondents could share positive experience about this and in some cases a very critical and sceptical position could be perceived towards the growth of communication staff and the lack of tangible results to prove they are really needed.

UNAV and AustralArg respondents believe that the rectorate is the ultimate responsible to safeguard the good institutional name, but the communication office is co-responsible for the creation of the institutional culture that should be the live expression of the institutional mission enacted in a shared well-communicated strategy. Hence, the urgency to grant communication the position and resources it requires and then to regularly assess its tangible contribution to mission-driven institutional goals. Yet, certain scepticism can be perceived in academic with respect to overrating the role of communication management in enhancing real excellence rather than forging it by spinning a fictional reputation. The tension between academia and administration is a natural phenomenon and to some extent a symptom of good health, otherwise academization and marketization would have already laid roots, endangering the primordial mission of the university.

Some final remarks about the achievements of each explored university as seen by their representatives seems proper to conclude this section. **UNAV is the most prominent example of the contribution that well-managed institutional communication can bring into the solid and sustainable excellence** of HEI. The head of the communication department decided to conduct research on institutional reputation in order to know how well the institution is fulfilling its triple mission and serving the local society where the university was founded and has the largest campus. This mission-driven intention led to initiating several synergetic institutional projects such as the “Building University Reputation” international conferences and *Tantaka* (a digital platform to coordinate social non-profit knowledge transfer activities to engage institutional and local communities). Another result of thorough institutional self-assessment resulted in strong brand unification in all its

visual formats: one single logo for all building signage, printed stationery and other institutional communication pieces.

It may be hasty or pretentious to claim a causal link between the achieved excellence in communication management and the improved institutional image, reputation and consolidated excellence. However, survey results, world rankings and social impact in the local and national communities, as well as the feedback from thousands of foreign Alumni working overseas after graduation seem to confirm this inference.

Contrastingly, the turmoil and lack of continuity in the management of institutional communication in **AustralArg** coincide with the dropping positions of this institution in world rankings, **the weakening of internal cohesion** and employee turnover rate. This excellent institution has undergone significant organizational changes during the two decades of existence (new campus, executive successions), which were **not effectively supported by an ad hoc communication management strategy**, especially with respect to **internal stakeholders**. This can be partly attributed to the lack of leadership in the institutional communication team which lacked executive and advisory influence for decision making with the dominant coalitions of the university governance at overall institutional and academic unit levels. All this has taken its toll on the internal reputation of the communication function and has undermined the expectations and trust on the potential contribution that strategic and more aligned institutional communication can make to institutional excellence. AustralArg still enjoys by fairly high positions in world rankings and externally **acknowledged institutional excellence** from other performance evaluations of institutional quality. However, internal stakeholders (faculty, administration, students, both enrolled and Alumni) in general attribute the merit of this achieved **quality to the exceptional academic excellence of faculty** and the well-rooted institutional culture, instilled by the founders and kept alive by a once cohesive community, with little inference of professionalized communication management. Nevertheless, internal stakeholders are looking forward to badly needed improvements in institutional communication management, which have already started. Since the last interview for this empirical research, several positive changes have already taken place: the communication department has grown in number of staff members with better focused distribution of functions and the new executive team is taking the communication function much more seriously: rectorate members have taken to directly supervising stakeholder relations, starting from students; some centralization and

alignment efforts are also evident in the management of Alumni networks and synergetic projects with the Direction of Personnel are in progress to tackle the so-far weakest function: internal communication.

PEU-Lt has made outstanding achievements in a relatively short period of time and has become a **referent in private education in Lithuania and high quality standards**. However, the data collected allows to claim that this institution has outgrown its own clothes and it has recently launched a **wholesome revision of the institutional mission** that must include a much more solid approach to an all-embracing **communication management**, so far **embedded in the marketing and sales department**. Even if this has been motivated by external forces (the desire to get AACSB accreditation), it has spurred internal stakeholders to express their views, it has encouraged a more participative approach and raised more awareness regarding the importance of having a fitting mission beyond compliance with accreditation criteria. Previous university leaders have led the institution along its short life with very different approaches to the role that communication could play in the implementation of institutional strategies; some proved to have more communication-oriented and favoured established pattern no matter the size of the organizations. A new rector is soon being elected and this may entail significant changes, which will hopefully include a **more mission-driven and integral approach to institutional communication management**, which so far has always been managed exclusively by marketing specialists.

Concluding this final stage of primary data analysis, it can be stated that all the defended propositions have been substantiated with sufficient evidence from the three explored universities, each displaying different levels of strategic communication management and the subsequent possibility to contribute to the achieved level of excellence. Naturally, each institution has plenty of room for improvement.

3.4 Conclusions of the empirical research and its results

a) The type and number of respondents for each data collection technique are proportional and suitable to the required data amount and variety, as well as to the size and particularities of the examined institutions (Treadwell, 2013); (Baxter & Jack, 2008); (Jansen, 2013); (Fink, 2003) (Madureira, 2007); (Boddy, 2016); (Malterud et al., 2016).

Regarding the data collection process, the dissertation author has conducted every single interview personally, in the language chosen by the interviewees

and on campus location during scholar visits. Being a native speaker of Spanish language, a holder of a university degree in Translation Spanish-English and having an official certificate of Lithuanian language proficiency are suitable conditions for back translation of all the hand-typed transcripts of audio-recorded interview. All the audio files in mp3 format, the typed interview transcripts in Microsoft Office Word format and the survey collected answers have been stored, should they be required for further evidence.

b) The three selected institutions match the characteristics attributed to private entrepreneurial universities considered the archetype of 21st century HEIs (Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014); (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014); (Dabic et al., 2015) and the features required to be suitable samples of analysis, because they display a certain degree of acknowledged institutional excellence, the three are facing mission-driven and market-driven competing institutional logics, for which they need solid governance and management models. Hence, the author's suggested management-by-mission paradigm, as it perfectly suits the presented conceptualization of excellence in communication management, institutional excellence (see Table 33).

c) Private entrepreneurial universities have been chosen for the empirical work precisely for their status of hybrid forms, whose nature implies inherent competing institutional logics that may not be applicable to all state-owned and state-run HEIs: (Pache & Santos, 2013); (Guerrero et al., 2016); (Smets et al., 2015); (Skelcher & Smith, 2015). Nevertheless, the theoretical and practical implications derived from this thesis can shed light on the pertaining executive measures that university governance may take to ensure mission-driven communication management to sustain already achieved or pursued institutional excellence.

d) The variety and suitability of the applied empirical researched methods and techniques for data collection and analysis have allowed the author to arrive at the conclusion that UNAV can be considered a typical case of best practice (Treadwell, 2013); (Baxter & Jack, 2008) in as much as it displays all the features of communicative excellence that contribute to institutional excellence, with mission-driven and mission-supportive governance and management system.

e) The content analysis of secondary Web-based data has allowed to contrast and confirm either by efficiency or deficiency, the extent to which the information available in the explored institutional Websites is true to the organizational reality channel in terms of the existence and status of the

communication function, the availability of channels, identified stakeholders, mission-driven contents disseminated via this increasingly significant communication channel (Fernández Beltrán, 2007). The portrayal of the institution in the Website matches the institutional reality in different degrees, as encountered and experienced by the internal stakeholders and external observers, amongst them, the dissertation author. Collected data has been corroborated with results from the Alumni survey and confirmed with the data gathered from in-depth interviews with different institutional stakeholders.

f) Alumni survey results demonstrate their appreciation for high academic quality and high calibre of faculty, which they highlighted as the key components of institutional excellence, together with a clear mission-driven commitment to pursue quality and focus on stakeholder relations, mainly the quality of professor-student relations. Another relevant finding is the overestimation of international accreditations and world university rankings as indicators of excellence, even though teaching quality has so far not been included in the assessment criteria and may have little direct correlation with the personal qualities valued in teaching faculty.

g) Amongst insights gained from experts, it is worth noticing that experts with a solid scholarly background and affiliation to a HEI (holders of PhD, more active in research and teaching) asserted that managing communication in a university differs from this practice in other organizations, let alone business corporations. Amongst the key differentiating factors they mentioned the particular institutional mission, the specificity of expected services and the wide scope of stakeholders. Even though the figure of a vice-rector for communication was not endorsed 100 %, scholarly experts advocate the preference for a university DirCom with vast academic experience and scholarly profile. This would enact the pragmatic collaboration, selective coupling, segmented and blended expertise, as strategies to manage the competing institutional logics, by combining the intact demands of a university and the expectations of entrepreneurial organizations. (Pache & Santos, 2013); (Smets et al., 2015); (Skelcher & Smith, 2015).

All experts advocate the importance of a mission-driven institutional strategy and favour the integration of the communication function in the overall institutional goals counting on the full-right membership of the DirCom in the Highest Governance Body of the institution (Gregory & Willis, 2013);(Dozier et al., 2013);(J. Costa & Com, 2005) (Villafañe, 2005);(Mercado Ramírez & Alvira Domínguez, 2016); (Molina et al., 2013).

Similarly, all experts acknowledge the need for integrated management of internal and external communication, with cohesive outputs that reflect the unique institutional communicative identity (Matilla, 2012);(Scheinsohn, 2010) (Gregory, 2013); (Dozier et al., 2013);(Bulotaite, 2003). Unanimously, experts claim that the internal communication function requires a communication professional (Matilla, 2012);(Scheinsohn, 2010) ;(Gregory, 2013); (Dozier et al., 2013). This should be implemented in cooperation with the Direction of Personnel or Human Resources department, again to obtain the best outcomes of the pragmatic collaboration and selective coupling mentioned before.

h) In-depth interviews have allowed the author to explore how each examined university deals with the competing logics, whether they resort to strategic pragmatic collaboration between academia, the executive leadership and administration staff through selective coupling and blending of the expertise and capabilities required to safeguard the intact and legitimate demands of the double logics, typical of market-driven expectations of a private entity, but embedded in the core societal logics of a HEI.

- UNAV has demonstrated the best outcomes in the management of this dual logic. The long-standing communication-oriented management tradition is firmly consolidated in this institution which at the same time enjoys a certain level of financial stability, which allows resources allocation on the areas where the Highest Governance Body considers more strategic and one of them is precisely institutional communication. UNAV can afford to experiment and create new departments for newly emerging matters, as is the case with the reputation management unit of very recent creation, directly dependent from the vice-rectorate for communication. Another outstanding best practice of UNAV is the successful enactment of pragmatic collaboration and selective coupling of academia and management expertise in the unified governance structure of all academic units, with the original position of the Director of development. This person is in charge of supervising core areas, amongst them, the communication work of the responsible for communication in his/her academic unit, who in turn reports directly to the vice-rectorate for communication.

The results of a long-term communication management strategy that is fully integrated into the overall institutional strategy are tangible and have a strong impact on the well-identified institutional stakeholders: at all levels of the organization there is a perceivable communicative sensitivity and strong identification with the institutional mission as the guiding line for individual

and organizational behaviour. The vice-rectorate for communication, his leader and the whole quite large department have the full support and trust from the rectorate, even though some academic unit managers feel some reluctance towards the degree of centralization of communication services, which may sometimes hinder the opportunities of their School to shine brighter for achieved excellence in particular fields that may pass less noticed at the expense of other institutional more global interests, to which more attention and wider coverage is given in different communication means and channels. This is yet another sign of the deep level of consciousness that each academic unit has regarding the relevance of generating mission-based contents and trying to make them reach the targeted audiences through all existing formats and platforms. The pursued and achieved institutional excellence has been internally and externally acknowledged by Alumni, national authorities (awarded as Campus of Excellence), the local communities and recognised by international rankings and accreditations. And all this is strategically and consistently communicated. However, there is also a noticeable awakening of market-driven forces to compete and reach out new prospective seedbeds to increase the number of students, thus marketing communication is gaining momentum, though carefully monitored by rectorate members in charge of the development activities to maintain a healthy balance. A balanced approach to sales-oriented and mission-based communication contents is visibly endorsed by communication graduates, who currently hold managerial positions in several academic units. They experience an increasing market-based pressure expressed in the numerical goals set by the rectorate to sustain the business. Even though at rectorate level, everyone fully endorses and praises the communication management work, from the position of the academic unit and other departments, the vice-rectorate for communication seems a bit self-referential and aloof, lacking a real touch with respect to the everyday life, needs and concerns. UNAV has a very strong administration structure, highly centralized; it keeps growing and adjusting to emerging needs, which are not always clearly understood and justifiable for the rest of the institutional community. Hence, even excellent communication must be better communicated to justify its created value first and foremost to insiders. Several respondents have expressed their concern for the problematic reporting lines, which sometimes seems to hinder rather than facilitate transversal communication work, or are just pre-established, but passive channels. Contrastingly, senior communication staff see their work as extremely useful and advocate flexibility, notwithstanding the existing matrix.

In sum, all the prerequisites for excellent communication management that the dissertation author has identified as essential to contribute to institutional excellence can definitely be found in UNAV, but some assets are still underexploited.

- AustralArg, in spite of being the best private university in Argentina whose excellence is acknowledged and endorsed by internal and external observers, is still slowly recovering from several crises caused by undeniable external socio-economic and political factors combined with crucial organizational changes for which the institution did not prepare with sound governance policies and strategic management measures. Adding to this, poorly managed communications have affected all areas of performance at institutional level, even though some academic units are doing much better, in particular the School of Communication and the School of Biomedical Sciences. In general, the lack of stronger leadership in the Direction of institutional communication is taking its toll on the internal climate, since internal communication has usually been neglected due to a marked preference for media relations, apparently always seen as a strategic priority. Cohesiveness and coherence of messages reveal the lack of pre-established communication patterns and channels for the whole organization as a safeguard of a consistent institutional discourse. Too many scattered efforts lose strength and impact due to lack of synergy and transversal work, which again is neither initiated nor coordinated from the centralized institutional Direction of communication. An overall institutional strategy and an ad hoc management model are not clearly defined, hence strategic communication can hardly support a non-existent institutional strategy, let alone without sufficient resources and the required personal qualities of the DirCom. In brief, many of the identified pre-requisites for strategic communication management that can uphold institutional excellence are either not present, or underexploited or underestimated by the Highest Governance Body. It may still be stated that authorities are becoming more conscious of the relevant role of communication as a strategic allied, but other urgent matters have so far gained priority and absorbed the scarce resources.

- In PEU-Lt all communication has always been markedly much more market-driven than mission-based. It could be argued that it is the expected approach from the first private and only private university offering higher education at all levels, included executive education. And after decades of no private sector activity in a Post-soviet country, there is little experience of less commercial and a more integral approach to communication management. PEU-Lt has never actually had an institutional communication department, so the broad

spectrum of communication work seen in UNAV is inapplicable to PEU-Lt, and this not only for the differences in size and years of seniority. In PEU-Lt a marketing office has somehow been in charge of external communication, with some occasional internal communication actions, depending on the CEO and the marketing director at the given point in the 20 years of this young and entrepreneurial, well-positioned university. Most respondents advocate the need for internal communication to be managed as it has never been included as a function that deserved resource allocation and strategic decisions, which would have probably resulted in clearly identified stakeholders, pre-established communication patterns and channels and content generation policies beyond sales-oriented messages and advertising campaigns. The institutional mission can hardly be considered the main driver and focus of all its communication contents and outputs. Nevertheless, a recent institutional assessment (motivated by accreditation seeking goals) has resulted in the revision of the out-dated mission and the formulation of a new one, which will coincide with a change of rector and the subsequent restructuring. In short, during these 20 years PEU-Lt perhaps has achieved some of the identified pre-requisites for strategic communication management, like more communication-oriented rectors and qualified marketing director with a wider vision. This dynamic institution can afford strategic shifts towards proper institutional communication management that could offer a solid contribution to an incipient institutional excellence.

i) The empirical research findings allow the dissertation author to assert that one of the weakest areas in institutional management is regular self-assessment. Thus, in the context of this thesis, the author claims that it is vital to regularly assess the status quo of the communication function and its degree of strategic management in the institution to implement the required changes so that communication management contributes more effectively to institutional excellence. The fusion of theoretical and empirical findings converge into several models elaborated by the dissertation author. These interrelated models can be applied for institutional self-assessment in order to explore the status quo of the communication function. Based on this diagnosis, the organization can make the pertaining executive decisions so that institutional communication is strategic, mission-driven and strategically managed, as these are pre-conditions for its contribution to institutional excellence. The author's elaborated models can be found in Appendix 11.

j) After thorough examination of collected data on the three explored private entrepreneurial universities, the author can conclude that the three examined

HEIs can be considered excellence-seeking private entrepreneurial universities, which demonstrate different levels of compliance with the established features and pre-requisites to be considered excellent and having excellent communication management.

Having compiled all the empirical research findings obtained through the applied mixed methods, the author has elaborated a wholesome summary (table 40) that graphically shows how the identified prerequisites and features for institutional excellence and communication management excellence apply to the three examined private entrepreneurial universities.

UNAV displays all the items mentioned in this conceptualization: communication management excellence and institutional excellence with a governance system that bears all the implicit resemblance to management-by-mission principles. AustralArg as well can be distinguished for comprising all the key features of institutional excellence, except the ones in common with excellence in communication management, where the widest gap is evident. Strong awareness of mission, and cultivated cultural values may not be enough to guarantee institutional excellence and overall organizational sustainability, unless remarkable improvement in communication management are implemented. This has proven a serious claim of all interviewees as well as a deep concern of the HGB and other middle-level managers.

PEU-Lt displays certain institutional excellence features, such as high quality of core faculty and academic offer, with a declared focus on students as main stakeholder. However, PEU-Lt is not managing its relational capital with a long-term strategic vision. Repeated organizational re-structuring threatens the sustainability of the achieved degree of excellence, unless governance opts for mission-driven and wholesome communication management, instead of sales-oriented communication at the expense of other neglected communication management aspects.

Regarding external assessment of institutional excellence, UNAV and AustralArg are relatively well positioned according to several of the well-known world university rankings, reputation measurements and international accreditations. And as it has already been mentioned, these two HEIs are rated the best private universities in their countries. UNAV has maintained quite stable positions and improved in some of the criteria set by rankings; meanwhile AustralArg has noticeably gone down a few steps in the ranking position ladder during the last 5 years, which coincide with the serious organizational changes, unfortunately accompanied by severe budget cuts for the communication management function. PEU-Lt includes the mandatory

national accreditation of study programmes amongst quality indicators and, for the moment, it can only boast of a high position in national ratings (run by local journals) in the field of economics and management.

Table 40. Application of identified excellence prerequisites and features to the three examined private entrepreneurial universities

Pre-requisites and characteristics for excellence in communication management and institutional excellence		Examined HEIs	
Common items to institutional and communication excellence	1. Participative atmosphere	UNAV, AustralArg, PEU-Lt	
	2. Clear pre-established communication patterns and channels within and amongst departments across organizational structure	UNAV	
	3. Institutional members well-informed on university initiatives	UNAV	
	4. Facilitated collective discussion of set institutional objectives	UNAV, AustralArg, PEU-Lt (partially)	
Excellence in communication management	Examined HEIs	Institutional excellence	
5. High identification with institutional culture + mission	UNAV, AustralArg, PEU-Lt	5. Clear mission: declaration of total quality	UNAV, AustralArg
6. Commitment to quality	UNAV, AustralArg, PEU-Lt	6. Effective governance + leadership processes	UNAV, PEU-Lt (partially)
7. Coupling with communication-oriented HGB	UNAV	7. Mission-based/driven strategic planning	UNAV
8. Highly-qualified communication management staff (for sub-functions)	UNAV, AustralArg (some)	8. Resource allocation for high-quality academic offer	UNAV, AustralArg
9. Expertise in strategic planning + advising senior management	UNAV	9. Qualified and dedicated faculty a) Cognitive and social competence (empathy) b) Role model for students c) Continuous professional + personal development d) Teamwork for research	UNAV, AustralArg PEU-Lt (a, b, d)
10. Alignment with governance through Dircom directly reporting to CEO/ member of HGB	UNAV, AustralArg, PEU-Lt		
11. Well-developed listening structures + techniques	UNAV		
12. Self-assessment of added value	UNAV	10. Regular review/assessment of performance	UNAV, AustralArg
13. Strategy for overall communication: listening and messaging	UNAV	11. Rich relational capital	UNAV, AustralArg
14. Internal partnerships with dominant coalitions in structural units for integration and intensive collaboration	UNAV, PEU-Lt (partially)	12. Focus on key stakeholders: a) Faculty; b) Students	UNAV, AustralArg (only b), PEU-Lt (only b)
15. Transversal synergies & common projects	UNAV, PEU-Lt (partially)		

Own elaboration

Another summary table (table 41) displays the distribution of perceived and endorsed features of communicative and institutional excellence attributed to the three examined private entrepreneurial universities, as well as the room

for improvement where these features still need strategic management decisions to implement adjustments and changes which lead to consolidated excellence and its proper dissemination through professionalized communication management.

In order to deliver excellence, the communication management needs to be elevated from tactical to strategic level with the pertaining structural adjustments and resource allocation. This implies a communication-oriented Higher Governance Body and highly qualified communication staff, who prove their value of their work. Some institutions, like UNAV seemed to have taken the challenge very seriously and have taken tangible decisions to make the most of the competing institutional logics and achieve excellent results out of the pragmatic collaboration and selective coupling of the strengths of academia and management. This has led to enhancing communication to be not only fully integrated into, but considered an essential component of the overall institutional strategy supported by strategies in each of the managerial functions, amongst them, the communication function.

Table 41. Distribution of communicative and institutional excellence features achieved by the three examined private entrepreneurial universities

	Excellent communication management		Institutional excellence	
	Perceived features		Endorsed and officially acknowledged features	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
UNAV	All 1-4		All	
	All 5-14		All 5-12	
AustralArg	1, 4	2, 3		
	5, 6, 8 (some), 10	7, 8 (some), 9, 11, 12, 13 Incipient 14, 15	5, 8, 9 (all), 10, 11, 12b	6, 7, 12 a
PEU-Lt	1, 4 (sometimes)	2, 3		
	5, 6, 10 Partly 14 and 15	7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 Partly 14 and 15	6 (some) 9 (a, b, d); 10, 12b	5, 7, 8, 9 c (n/a) 11, 12 a

Own elaboration

Other institutions have managed to cultivate such a strong sense of identification with the institutional mission that even in the absence of a well-

designed institutional strategy, communication is strategic in as much as it is still mission-supportive and mission-oriented, as it occurs in AustralArg. There is yet a third way: having smart strategies for different management areas (infrastructure, finance, communication, marketing, etc.). *Having* a communication strategy does not *automatically* result in its *being* strategic communication, if it is does not emerge from the mission and is not fully oriented to deploy it through integrated management of all communication functions, as seems to be the case of PEU-Lt. Hence, the extreme importance of stakeholder identification, prioritization and cultivation of relations through clear and well-established patterns and ad hoc channels and mission-based contents.

The overall communication strategies produced by excellent institutional communication departments in excellent institutions prove their ability in proactive communication planning on the basis of goals and objectives, founded on sound experience and research.

The researcher upholds the view that excellent universities who manage their institutional communication integrally and strategically, may display the features attributed to excellent organizations (Vercic & Zerfass, 2016);(Zerfass et al., 2017) with excellent communication departments (Zerfaß et al., 2014); (Zerfaß, Tench, Verčič, Verhoeven, & Moreno, 2014); listening more openly to stakeholders, significantly more developed structures and techniques of organizational listening in order to be more responsive.

Each university ought to foresee the level of communication management professionalization in order to attain positive results that match the institutional aims declared in their mission statements. Excellence in mission-driven strategic institutional communication management is crucial to make institutional excellence visible and sustainable, since excellence should remain the target behind all institutional endeavours of a university.

Excellent institutions deserve excellent communication, with the institutional mission as the core unifying element that relies on strategic communication to imbue the declared institutional promise all through the institutional structure, creating and cultivating relations and synergy. Scattered institutional achievements, however excellent, amount to lesser value than all held together by the underlying institutional mission, like the thread of a necklace that holds the beads together.

Table 42 displays the key empirical findings obtained through the several empirical research methods applied and the substantiation of the defended propositions in this dissertation.

Table 42. Key empirical findings by research methods and substantiation of defended propositions

Data collection method	Key findings	Defended propositions
Web-based content analysis	Features of excellence in communication management (cfr. tables 41-42) • Institutional excellence coupled with institutional mission. • Institutional mission as basis for strategy; integration of communication into institutional strategy. • Status of the communication function: position in the structure, appointed Dircom; internal organization of the institutional communication department (ICD). • Differences in levels of centralization and alignment of communication management in terms of structure and design of the Website of the whole university and that of each academic unit. • Existing and lacking pre-established communication lines with key institutional stakeholders (faculty, students and administration staff) to interact with the ICD and reach highest governance body • Strategic choices of content generation; signs of autonomous and centralized content management. • Explicit mentions/lack of triple-mission contents; market-driven tendencies in contents. Quality and excellence as interchangeable terms. Mentions of external assessments of excellence: rankings, accreditations.	DP1, DP2, DP3, DP4, DP5
Alumni survey from examined HEIs	• Features of institutional excellence as most important. • mission-driven institutional excellence; effective governance clearly identified stakeholders and prioritization of their needs; higher valued to international recognition of achievements • Indistinctive use of the terms <i>excellence</i> and <i>quality</i> applied to teaching and faculty.	DP1 DP3
Expert survey	• Advocate the importance of a mission-driven institutional strategy and favour the integration of the communication function in the overall institutional goals counting on the full-right membership of the DirCom in the Highest Governance Body of the institution • Acknowledge the need for integrated management of internal and external communication, with cohesive outputs that reflect the unique institutional communicative identity. • internal communication function requires a communication professional in cooperation with the Direction of Personnel or Human Resources department.	DP1, DP2, DP3, DP3, DP4
Expert interviews	• Scholar experts claim differences in managing communication in a university from this practice in other organizations: institutional mission, the specificity of expected services and the wide scope of stakeholders • Advocate the importance of a mission-driven institutional strategy and favour the integration of the communication function in the overall institutional goals counting on the full-right membership of the DirCom in the Highest Governance Body of the institution	DP1, DP2, DP3, DP3, DP4
In-depth interviews with representatives from examined HEIs	• Currently existing and lacking features of excellence in communication management and institutional excellence (cfr. Tables 41-42). • Different levels of achieved strategic pragmatic collaboration between academia, the executive leadership and administration staff through selective coupling and blending of the managerial expertise. • Regular self-assessment as weakest areas in institutional management, particularly communication management beyond media clipping.	DP1, DP2, DP3, DP3, DP4, DP5

Own elaboration

The dissertation author adheres to the words of UNAV Vice-rector for communication: “*only when an ad hoc communication professional is placed in the right place and at the right time, only then the communication function*

grows. Communication has done its job when it has created such a communicative culture that the communication management department is no longer needed, because everyone and everything communicates. When you have managed to make communication an essential element of the organizational culture, then your job is done”.

Chapter 3. General conclusions, research limitations, further research proposals

3.1 General Conclusions

The author has achieved the seven set objectives for this doctoral dissertation and has validated the five defended propositions:

1. The importance of strategic institutional communication management for the institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities has been disclosed: the author has substantiated linkages between institutional excellence and communicative excellence, the latter being achievable through mission-driven strategic institutional communication management. The author does not claim an absolute causal correlation; however, it can be asserted that one can hardly subsist without the other, as it has been theoretically grounded and empirically ratified with abundant evidence.
2. Conceptualization of private entrepreneurial universities, institutional excellence and strategic communication, has been thoroughly discussed and concepts have been theoretically grounded with abundant scientific sources; the author has suggested her own working definitions of institutional excellence and strategic institutional communication.
3. The prerequisites that affect the contribution of strategic institutional communication to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities have been identified, systematized and explored with mixed empirical research methods in three institutions with similarities and differences in their degree of achieved overall institutional excellence and communicative excellence.
4. Based on the theoretical insights of strategic communication management, institutional theory and institutional excellence, the author has provided a theoretical grounding for the linkages between strategic institutional communication management, competing institutional logics and institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities.
5. These linkages have been integrated in the author’s elaborated conceptual model that explains the contribution of mission-driven strategic institutional

communication to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities.

6. The identified prerequisites of strategic institutional communication management that affect its contribution to the institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities have been empirically assessed applying retroductive inference to examine the phenomena in the three purposefully selected private entrepreneurial universities as units of this multiple case-study research design.

Critical realist multiple case-study research design has proved a suitable choice which has allowed the author to explore the complex phenomena of the interrelated institutional excellence and institutional communication in the real contexts where identified pre-requisites have disclosed how they influence the course of action, decisions and outcomes in each of the examined organizations using the same empirical research instruments. The author has conducted empirical research with double triangulation of data sources and data gathering methods: Web-based content data analysis; survey responses from 81 Alumni, survey data obtained from 10 experts with 6 additional communication experts interviews and 56 interviews with representatives from the three examined HEIs. This thorough empirical research has permitted the author to gather relevant and sufficient evidence to confirm the defended propositions.

7. Managerial insights have been provided for private entrepreneurial universities to improve their strategic institutional communication management as a strategic component of institutional excellence; further research suggestions that can expand exploration to other areas of communication management in HEIs have as well been made by the dissertation author.

8. Defended propositions have been formulated based on thorough theoretical substantiation of the linkages between conceptualized institutional excellence, strategic institutional communication and the competing institutional logics that demand an adequate mission-driven management paradigm.

The five defended propositions have been validated with sound evidence gathered through mixed methods of empirical research.

DP1 has been validated: the fuller the awareness of the Highest Governance Body of the significant contribution of institutional communication to institutional excellence, the higher status attributed to the communication function, the more effectively this function is integrated into the overall

mission-driven institutional strategy. Considering the institutional excellence as coupled with the institutional mission entails establishing effective and efficient mission fulfilment as the base for institutional performance assessment. Plenty of evidence has been provided through primary data obtained from Web-based content and corroborated with expert interviews and interviewees from the three selected universities. This allows to confirm that the status and position of the communication function is affected by the level of awareness that the highest governance body (executive steering team, rectorate) has about the significant impact of communication management on long-term institutional excellence. Institutional communication tends to remain at a tactical-operational level, if the executive steering team does not raise the management of this function to executive level with corresponding structural design and resource allocation. An excellent institution cannot be considered as such unless it strives for excellence at all levels of performance. Thus, in order to achieve and sustain the identified features of institutional excellence, strategic institutional communication must also display the features of excellent communication management.

DP2 has subsequently been demonstrated, because given the first condition stated in DP1, the communication management function is placed at the highest executive level in the organizational structure and the management of this function is entrusted to a structural unit, usually called Communication Department, Direction of Communication or alike denominations. Most Dircoms in HEIs are currently too much focused on media relations, positioning the rector, and marketing communications for promotion and enrolment. However, university management implies management of knowledge, thus it requires expert knowledge in all areas of institutional governance. Therefore, university communication requires the highest level of expertise on communication management: the university Dircom must *know about* communication to manage communication with competence and empower others to communicate as professionally as possible.

The choice of organizational structure conditions the status and position of the institutional communication management function and its potential contribution to institutional excellence. As empirical data has demonstrated, this structural unit tends to report directly to Highest Governance body, and in some cases with full membership in the executive board. Substantial evidence (obtained through Web-based content analysis, insights from experts and interviewees from the three examined universities, in particular those in managerial positions and communication management staff) has been

provided to reveal the pressing need for highly qualified Directors of Communication with extraordinary personal skills and outstanding qualification, professional experience and vast knowledge of several disciplines, namely communication management, strategic management, organizational behaviour and governance. The status and position assigned to this senior communicator is highly dependent on his/her personal endowment: when the candidate fails to have the required profile, he/she has little executive and advisory influence and inference with the dominant formal and informal coalitions and with his/her own department as well. In such cases, communication tends to play a supportive, tactical role rather than being a forerunner and strategic element that pervades the whole organization. Pertaining empirical findings as well demonstrate that the advisory and executive influence of the DirCom in a university is significantly enhanced when the Dircom has not only proved practitioner experience, but also a solid academic background (preferably PhD). This is also demonstrated by the increasing number of universities with a vice-rectorate for communication and institutional relations. Thus, a strategic inflection point is the choice of the suitable candidate for the position of DirCom in a university, where the role of Dircom is still poorly defined or underexploited.

DP3 has been demonstrated as a key mechanism to favour the contribution of strategic institutional communication to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities. When there is an *ad hoc* structural unit entrusted with the management of the institutional communication function, communication channels and patterns can be developed and monitored to build and maintain the rich relational capital expected from excellence-seeking universities. Then, interests and needs of key institutional stakeholders are given due attention. In return, they refeed the co-created social capital based on a shared institutional mission and strong identification with the pursued institutional excellence and joint achievements. Successful enactment of pragmatic collaboration and selective coupling in hybrid institutional forms can also be perceived in structural arrangements that facilitate transversal cooperation, synergetic work and better outcomes. A clear example of this is a unified governance structure across all academic units, where governance boards gather the expertise of academia and management.

Stakeholder identification and prioritization has also emerged as a key concern and urgent matter to tackle the inherent and necessary tension to be encountered in private entrepreneurial universities (extensively applicable as

well to state-run HEIS). Current academia is pressurized to bear quantifiable results, while university executive leadership and administration management increasingly seems rather focused on sustaining the business, thus centred on students (former, current and mostly-prospective ones). Faculty's sceptical and fault-finding attitude towards communication management is in part justifiable. tangible results of communication work either fall short or are not properly communicated precisely to professors, who are the most visible institutional stakeholders, the interphase between the institution and students and their families, between the university and society.

DP4 has been validated in as much as the organizational structure of the examined universities have proved to be either a passive/active facilitator. Existing reporting lines and established structures may be used adequately or simply ignored; they may even become a sort of nuisance that hinders stakeholder engagement and alignment of all structural units, whenever the structure reinforced too strong centralization at the expense of deep-rooted autonomy of certain management areas, including the communication function. In brief, a full-fledged communication department that coordinates internal and external communication functions in cooperation with equivalent communication management teams in the academic units facilitates their legitimate autonomy, without undermining the unity of the institutional identity, mission and joint pursuit of institutional excellence. This matrix model of double reporting with empowered communication delegates or unit dircoms can be considered the ideal organizational design for an entrepreneurial university with well-developed large structural units. This way, autonomy and alignment are reconciled.

Private entrepreneurial universities acknowledge the increasing relevance of internal communication management as a strategic long-term factor of institutional excellence; however, they tend to allocate more resources to the external communication function. Integration of internal and external communication has proved to be affected by the level of understanding and importance given by the highest governance body to internal communication in comparison to resources allocated for the external communication (in terms of structure and personnel). This is also evident in as much as the institutional strategy tackles the two communication sub-functions/ areas as equally significant for the achievement of long-term mission-driven excellence and sustainable positive performance. The pragmatic collaboration and selective coupling of blended expertise of communication professionals with Human

Resources managers has emerged as a favoured option and in some of the explored universities, as an outcome of well-managed competing logics. DP5 has been substantiated with evidence from Web-based content analysis, which has been later corroborated with abundant responses of the interviewees, as legitimate witnesses to the undeniable competing institutional logics that pervade the generated internal and external communication contents. The knowledge created and accumulated in a university needs to be properly managed and communicated *ad extra* as well as *ad intra*, hence the constitutive role of communication to reveal the excellence achieved in a university. The increasing and alarming tendency to focus on tactical market-driven and short-term communication actions is often suffocating long-term more strategic outputs that safeguard and reflect the triple institutional mission. The more market-driven is the institutional strategy, the more imbalance and disproportion between external and internal communication, with market-oriented external communication outputs generally upstaging mission-driven internal communication efforts. The more mission-driven the internal communication, the sooner this function gets formalized, as a strategic component of a more sustainable institutional excellence. Content generation and their dissemination through carefully selected communication means and channels has proved to be closely related to the available resources (ref. DP1 and DP2), to the personal endowment of the communication management unit and its visionary and well-qualified director with the necessary status, executive and advisory influence.

Regular assessment emerged as the weakest area with the most urgent needs to implement pertaining changes that can enhance the contribution institutional communication to institutional excellence in private entrepreneurial universities. Regular evaluation of the quality of stakeholders' relations is one of the core tasks of the university Dircom. Only by assessing the current status quo of this vital management function and by pinpointing the ailing areas that require improvement and adjustments (DP2-DP5), can decisions be made and solutions be sought, as long as the Highest governance body gains awareness (DP1) of how much really strategic institutional communication can contribute to long-term, sustainable and mission-driven institutional excellence. Overestimated and unbalanced focus on external drivers of excellence, such as rankings is a frequent deviant communication behaviour. Instead, the criteria of world university rankings should better become self-assessment instruments to monitor and improve institutional performance and communicate it more effectively.

3.2 Limitations of this dissertation

1. Respondents and methods: the author had intended to apply a larger proportion of qualitative research methods for the primary data collection, as it seemed to correspond better with the research design chosen to explore the research question. Even though in the end each data gathering technique was applied with a sufficient sample of key informants, respondents and experts to achieve the aim set for each method, yet the researcher encountered unexpected obstacles during the scholarly visits to the universities in Spain and Argentina. The intended meetings with students and Alumni to conduct collective interviews or focus groups could not take place due to certain restrictions in the institutions regarding involvement of students. Thus, survey method was used. In the future, quantitative methods with larger samples of institutional stakeholders could be used to provide additional findings of interest for the HEIs and counting on their cooperation to collect data.
2. Multi-case sampling and replicability: one of the chosen universities (namely, Universidad de Navarra-UNAV) could have been sufficient unit of analysis as a single case study applying the criteria of typical single case of best practice or exemplary institution. The author expanded the sample to three institutions for comparative analysis and for deference with the Lithuanian HE context, since the dissertation has been written under the affiliation of a Lithuanian university, hence the inclusion of a Lithuanian case. A third non-European institution has also been included for wider coverage of the globalizing phenomena taking place in the HE context. The author believes many of the identified prerequisites, empirical findings, and provided models can be applied to other similar educational institutions.
3. Intercultural dimension: the geographical location of the three explored HEIs is very different and could have allowed a thorough cross-cultural comparative analysis with deeper insights on the cultural-laden approaches to institutional management. However, the author asserts that the HE is rapidly globalizing and HEIs in absolutely opposite latitudes are facing very similar market-driven challenges. Admittedly, the dissertation author has a multicultural profile with long experience in the three cultural environments tangentially explored in this research paper. Nevertheless, cross-cultural comparison of HE market trends was not the main aim of this dissertation.
4. Depth of exploration: being a multiple-case study research design with critical realist paradigm, the present dissertation did not seek to explore all and every detail of the organizational behaviour in the three chosen universities.

This could be done as further research with specific variables or factors and other or similar combination of methods

5. The phenomena selected by the author led to her specifically focusing on two main constructs: strategic communication management and institutional excellence as interrelated through the mission-driven paradigm for institutional governance and management in which communication plays a vital role. Other areas of institutional management could be also explored.

6. Use of foreign languages: the terminology in Lithuanian language poses some difficulties, because some of the keywords lose their original semantic field, for instance the word “excellence”. The equivalent in Lithuanian could be *pranašumas*, which would be the same term widely used for *competitive advantage*. Instead, the word *tobulumas* (in English -perfection) seems to be officially adopted in the Lithuanian scientific literature applied to the field of management. Similarly, the word “institutional” is not frequently used by Lithuanian scholars and practitioners in the field of communication management; meanwhile, this term is commonly used in English, Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese and other languages.

3.3 Further research proposals

Many of the following proposals are already part of the research activity envisioned by the dissertation author.

1) Longitudinal study would allow to track the improvements in communication management and measure its impact on institutional excellence. However interesting the results might be, it is rather time-consuming and the sample should probably be reduced to either one or two institutions, or to one geographical area to facilitate fieldwork.

2) Large samples of respondents from each stakeholder group could allow quantitative analysis of correlations between excellent communication management, impact on externally and internally measured reputation and excellence. Access to data could be difficult in countries where personal data protection regulations are in force and respondents may be unwilling to answer, thus response rate could affect reliability.

3) Thorough examination of cultural factors would allow cross-cultural comparisons to explore the extent of the national culture impact on institutional governance of private entrepreneurial universities, bearing in mind the increasingly globalizing phenomenon of the marketization of HE and the subsequent communication management paradigms.

- 4) Further research on the same or other chosen HEIs could be conducted with a focus on the impact of leadership styles on mission-driven governance and its approach to the role of communication management. In this dissertation, the author could already foresee some trends in this respect, as two of the explored universities have gone through serious executive team changes during the dissertation writing period. The same can be said when a given institution changes its mission, vision and values, as this should be accompanied by an evident change in institutional strategy that should naturally affect the strategic communication function.
- 5) Further empirical research about the impact of internal communication management exploring the engagement of different stakeholder groups could be illuminating in terms of excellence and overall organizational sustainability, aided by professionalized strategic communication management.
- 6) Additional quantitative and qualitative analysis of communication contents generated and delivered through different channels and means for different targeted audiences could be conducted to examine congruence, consistency and coherence with the declared institutional mission and pursued institutional excellence.
- 7) This thesis advocates the significance of communication-oriented and mission-driven institutional governance as conditioning the contribution of communication to institutional excellence. Thus, further research could address the influence of leadership style on the management model choice to facilitate this contribution.
- 8) Both the theoretical contributions and managerial recommendations could be blended into a wholesome set of institutional communication management audit portfolio, as suggested by some of the interviewees, who expressed genuine interest in receiving feedback for their respective institutions after empirical data analysis.
- 9) Sampling could include top universities (by world rankings) to explore their institutional communication management in relation to excellence. However, this would require solid financial aid and leverage to access institutional data.
- 10) High-rank public entrepreneurial universities could be selected as cases to explore how the competing logics in the public sector influence executive leadership approach to communication management and its implication in the overall institutional strategy. In any case, it would be advisable to restrict the sampling to zones of certain economic, social, political and cultural affinity, which strongly affect the status quo of HEIs and the HE market trends.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1 Systematized data about the three examined universities

a) Brief information about the three selected private universities

	University of Navarra	Universidad Austral	PEU-Lt
Foundation	1952 in Pamplona, Spain. Predecessor: Estudio General de Navarra. University status in 1960.	1991 in Buenos Aires and Rosario. Argentina Predecessor: IAE Business School in 1978.	1999 in Kaunas, Lithuania. Predecessor of PEU-Lt: Business Training Centre, founded in 1995.
Campus	Pamplona, San Sebastian Madrid, Barcelona (IESE has 4 more)	Pilar, Buenos Aires, Rosario.	Vilnius
Enrolment	7861 undergrads; 2227 graduates; 914 doctoral	3076 undergrads 2008 graduates 10000 in other programmes	(accurate data not available)
Alumni	165,646 from 120 countries. 28041 in Alumni association	41,700 (IAE business school 14,500 from 50 nationalities)	Over 4000 Alumni (accurate data not available)
Faculty	880 full time, 554 part time faculty members	596 faculty members 170 researchers	(accurate data not available)
Administration and support services	Total: 3686, 2176 of them (59%) 'Clínica' staff, the rest 1510.	(accurate updated data not available)	(accurate data not available)
Academic units	17 schools, 10 institutes, 7 centres	6 schools, 2 institutes	1 school
Academic offer	~ 50 undergraduate, 40 graduate, 27 doctoral programmes ~ 13 Executive MBA programmes in Barcelona, Madrid, New York and Munich and São Paulo	1 pre-undergraduate 3 B.A, 1 Teaching College, 11 undergraduate 36 graduate, 4 doctoral programmes) IAE Business School: 2 MBAs, ~10 Executive MBAs and 1 Executive PhD programme	6 undergraduate, 3 graduate, 2 doctoral programmes 8 MBA study modules, 1 Executive MBA programme
Visual identity	Coat of arms and logo	Coat of arms and logo	Corporate logo
Motto	Navarrensis universitas studiorum	Australis universitas studiorum	N/A(?)
Scientific production	508 indexed publications, others: 883 (book reviews, editorials, proceedings)	Around 300 per year. 41 accredited researchers of Conicet	(accurate updated data unavailable)
Own publications	9 journals indexed (former WOS of Science, ISI, Thomson Reuters) 11 journals indexed SCOPUS 7 monograph collections	2 scientific journals (perhaps more. Cfr. available Website data)	1 scientific journal

Own elaboration based on institutional Website data

b) Institutional mission, vision and values of the three selected private entrepreneurial universities

	Mission	Core values
UNAV	Its mission is to seek and present the truth; contribute to the academic, cultural and personal education of students, promote academic research and health care activities; provide suitable opportunities for the development of its professors and employees; carry out broad cultural outreach and social promotion work with a clear goal of service.	Work Freedom Respect Interdisciplinarity Responsibility Service International dimension
AustralArg	...intends to serve society by pursuing truth, creating and disseminating knowledge, educating on virtues, and catering to every individual's transcendent destiny, providing intellectual, professional, social and public leadership.	Search of truth Universal outlook Interdisciplinary spirit Interrelation Intellectual freedom Cultural diversity Respect
PEU-Lt	Professional and socially responsible development of high relevance managerial competence and economic thought.	Expertise leadership Entrepreneurship Social responsibility Sense of community

Own elaboration based on institutional Website data

c) Characterization of the selected universities according to private university types

Types of HEI	Description	University
Elite (world-class)	World-class, top tier: mostly US universities; some UK.	
Semi-elite	Among leading HEIs in their country by rankings Above-average selectivity and status. Priority on good practical teaching; good applied research	UNAV AustralArg PEU-Lt
Identity	Very often religiously based: Latin America, Europe and Africa usually Catholic; USA, Protestant denominations.	UNAV (endorses the teachings Roman Catholic Church teachings) AustralArg (endorses the teachings Roman Catholic Church teachings)
Demand absorbing	Largest increase; demand has exceeded supply in public or other private HEIs University "label", though rather technical/ vocational institutions	
For-profit	Small sub-sector markedly growing in developing regions Business model: students-customers; faculty-service provider; power concentration in Executive board.	PEU-Lt (juridical non-profit, private in praxis. 90% of shares bought by local national university.

Own elaboration based on source (Albatch, 2009)

d) Characterization of the three selected universities into research (R) or entrepreneurial (E) type

Organizational dimensions		UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-LT Lt
Work integration		Some degree of coupling	Some degree of coupling	Tighter coupling
(R) Looser coupling	(E) Tighter coupling amongst sub-units and activities (internal); links with society (external)	Closer to R type	Closer to R type	Closer to E type
Governance model		R + E	R + E	R + E
(R) Collegial and democratic	(E) Executive with strong steering core	Collegial and strong steering core	Collegial and strong steering core	Executive with strong steering core
Goals and identity		E	E	E
(R) Multiple, conflicting goals and identities	(E) Coherent institutional profile; unitary organizational identity			
Legitimacy basis and resource-dependencies		R + E	R + E	R + E
(R) Largely dependent on public-support and funding	(E) Social relevance and third stream funding	Some public funding for study grants (voucher system) Closer to E type	Some public funding for study grants (voucher system) Closer to E type	Some public funding for study grants (voucher system) Closer to E type
Core functions and mission		E	E	E
(R) Teaching + research	(E) Teaching, research + third mission			
Dominant normative ethos		R + E	R + E	R + E
(R) Academic freedom (knowledge production)	(E) Strategic science (Knowledge Production and user-inspired basic research)			

Own elaboration based on source: Pinheiro et al. (2014)

e) Defining factors of excellence applied to selected universities

Type of institution	Concentration of talent	Abundance of resources	Favourable governance	
Research university	Students and faculty Emphasis on graduate students	+++	+++	AustralArg
Teaching university/ college	Students and faculty Emphasis on undergraduates	++	+++	UNAV PEU-Lt
Community college	Student body of diverse academic achievement	+	+++	PEU-Lt
	Outstanding faculty with professional experience and pedagogical skills			UNAV AustralArg PEU-Lt
Open university	Diverse student body (academic achievement and age)	+	+++	PEU-Lt
	Faculty: excellent skills for distance teaching			UNAV AustralArg

Own elaboration based on source Salmi (2009)

Appendix 2 Web-based content analysis forms applied to the three examined universities

ICD existence and accessibility

Rules: Presence (yes=X; no=) ; Order: 1,2,3. Criteria: the least, the better.				
Sub-category and variables		Numerical codes		
Existence, visibility and accessibility		UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	The university has an ICD, or a unit with similar functions, but different nomenclature	x	x	x
Status of the ICD and its Head (director, manager, or equivalent)				
2	The university has a Dircom or any other equivalent position/title	x	x	x
3	The Head of the ICD is integrated into the HGB/ rectorate	x		x
4	A person in the highest governance body supervises the ICD performance	x		
5	The ICD has its own space in the institutional Website		x	
6	ICD released Handbook of institutional communication for internal users	x		
Accessibility of ICD sub-site/page in the Website				
7	Accessible ICD site at primary navigation from the Homepage, or 2-4 steps			x
Internal organization of the ICD				
8	Information about ICD position in the university organigram	x	x	
9	Information about the mission and function in the institution	x	x	
10	Clear distribution of functions: internal, external, digital communication, media, social media, etc.	x	x	
11	Each function has an appointed person	x	x	
Interaction with the ICD				
12	Full contact information of each appointed person by function: tel. nr., office address; available direct link to email address	x		
13	Available names and emails of appointed person by function, but no direct embedded link	x		
14	Links to social media	x	x	
15	Available real time communication: chat logo/speech bubble			
16	There is a visible suggestion box	x		
17	There is a delegate/communication manager/ICD satellite or representative in each department/school/ centre	x		
18	There is a clear communication line academic staff -ICD	x		
19	There is a clear communication line students-ICD	x		
20	There is a clear communication line administrative staff-ICD	x		
21	The ICD releases a Newsletter, anyone can contribute ideas, topics, photos	x		
22	The ICD releases a Newsletter as unilateral initiative (no contributions from stakeholders).			
23	Experts guide/directory coordinated by ICD	x		

	Availability of resources for communication with stakeholders	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
	Tab to personalized search by profile available on Homepage	x	x	
1	Prospective students	x	x	x
2	Current students	x	x	
3	Alumni	x	x	
4	Academic staff	x	x	
5	Administration staff	x		
6	parents	x		
7	Research and transfer	x		
8	Links to social media profiles of the university	x		x
9	Available real time communication: chat logo/speech bubble			
10	Available contact information: phone, email address	x	x	x
	Accessible from the institutional Website Homepage			
11	Portal or Intranet for internal users	x	x	x
12	Facebook	x	x	x
13	Instagram		x	x
14	Twitter	x	x	x
15	LinkedIn	x	x	x
16	YouTube	x	x	x
17	Google+			x
18	Snapchat		x	x
19	Flickr	x		x
20	Other			x
	Institutional Newsletter availability/accessibility			
21	To the general public		x	
22	To employees, current and former students and employees	x		
23	To employees and students			
24	Only to full-time employees. E.g., on the mailing list			x

	Availability of resources specially focused on students	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	For all students accessible from the institutional Website Homepage	x		
2	Links to social media profiles of the university	x	x	
3	Available real time communication: chat logo/speech bubble			
4	Available contact information (phone, email address)		x	x
5	FAQs		x	x
6	Multimedia gallery; downloadable material	x	x	
	University life portfolio (tabs on menu)			
7	News of all university	x		
8	Social media tab	x	x	
9	Personal development opportunities	x	x	x
10	Recreational activities (academic clubs, arts, culture, sports)	x	x	x
11	Tab for social engagement/CSR offer	x	x	
12	Upcoming events/agenda	x	x	
13	Interactive link available for more information	x	x	x
	Alumni relations			
14	Special subsite for all Alumni from institutional Website Homepage	x	x	x
15	Tab or subsite for Alumni webpage of each academic unit/centre	x	x	
16	Links to social media profiles of the university		x	x
17	Available real time communication			
18	Available contact information: phone, email address	x	x	x
19	Special portal/platform with available resources	x	x	
20	Personal and professional development opportunities	x	x	
21	Networking opportunities through career day, talent search	x	x	x
22	Invitation to cooperate/contribute financially...	x	x	x
23	Invitation to join: fill in form, update personal info	x	x	
24	Links to social media by school/academic unit (or study programme?)	x	x	
25	Multimedia gallery; downloadable material		x	
26	A digital Newsletter/journal for Alumni can be requested	x	x	
27	Printed Newsletter Alumni/ paid subscription	x		

	Media relations	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	Available subsite: Press room	x		
2	Available institutional contact information: phone number, email address	x		
3	Available full name, phone number+ email address of responsible person	x	x	
4	Links to social media profiles of the university	x		
5	Press releases available for download document and photos	x		
6	Available experts guide/directory with accessible contact data	x		
7	Academic and financial data annual reports	x	x	
8	Link to press releases	x	x	

	References to rankings of universities			
		UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
	Where			
1	Special tab in Homepage menu		x	
2	Rector's words			
3	Introductory/explanatory note on mentioned rankings	x	x	x
4	News (update banners when new rankings released)	x	x	
	International rankings			
5	Logos with hyperlinks		x	x
6	QS	x	x	
7	THE	x		
8	ARWU (Shanghai rankings)			
9	Webometrics	x		
10	U-Multirank	x		
11	Graduate employability	x	x	x
12	By subjects	x	x	
13	Regional rankings	x	x	
14	National rankings	x		x
	Specific for Business Schools			
15	Eduuniversal		x	x
16	Financial Times	x	x	
17	Bloomberg Businessweek	x		
	Website of academic units			
18	School of Communication	x	x	
19	Deans' or welcome address			
20	School of Economics and Business and Management	x	x	
21	Deans' or welcome address			
22	Other schools	x	x	
23	Enrolment/admissions sub-site	x	x	
24	References in posts of /or links to social media	x	x	x
	Total:	31	33	42

	References to accreditations	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	EQUIS (executive education)	x	x	
2	AMBA (executive education)	x	x	
3	AASCB (executive education)	x	x	
4	EFMD (regional, Europe)	x		
5	EDUNIVERSAL		x	x
6	CEEMAN (regional, Central & Eastern Europe)			x
7	Latam (regional for Latin America)		x	
8	Joint Commission International (Hospitals)	x	x	
9	America Economia (American hospitals and clinics)		x	

	References to quality	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	Special tab in Homepage menu		x	x
2	mentioned but not separate tab/section	x		
3	Mission statement		x	
4	Rector's words			
	Website of academic units			
5	School of Communication		x	
6	Deans' welcome address		x	
7	School of Economics and Business and Management	x	x	
8	Deans' welcome address	x	x	
9	Other schools	x	x	
10	Enrolment/admissions sub-site			
	References to excellence	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	Special tab in Homepage menu			
2	Mentioned, but not separate tab			x
3	Mission statement			
4	Rector's words			
	Website of academic units			
5	School of Communication	x	x	
6	Deans' welcome address			
7	School of Economics and Business and Management	x	x	
8	Deans' welcome address			
9	Other schools			
10	Enrolment/admissions sub-site			

	References to successful graduates and employability rate after graduation	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	Special tab in Homepage menu			x
2	Rector's words	x		
	Website of academic units			
3	School of Communication	x	x	
4	Deans' welcome address			
5	School of Economics and Business and Management	x	x	
6	Deans' welcome address	x		
7	Other schools		x	
8	Enrolment/admissions sub-site			x
9	News about successful grads	x		x

	References to knowledge transfer	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	Special tab in Homepage menu	x	x	
2	Mentioned but not separate tab/section			x
3	Mission statement and vision	x	x	
4	Vision	x	x	
5	Values	x	x	
	Website of academic units			
6	School of Communication		x	
7	Deans' welcome address			
8	School of Economics and Business and Management	x	x	
9	Deans' welcome address			
10	Other schools	x	x	
11	Enrolment/admissions sub-site			
	References to social mission	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	Mentioned but not separate tab/section	x		
2	Mission statement	x	x	x
3	Vision	x	x	
4	Values	x	x	x
	Website of academic units			
6	School of Communication	x	x	
7	Deans' welcome address			
8	School of Economics and Business and Management		x	
9	Other schools	x	x	
10	Other tabs related to social mission and cooperation	x	x	
	Tools for CSR and social mission dissemination			
	ITEMS	UNAV	AustralArg	PEU-Lt
1	Transparency Portal	x		
2	System of Grants	x	x	x
3	Partnership with sponsors	x	x	x
4	Knowledge sharing events	x	x	x
5	Knowledge sharing platforms (Coursera/MOOC)	x	x	
6	Social activities: voluntary work	x	x	
7	Third mission projects	x	x	

Appendix 3. Brief questionnaire for standardized survey with Alumni on institutional excellence

OPEN QUESTIONS	
1. Which three words come first to your mind when you hear the word excellence , as applied to an educational institution , like a university ?	
1.	
2.	
3.	
2. From what you experienced as a student, would you categorize your university as an excellent institution ?	
Why? Could you give at least 1 specific example ?	
CLOSE QUESTIONS	
Which of the following items would you rank as the most/least important characteristics or criteria to consider a university an excellent institution	
In a 5-0 scale, assign 5= essential and most important; 4= quite important; 3= important, but not essential; 2 = less important, because not urgent; 1= least important; 0= not important at all.	
1. Clear institutional mission- a declared promise and decision of total quality in performance.	
2. Clear pre-established communication patterns and channels	
3. Effective governance + leadership processes	
4. Facilitated collective discussion of institutional objectives	
5. High-quality academic offer	
6. Institutional members regularly and well-informed on university initiatives	
7. International recognition of achievements, measurable by external standards applied to all universities (for example, rankings)	
8. Official recognition of quality and excellence by national authorities ((for example, accreditations)	
9. Participative atmosphere as a feature of the institutional culture	
10. Professors as role model for students	
11. Qualified and dedicated academic staff	
12. Real focus on needs, expectations and experiences of professors	
13. Real focus on needs, expectations and experiences of students	
14. Regular review/assessment of performance and outcomes (minimum yearly)	
15. Social competence, especially empathy of academic staff	
16. Strategic planning in full accordance with mission and vision	
17. Strong relationships amongst different stakeholders: academic and administration staff, students	

Own elaboration

Appendix 4. Alumni survey answers and statistical data

university	Alumni	QUESTIONS																
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
UNAV	1	2	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	3
UNAV	2	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
UNAV	3	3	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
UNAV	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4
UNAV	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5
UNAV	6	4	4	5	3	5	5	4	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5
UNAV	7	4	4	5	3	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	3	4	4	4
UNAV	8	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5
UNAV	9	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5
UNAV	10	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	3	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	2	3
UNAV	11	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3
UNAV	12	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	2
UNAV	13	5	4	4	3	5	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	3	3	4
UNAV	14	5	4	4	2	5	5	5	3	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	4
UNAV	15	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4
UNAV	16	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4
UNAV	17	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
UNAV	18	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4
UNAV	19	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	3	4	4	4	4	4
UNAV	20	5	4	4	4	5	3	2	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	3	4
UNAV	21	5	4	3	3	5	3	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	3	4
UNAV	22	5	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
UNAV	23	5	3	4	4	5	3	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
UNAV	24	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
UNAV	25	5	4	5	5	5	4	3	3	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4
UNAV	26	5	4	4	4	5	3	3	2	3	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4
UNAV	27	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	3	4	5	5	4	5	4	3	5	4
UNAV	28	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5
UNAV	29	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	3
UNAV	30	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4
UNAV	31	5	3	4	2	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	3
UNAV	32	5	4	4	3	5	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	5	3	4	5	3

(continues on next page)

University	Alumni	QUESTIONS																
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
AUSTRALArg		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
AUSTRALArg	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
AUSTRALArg	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
AUSTRALArg	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
AUSTRALArg	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
AUSTRALArg	6	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
AUSTRALArg	7	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4
AUSTRALArg	8	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4
AUSTRALArg	9	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
AUSTRALArg	10	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
AUSTRALArg	11	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
AUSTRALArg	12	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
AUSTRALArg	13	5	4	4	3	5	4	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
AUSTRALArg	14	5	4	4	3	5	4	3	3	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
AUSTRALArg	15	5	4	4	3	5	3	3	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3
AUSTRALArg	16	5	4	4	3	5	3	3	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	3	4	3
AUSTRALArg	17	4	3	4	3	5	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3
AUSTRALArg	18	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3
AUSTRALArg	19	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3
AUSTRALArg	20	4	3	3	3	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3
AUSTRALArg	21	4	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
AUSTRALArg	22	3	3	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

	Alumni	QUESTIONS																
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
PEU-Lt	1	5	2	3	2	4	2	4	1	3	3	4	3	3	0	1	2	2
PEU-Lt	2	2	2	3	3	4	2	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	2	2	3
PEU-Lt	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3
PEU-Lt	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
PEU-Lt	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
PEU-Lt	6	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	3
PEU-Lt	7	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	4	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3
PEU-Lt	8	4	4	4	3	5	4	3	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3
PEU-Lt	9	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3
PEU-Lt	10	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
PEU-Lt	11	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
PEU-Lt	12	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
PEU-Lt	13	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
PEU-Lt	14	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
PEU-Lt	15	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
PEU-Lt	16	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
PEU-Lt	17	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
PEU-Lt	18	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4
PEU-Lt	19	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4
PEU-Lt	20	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4
PEU-Lt	21	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
PEU-Lt	22	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
PEU-Lt	23	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
PEU-Lt	24	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
PEU-Lt	25	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
PEU-Lt	26	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
PEU-Lt	27	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	5

Alumni survey statistical data

UNAV	Mean		4.5	4.125	4.3125	3.78125	4.84375	3.96875
	Median		5	4	4	4	5	4
	SD		0.803219329	0.6090712	0.535061	0.7924798	0.368902	0.7398507
	Coefficient of variation		0.178493184	0.1476536	0.1240721	0.2095814	0.0761604	0.1864191
AUSTRALArg	Mean		4.681818182	4.0909091	4.1818182	3.5454545	4.6818182	3.8636364
	Median		5	4	4	4	5	4
	SD		0.567900363	0.8111773	0.7950061	0.9625004	0.646335	0.9902118
	Coefficient of variation		0.121299107	0.1982878	0.1901101	0.2714745	0.1380521	0.2562901
PEU-Lt	Mean		4.259259259	4	4.444444	3.9259259	4.8148148	3.9259259
	Median		4	4	5	4	5	4
	SD		0.712125345	0.7844645	0.6405126	0.9167638	0.3958474	0.7808243
	Coefficient of variation		0.167194646	0.1961161	0.1441153	0.2335153	0.0822145	0.1988892
Overall	Mean		4.469135802	4.0740741	4.3209877	3.7654321	4.7901235	3.9259259
	Median		5	4	4	4	5	4
	SD		0.726058189	0.7207249	0.6485977	0.884189	0.4667989	0.8181958
	Coefficient of variation		0.162460534	0.1769052	0.150104	0.2348174	0.0974503	0.2084084
	(KW test) p-value		0.04938*	0.9243	0.4235	0.4157	0.7279	0.9702
		grupes reiksmingai skiriasi	grupes reiksmingai nesiskiria					
		Significant difference between groups	No significant difference between groups					
		Significance levels: ** - 1%, * - 5%						

Alumni survey statistical data (continuation)

UNAV	Mean	4.03125	3.8125	4.21875	4.8125	4.75	4.375	4.5625	4.125	4.34375	4.1875	4
	Median	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
	SD	0.7398507	18	31	78	13	07	61	07	18	18	08
	Coefficient of variation	0.1835289	93	61	16	92	27	93	14	13	07	02
AUSTRALIA	Mean	3.6818182	91	09	36	82	73	55	4	404545	3.85454	3.81818
	Median	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
	SD	0.994574	1	24	17	04	69	17	89	27	84	4
	Coefficient of variation	0.2701312	25	85	11	91	01	85	22	78	6	82
PEU-Lt	Mean	4.5925926	22	7	37	48	74	15	22	7	7	89
	Median	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
	SD	0.5723944	15	62	06	74	44	23	94	42	42	85
	Coefficient of variation	0.1246343	93	41	33	45	1	96	93	16	16	19
Overall	Mean	4.1234568	89	41	51	64	47	28	68	38	41	02
	Median	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
	SD	0.8423585	72	54	42	34	05	83	83	92	79	78
	Coefficient of variation	0.2042846	56	38	65	07	43	19	31	63	45	82
	(KW test) p-value	0.0006545**	0.01586	0.4168	0.6832	0.715	0.8874	0.879	0.2147	0.3057	0.4181	0.6126
	grupos reikšmingai skirtasi											
	Significant difference between groups											

Appendix 5 Experts survey Questionnaire

(some items partly used for experts interview as well)

Institutional communication management in entrepreneurial universities of the 21st century

Please, read each question and for each statement choose the most suitable option in the 1-5 disagreement-agreement scale according to your personal opinion and experience.

A. Which should be the main objectives of institutional communication management in the contemporary university?					
1-5 scale	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Establish and maintain good relations with key institutional stakeholders (internal and external) with clear mechanisms and channels to promote dialogue	1	2	3	4	5
2. Encourage and manage internal communication amongst all the units in the institutional structure.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Build a strong and competitive brand that can attract students and retain good employees to ensure economic sustainability of the institution	1	2	3	4	5
4. Keep society informed about its institutional performance: academic and research activities, scientific results	1	2	3	4	5

You are welcome to make here any comments you consider relevant to this question:

B. What should institutional communication management be like in order to be considered strategic?					
1-5 scale	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
5. Institutional communication should be first of all integrated into the overall strategy of the university as a key element in the implementation of institutional plans and essential factor in the achievement of goals.	1	2	3	4	5
6. An institutional strategy requires a communication perspective at all levels of organizational performance.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The university must have an institutional communication strategy designed after a diagnosis of institutional needs and priorities. This strategy requires regular evaluation and updating.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Key internal institutional stakeholders (academic and administration staff, representatives of students) should be engaged in the preparation of institutional communication strategy for the whole university	1	2	3	4	5
9. Having institutional communication delegates in each organizational unit ensures transversal management of institutional communication and the participation of key internal stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5

You are welcome to make here any comments you consider relevant to this question:

C. Who should manage the institutional communication function?					
1-5 scale	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
10. All the communication functions should be coordinated and managed in a centralized way through an institutional communication department/office integrated in the organizational structure	1	2	3	4	5
11. Communication management should be considered a strategic function with executive level and status in the organizational structure (the same as infrastructure, finance, human resources, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The institutional communication department should have a senior manager/ Director of Communication with status and empowerment for autonomous strategic decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The communication function should report directly to the governing body of the university: the rector's office.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The appointment/position of the Director of institutional communication should be independent from the rectorate's term to ensure continuity when a new rector is elected.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The institutional communication department should be in charge of (coordinate and if necessary delegate, supervise) internal as well as external communication.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The Director of institutional communication and his/her team should first and foremost facilitate open and interactive relations, especially with key internal stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
17. The institutional communication department should have sufficient staff to take responsibility for digital communication, social media, media relations, marketing communications, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Institutional communication functions should be managed (planned, implemented and monitored) by staff from within the institutional community to ensure cohesive culture, identity and image of the university. The least outsourcing, the better.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Appointing a Vice-rector of communication is the most suitable measure to ensure that communication is a strategic function in the governance of the university.	1	2	3	4	5
20. If there is no Vice-rector of communication, the Director of institutional communication should take part in strategic decision-making together with the rectorate.	1	2	3	4	5

You are welcome to make here any comments you consider relevant to this question:

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Mariana Sueldo

PhD Candidate from Vilnius University (Lithuania)

Appendix 6 Experts survey answers and statistical data

Experts/ Qs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
LT	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	4	5	3	5	4	4
LT	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	3
ARG	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	3	3
ARG	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	3	3	3
ARG	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	5	3	3	2	5
Arg	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	4
SP	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	3	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	5
SP	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	2	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
SP	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	2	4	2	5	3	4	4	5	3	4	4
SP	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	5	3	3	4	5
	4.6	4.5	3.7	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.9	3.9	4.3	3.9	4.9	4.3	4.9	3.8	4.6	4.6	4.2	3.4	3.6	4.1
5 strongly agree; 4 agree; 3 neither agree nor disagree; disagree; 1 strongly disagree																				

\$Concordance_analysis			
	LT	ARG	SP
W	0.6275401	0.479409529	0.3406468
F	1.6848528	2.762687112	1.5499134
Prob.F	0.1388762	0.001818837	0.1059721
Prob.F Corr	0.2119442	0.005456512*	0.2119442
Chi2	23.8465241	36.43512418	25.889156
Prob.perm	0.133	0.001	0.119
prob.perm corr	0.238	0.003*	0.238
		ARG grupeje yra konkordacija	
		* - 5% level of significance\	

Appendix 7. Applied coding system for qualitative data analysis of expert interviews

Category	Symptoms of Competing institutional logics
Subcategory	Responses
Balanced double vision required	<i>"When the business sector logics are wrongly adapted into the HEI or forced, probably somebody made the decision to run the HEI as if it were a business company without thorough analysis or judgement. (...) I would like to see more entrepreneurship in the Lithuanian universities, more business principles and mindset, so that they rethink what is more useful, how to make the most of their current resources. (...) For instance, they have empty unused rooms or buildings in the Old Town, or more cleaning staff than required. Perhaps universities should outsource the management of their economic affairs, because that is not an academic activity. And this would help to depurate and delimitate their core functions and responsibilities towards their mission. ..Because after all, education can be delivered anywhere" (LT exp 2-RS)</i> <i>"Our Webpage was too focused on marketing, promotion of products, but the rector said he wanted everyone in our community to open their PCs and be welcome by the starting screen of our institutional Website that communicates who we are, our mission and identity, more internal communication and less sales-oriented. Because after all, for us who are already here new products info is less relevant, but we need to share more about the university life" (ES exp2-AMN)</i>
Hardships in implementing business Principles into HEI	<i>"Our previous communication manager was called "corporate relations director", but no clear understanding of her position. This title was just borrowed from the business sector". (LT exp 3-AL)</i> <i>"The problem is the management teams of academic institutions, because very often those teams are led by very good specialists who may be experts in their field but may be bad managers. So, the best chemist is the leader of the Chemistry Department. But when he participates in a strategic session for his department, he does not understand who the client is... So how to work with them if they no management knowledge, no management practice... There are many department head with no management skills, so the first step should be this". (LT exp 2- RS)</i> <i>"During these HE reform, business principles were adopted by public HEIs and here we can see big differences in the organizational culture. MRU delayed their structure and so communication became easier and more fluent, which does not mean better. KTU went to the extreme of too much managerialism, heavier structures and processes, there is even too much communication but not the necessary one" (LT exp 3-AL)</i> <i>"It is great when the members of the organization know their mission. Private universities want to make money as well at least to give it back to the shareholders...And all shareholders have the same expectation: dividends". (LT exp 2- RS)</i>

Category	Relevance of institutional mission
Subcategory	Responses
Linkage with communication	<i>"It is not a question of so much saying but rather of doing, that is, to comply with the functional benefits expected from the university, because first I need to prove I am doing it and not only telling stories about it. And this has to do a lot with excellence: I have to show it by the quality of the faculty members of my university, by the applied research conducted, even by physical evidence; with a library that is much larger than the cafeteria. (...) Mostly, because the university as a brand already implies a whole series of attributes that we cannot be disregarded"</i> (Arg exp1-AAN) <i>"We as universities must bear in mind this question: the university is a social actor, because universities are institutions which transform and imbue future leaders with values. Therefore, I firmly believe that universities have a duty to deliver clear messages about their vision of the world in their advertising and branding communications. They should declare which paradigm they follow, because we all know that in a university we are educators and as such we form and shape others from a very specific stance, from the way we feel and the values we believe in. Thus, I think that all the publicity communication of universities should be transparent in this sense and make their publics clearly aware of the vision that the university upholds about the world, so as to allow people to know what to expect from their formation period of time spent in that particular institution"</i> (Arg expert interviewee 2-LM)
Adjustments to change	<i>"We began to manage our company by the governance –by-mission principle and we do not get distracted by any other model because we find this model is sustainable. Our KPIs emerged naturally out that model of governance, we have frequent conversations about them. When the strategy is really alive and we live by it, you believe in that, even though the results so far are not yet the ones we had set. But the strong belief of executive managers is extremely important, belief in what you are doing. Transferring this management philosophy to HEIs, I can firmly state that it would be almost impossible... I had the chance to visit in a college during their strategic session it is a very hard public to work with because academic staff knows everything the best, and they do not like changes, or if we have been doing things this way why should we start doing it in any other way? Because of their ego, academic staff tend to look at all consultants and lectures with a great load of scepticism"</i> (LT exp2- RS) <i>"When everyone knows clearly why and where he/she is heading it works. With all this merging of public HEIs in Lithuania, it is no longer clear. KTU is still deliberating its own identity: technical or broader profile?"</i> (Lt exp 3-AL)

Category	Status quo of communication function
Subcategory	Responses
HGB approach to communication	<i>"if the executive team or top managers think that the communication function is not important, they will not change their mind. But if these executive people consider communication as one of the core functions, sooner or later the organization will have to face problems and manage this function with the required resources, then the question is settled and the need for communication is unquestionable."</i> (LT expert interviewee 1-AK). <i>"Our university places communication at the very centre and this has made it all possible. This decision of putting institutional communication at the highest executive level implies a wholesome way of doing".</i> (Arg exp 2-LM) <i>"In the model of UIC, communication plays a key role, You must differentiate and institutional communication gives that differential value. It is so important that we hired a Dircom for this academic unit, even more so when there is such high competition amongst public and private HELs here in Catalunya"</i> (ES exp2-AMN)
Strategic, entrusted to ad hoc department	<i>The organizational structure with the visible reporting lines and management levels evidently show how communication flows and who is important".</i> (LT exp2-RS) <i>"It would a great waste of resources, time, energy, if there was no director of communication with an organizational unit or a department in charge of the communication management who integrated all communications: internal, external, marketing, etc. Besides, this would mean result in a great inconsistency in terms of branding. The most powerful brands have their communications very well integrated, so we are trying to make our young brand a powerful one. In a few years we have already become the largest private university in Argentina".</i> (Arg exp 2-LM) <i>"There is a Dircom in charge of the institutional communication of all the university, but there are dircoms in the academic units"</i> (ES exp2-AMN)
Centralized Or autonomous	<i>"If I was the leader or part of the university communication management team, I would suggest as the first step to discuss together with the Executive board, rectorate or whoever are the top management, and decide which communication is centralized and which part is left to academic units. Then, we should work with consistency in very specific areas like all the visuals to avoid chaos and guarantee that every academic unit and department of the whole institution uses these visual and common visual identity tools properly. (...). A unified narrative and of course internal communication...I believe that I have not said anything new, however I can claim that this is not done in universities in Lithuania and most probably universities do not have ad hoc communication teams and executive teams working together on this, or they are simply lost and their efforts are scattered".</i> (LT expert interviewee 1-AK). <i>"The communication policy here is not heavily centralized in a large Dircom, but rather focused on letting each academic unit take care of their needs and priorities. Of course sometimes the marketing director and the Dircom are invited to meetings with the governance body of academic units to consult for some projects"</i> (ES exp2-AMN) <i>"In my opinion, there is no ideal model. It depends on the close coordination with the central Direction of Communication and the team in academic units. The key is in content generation and capacity of adaptability to changing environment inside and outside the organization. But there must be a structure and strategy"</i> (LT exp 3-AL)

Category	Dircom in HEIs
Subcategory	Responses
Status Of DirCom	"We as directors of departments are all at the same level 1 in the board of directors. I am part of that board". (Arg exp 2-LM) "I address each particular person and tell him or her that the University Board Governance has informed me about a project you are in charge of and would like to arrange a meeting to discuss all the particulars. Could all this transversal groundwork if I did not have autonomy and authority? Because when I address professors and ask them to tell me everything they know about a new project, they know that the one who is calling and requesting information is a person that depends directly from the rector". (ES exp 1-AGS) "I have noticed that the communication managers, with whatever the name of their positions are increasingly becoming directly accountable to the CEO. And sometimes these communication directors stand alone in a sort of side line of direct report to the CEO, who sometimes delegates certain issues and gives instructions directly to the communication director, who are becoming more important and of highest executive level. When the communication management is in a higher position as advisor to the CEO and sometimes even speaking on behalf of him in relevant issues, that also gives a signal of his authority and the other employees see this communication director or manager not only as an executioner of downwards instructions. Or a kind of handy supporting person". (LT exp 2-RS)
Qualities	"If the communication director is a good professional and a good communicator, he/she will be able to manage the communication of sausages and of university activities. This person will only need time to grasp the "product", the target audiences and of course induction is vital. A Dircom who enters the academic world must be especially strong, will face a critical mass who considers the university as a kind of holy place, a shrine of intellectuals where he/she needs to prove his/her worth. Business principles are bad, a dirty thing. In Lithuania the image of business in general is very negative, it is all about lying to sell. So this communication person comes here to lie in order to sell the university products. A communication specialist who comes from the business sector may not be liked and accepted so easily. Or he/she may not like the job itself. I personally would not like to take such a position. (LT exp 2-RS) "Whether scholar or practitioner...well, a scholar Dircom would be of help as long as he/she speaks the same language of academic particular life, with his/her own experience it would be easier to understand the specifics; on the other hand, when the organization is too segregated and hard to change, bringing an outsider to this position may be a useful shaker" (LT exp 3-AL) "The Dircom in private universities must be able to operate with a mixed formula: as an enterprise they are accountable and must be profitable, save costs and always think whether communication actions are relevant, not just mere positioning or puff advertising; it should also be useful to attract new students. As a DirCom in a university, it must never forget that faculty should not feel under profitability pressure for their work, because their main job is quality teaching, excellent research and personalized attention to students, as a key differentiation factor. Suffocating faculty by demanding more results means killing the golden egg hen, because in the long-run what really brings prestige to the institution is the excellence of faculty in the triple mission fulfilment" (ES exp2- AMN)

Category	Identification of HEI stakeholders
Subcategory	Responses
Student	<i>“it is only natural and logic, even more in the case of private universities, because that is what sustains the business, but students are the second priority public, after professors and researchers”.</i> (Arg exp 1-AAN). <i>“Wide range of stakeholders: the closer circle of faculty, students and support staff; then families of enrolled students, prospective students and their families as well, schools of course, and Alumni, are extremely important for us”</i> (ES exp 2- AMN)
Faculty	<i>“Universities have many faculty members and each of them different, with own styles, personalities, interests, fields, etc. So the challenge is to manage all these flows and gather all these rich differences into a common institutional discourse that creates a differentiation and contributes to a shared institutional reputation”</i> (LT exp1-AK) <i>“If I were to take over the communication management of a university, my first public would be faculty members, because they are the public with the highest interest and the most able to differentiate. Teaching and research staff will talk about the quality of the institutional offer, and that constitutes the functional quality differentiating attribute: the best equipped library with the best professors”.</i> (Arg exp 1-AAN). <i>“Our faculty is a key internal stakeholder and needs to be aligned with the mission and values, as well as having clear goals for teaching quality, research, transfer and engagement in the university life. The dean has meetings with each professor at the beginning and end of the yea to set goals and assess performance. Then informally, some deans try to go for lunch with each of them along the year”.</i> (ES exp 2- AMN)
Poor identification	<i>“If you asked the heads of university or schools academic departments who are their clients, ones will tell you that it is the parents, others say it is the national government from whom their university gets all the financial resources”</i>(LT exp 2-RS)

Category	Relevance of internal communication
Subcategory	Responses
Formalized with established channels	<i>“we believe in integrated communications that is why the Direction of marketing encompasses not only the communication actions specifically oriented to attracting new students, but also all the other communications we disseminate as an organization, internally as well as externally. And regarding internal communication, we have already decided to assign a person who will be responsible for that specific area working with the Human Resources department but depending from us, the Direction of marketing and communication”.</i> (Arg expert 2-LM). <i>“With our three core principles of active listening content management and relations management, we have reorganized the whole internal work of our communication team, even though with very limited, but specific resources that fit our needs. We can now prepare ahead for the upcoming requests that other departments may have because we have designed a communication service request form.”</i> (Arg expert 1-AAN). <i>“The internal function must exist somewhere and the place this function is given in the organizational structure will show the importance that the institution assigns to it. It is hard to measure it, to take it more seriously as a key function to allocate resources.</i> (LT expert 2-RS).
Unsolved issue Gaining importance	<i>“There is no right model. It all depends on the business model and the size of the organization. The same applies to universities. But HR seems to be oriented only to internal issues and. HR staff are most often not qualified for the communication function. They often are not good communicators. Their job is not to write newsletters”.</i> (LT expert 2-RS). <i>“Most universities start to understand that internal communication becomes a sustainability question. In times of great changes, internal communication is vital”</i> (LT expert 2-RS). <i>“This is an eternal problem and the key is combining HR and communication specialists or team. Because if internal communication is only managed by HR staff, then it will remain an HR administrative function, but deprived of communicative issues per se. (...) On the other hand, if internal communication is left only in the hands of communication specialists, these will only focus on communication and fail to do what HR department would do. So, the best is the coordinated combination and synergy of both in joint actions”.</i> (LT expert 1-AK).

Category	Management of content generation and dissemination
Subcategory	Responses
Triple Mission-oriented contents	<i>"It is much more complicated to do qualitative evaluation work, because it is more subjective if you try to analyze for instance contents related to the mission or not, or related to strategy etc.. Well-performing organizations are consistent in their institutional discourse: they always speak about the same thing, there is a rotation of messages, but the core message is the same"</i> (LT exp 2-RS) <i>"I would be more than pleased to see a well-informed and pluralist debate where, let's say, PEU-LT professors have one approach to an issue and Vilnius or any other university presents a different point of view. (...) this would result in a very productive discussion enlightened by academic experts and researchers. But unfortunately we do not have this in Lithuania".</i> (LT expert interviewee 1-AK)
Consistency of contents	<i>"Well, a Lithuanian HEI is constantly using its rankings for promotion and it is still the number 1 choice for many students who trust this HEI upon enrolment. But later on, students get very disappointed because they do not get what they expected. In business, when you offer a product and the customer is not pleased, you may always ask him what he wants and expects. But in the case of university studies, the "client" is a young person who often does not know even himself what he wants and what to expect"</i> (LT exp 2-RS)
Only Media monitoring	<i>"Most often organizations evaluate their communication quantitatively in terms of the number of mentions in the press, negative and positive mentions. But perhaps there have been many positive appearances in the mass media which are not so relevant or closely related to the organization's goals, priorities, products, etc."</i> (LT exp 2-RS)
Mechanistic managerialism	<i>"We are undergoing extreme mechanistic measurements of everything, too many managers wanting to measure everything. Metrics are necessary; however, too much makes processes harder and after all those KPIs lose meaning when you do not have the right means and resources to implement what they demand from you. And so much measurement does not always suit academic and research work, there are things we do we cannot measure but we can still communicate"</i> (LT exp3 AL)

Appendix 8. Questions for qualitative interviews (illustrative list)

Question types	Examples	Remarks
Close-ended	How many years have you been working for this institution? Is this your first job in an educational institution? Had you worked before in a university?	To start from safe information To warm-up to make interviewee gain confidence and natural flow of conversation
Open-ended	What is your academic background? Do you think it is very different to work in a university compared to any other kind of organization?	To move slightly from non-challenging to more critical issues
Mixed types		
Direct	You said before that the communication department is also responsible for internal communication. So, how does it relate with, for example, the information that the Human Resource Department handles?	Asked later on, as it may be slightly confrontational to ask for clarification of presumably discrepant information
Follow-up	Could you say something else about integrating projects? What do you mean by development manager? How does this person exactly relate to the communication management?	getting the interviewee to elaborate his/her answer
Hypothetical	If you could make reforms in the organizational structure, how would you re-organize the communication management function?	To probe the interviewee on current state of affairs
Ideal	In your opinion, what would be the best way to organize your department/re-distribute tasks..	To probe the interviewee on current state of affairs
Indirect	What should academic staff do if they have some communication problem with students or with university governance? What do most teachers/employees think of the way internal communication works here? Is that the way you feel too? Has anyone come to you to talk about it?	To avoid social desirability bias To get at the individual's own view.

Question types	Examples	Remarks
Interpretative	Does it mean that the current structure might change and perhaps next year marketing activities will be under the communication department umbrella? Is it fair to say that what you are suggesting is that your academic unit is in the top of rankings despite poor communication management	Rephrasing answers for more speculative questions
Introducing	Could you tell me about the way your institution coordinates internal communication processes?	To start the interview or after a pause, to move to a new topic
Leading	Do you think that 'Dircoms' in each academic unit would help? ...If they reported to the Director of institutional communication?	To induce the interviewee to further develop the stream of thought
Loading	Does the alarming decrease in student enrolment really influenced the whole strategy?	To encourage more critical position from the interviewee
Probing	That's interesting. Could you tell me more about how your university has tried to unify the brand and why?	To encourage critical opinion and details
Provocative	I have heard that institutional communication management is quite centralized through the vice-rectorate. How does it affect your academic unit?	To get grounded arguments and the personal view of this particular interviewee
Silence	(Just nodding head, smiling or keeping eye contact, or a short encouraging question tag or comment- "oh, really? Oh, I had not heard that before....")	to prod the interviewee to reflect and amplify the answer
Specifying	Could you give me an example of transversal work with other departments? or project where internal, digital and external communication	To induce the interviewee to give more detailed information
Structuring	I would like to move now to the issue of world rankings. Could you comment your position on this issue?	To keep track on the topics the researcher seeks to cover

Appendix 9. Guidelines for unstructured, in-depth interviews

(listed items for discussion during interviews in random order and not necessarily all of them in every interview)

1. Organizational design/structure: existence of Communication department with a Director of Communication (DirCom).
2. Executive and advisory influence of DirCom (reporting line, membership in executive board)
3. DirCom profile: skills, competence, knowledge, reputation and authority amongst institutional stakeholders: staff, colleagues, students, etc.
4. Resources assigned for the communication management function: a) human: communication team/staff; b) material: budget, infrastructure, etc.
5. Internal organization of the communication department: areas, function, reporting, transversal synergy across the organizational structure: with other management departments, with academic units.
6. Institutional Leadership (executive management/board) attitude towards communication role/function/management:
Integration, alignment, full trust in DirCom, access to information, autonomy for decisions, etc.
7. Stakeholders strategic inclusion and involvement through continuous formation and information
8. Long-term communication strategy alignment with institutional identity (mission, vision, values).
9. Short-term communication strategies to implement the long-term strategy
10. Measurement/monitoring of communication process/results/etc.
11. Influence of communication management on institutional excellence and quality.
12. Institutional assessment issues: internal evaluation, external accreditations and rankings.

Appendix 10. Applied coding system for qualitative data analysis of in-depth interviews

Category: Competing logics of market versus social / educational

Subcategory: Sales-oriented external communication outputs

RESPONSES

“Internal communication is what guarantees the organization robustness. When changes are hard to forecast and it gets more difficult to foresee even for the period of one year, it is said that robustness is more important than efficiency. So in my opinion is that the goal of internal communication is to create and maintain that robustness (...) Nevertheless, we only communicate ad extra, and 90 % is focused on sales, truly, there is no [official] institutional communication inside the institution”. (PEU-Lt HGB)

“We aim higher, our goal is not direct sell, because communication can only reinforce a person's decision, communication is not aimed at selling our academic offer. My texts do not sell, but can strengthen the motivation and reason of people to make up their mind and choose us. It increases our visibility and knowledge about us”. (PEU-Lt ICD+ Stud).

”regarding contents, communication here is in hands of people who have an individual approach just to what they consider as important...maybe there is a lack of overall sustainable communication. I think it is very short-term. (...) I think that the mission is formulated in a way that it simply complies with the requirements of external stakeholders and how they should perceive it. I do not think that the mission is related to what people think what people do or what people want to do”. (PEU-Lt AcdMng)

“It is a bit surprising nowadays that most HE schools are communicating about what professors do, but in this university we communicate as we were selling chewing gum, this is the external communication. And regarding inside communication, I think that what is missing is transparency of core things and not just repeating the narrative which does not reflect the reality. I am not sure how to arrange a communication structure for that.... (PEU-LT AcdMng)

“this academic unit does not have a person assigned to communication, so our daily communication is sales-oriented and we have neglected real content generation and I admit it, we are making poor use of our social media accounts, because we are uploading more promotional information when in fact our university is a real power-plant of excellence and all that excellence should become the content that then overflows into the welfare of society. (...) We are at least trying to post more contents about our faculty, their research visits and their scholarly expertise that has impact on society”. (AustralArg AdmMidMng)

RESPONSES

"I am result-oriented even when I am preparing visual materials like brochures or Powerpoint slides with logo. I have sales in mind. You cannot totally separate sales from communication. Of course our communication should be subtle and not hard sell". (PEU-Lt ICD)

"We are all the time looking for new and creative ways of reaching the future students, and avoiding the direct and hard sell (...) Our main function is working together with the sales and enrolment of bachelor programmes. . And that is what might be seen in PEU-LT webpage. But ad extra, we do not say we are a sales force and our goal is not simply to sell and sell". (PEU-Lt ICD+ stud)

Subcategory: Mission-based (triple mission contents) Differentiation, uniqueness; internal and external stakeholders

RESPONSES

"We have a long-standing communication tradition in here, our School of Communication is 55 years old, our current rector is the first journalist graduated from the first school of journalism in Spain who has become rector. Three out of the ten members of the Permanent Council of the Rectorate have studied communication. Communication here is very well-ingrained and enjoys great prestige, so you do not need to explain to anyone here how important communication is for a university". (UNAV HGB-ComMng)

"For me, again, a university is radically different from any other kind of organization or entity, or at least it should be so. We cannot simply transfer the communication and marketing manual of other corporations and apply it to a university. And this because of its particular publics, stakeholders and because of the very nature of the university as an institution". (AustralArg ComMng)

"Those who pursue excellence also try to improve their communication and not only to increase sales. Marketing is not a problem, if you do it without betraying your institutional principles. It does not matter whom this function reports; the disaster would be that the marketing director did not share his/her plans with me and I did not share mine with her/him". UNAV HGB+ ComMng

Part of our mission is reaching larger number of graduates and other stakeholders identified with the spirit of our institutional project. Thus, in line with those objectives, we have to think how to attract those who have not still heard about us, because the capital of prestige and excellence of this university is undeniable, but it needs to solve the riddle how to make itself better known by more people in such a way that it is well interpreted in terms of positioning". (AustralArg ResComUnit).

RESPONSES

"We used to prepare a newsletter but noticed that rate of clicks was rather low; so perhaps there was little interest; it was more entertaining than informative. However, if the contents were properly chosen and extended to research and academic affairs, perhaps it would be more useful", (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ComMng)

"We have our communication perfectly linked with essence of the university; we do not seek to do communication work just to reach goals of rankings or so. We strive to do our work as a university so that the principles and values that inspire this university make it more diverse, inclusive, responsible, open to dialogue. Thus, we will link communication with teaching, research and knowledge transfer. We do not want that kind of communication that sways by market forces that make you forget you are a university" (UNAV HGB+ ComMng)

"Our communication work integrates into the overall strategy of PEU-LT in a natural process, there is no artificial integration. For instance, our experts do research and there is a natural need to communicate and make that known. Our agenda gets naturally filled, as our experts do their usual job and we try to show what they do. Our aim is not quantity and appearance on media channels just for sake of being as much and as often as possible." (PEU-Lt ICD)

"Communication in a university cannot be paired to commercial communication, by no means, we cannot "sell" whichever product in whichever manner, and that not out of mere intelligent CSR communication. I cannot tell a journalist that something is big news when it is not. We simply cannot lie. (...) even when it may seem that solves a problem or appeases the concerned public. So let us make journalists see the value where it truly is, not where it is not". (AustralArg ComMng)

Category: Relevance of institutional mission

Subcategory: linked to excellence

RESPONSES

"We are a non-profit organization and as our rector always tells us, our mission is not to earn money, but neither is it to waste it! so we must strike balance. (...) We have been very clear in our communication of this. We do not seek economic excellence, our resources are allocated to supporting the academic and research excellence". (UNAV HGB)

"The pursue of excellence should be encoded in the mission as a declaration of its purpose, why the institution exists and it promises to its all stakeholders" (PEU-Lt Acd)

Excellence is absolutely related to the institutional mission, so if you declare that you are good at applied research and do something good for the business sector, and we do that well and communicate it well, you do excellent communication about what you fulfil and how you reach your promised goals, that is excellence" (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+Acd)

Subcategory: base for institutional strategy

RESPONSES

"I do not know whether we really have a strategy which means it is not very well communicated to the people (...) The mission must be really based on either the resources matching your culture. Or there must be one grand aim you want to reach one day (...) maybe you need a strong leader who also believes in that mission". (PEU-Lt AcdMng)

"The mission should come first, and then the strategy is to fulfil that mission; but here we are losing the original idea that inspired this university, what made us different" (PEU-Lt Acd)

"I am not much of fan for mission and vision, for several reasons. The written words have the power of binding you, words are important and should not be written carelessly without really meaning what they say. And I see the business organizations have a written mission and vision that sounds like bullshit and is so artificial. (...) Heavy and complicated structures and departments, and the need for KPIs to emerge in order to give employees some meaning, so they feel that they are doing something meaningful to reach specific goals. So those who are above at the executive level get the illusory feeling of single-mindedness and purpose towards they work. It is a mere illusion for both". (PEU-Lt HGB)

"We have no long-term strategy. (...) The surprising thing is that in only 20 years PEU-Lt has achieved so much, so we may question how much impact does poorly or well-managed communication affect it. Sustainability....20 years is a short time... we will soon see, because the current rector's term has come to an end and he was one of the founding members". (ISMLt AdmSrMng.

Subcategory: Base for communication

RESPONSES

"Strategic communication is defined by a way of working that is long-term and centred on working for the essential aims of the organization with a long-term view (...) We believe that our key lies in our mission, and not in the market trends of the moment. And our mission enlightens all we do and grants is unity." (UNAV HGB-ComMng).

"In order to make institutional communication cooperate with boosting institutional excellence, an essential factor is coordination of strategies at the highest levels". (AustralArg RespComUnit)

Subcategory: Base for communication

RESPONSES

"We have a strategy, but is separated from everyday life, the mission is separate from the life, so it is very much fragmented. (...) If our leaders do not have anyone thinking about communication, it makes sense why they do not take into account in what they do. (...) This organization is working at a tactical level. So in order to make communication gain the place it needs and deserves in this organization, it must start from the mission". (PEU-Lt AcdMng).

"If there is no clear strategy, communication can do little. I used to be involved in KPI teams and wonder about this. Getting the ACBS accreditation seems a goal, but it is in fact a means to what? Why do we want this accreditation? We are so focused on the requirements set to get this accreditation that it has become our goal" PEU-Lt SrMng

Category: Communication linkage with excellence

Subcategory: 'Total Excellence'

RESPONSES

"the best project deserves the best communication. A university is an institution of great social relevance; as such it deserves the best communication. And this should not only be affordable for the wealthy who can hire the best communication professionals". (UNAV HGB-ComMng)

Subcategory: Disclosing achieved excellence:

"If we understand excellence as an extraordinary good way of doing things. In fact, there are excellent institutions and professional individuals who do not take into account communication. However, we may consider excellence as a great synthesis by Conchita Naval: university reputation as perceived excellence, so in this case communication does contribute to excellence". (UNAV HGB+ ComMng)
"Excellence needs to be very well defined (...). It is absolutely related to the institutional mission, so if you declare that you are good at applied research and do something good for the business sector, and we do that well and communicate it well, you do excellent communication about what you fulfil and how you reach your promised goals, that is excellence" (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+Acad)

Subcategory: Overrated excellence/ puffery:

RESPONSES

“Communication cannot generate what does not exists, neither short nor long-term. Communication does not generate prestige, it only expands it, disseminates it. Because at the end of the day, communication is perceived as rooted in reality.” (UNAV AcadMng)

“Excellence demands continuous and watchful work! We have academic excellence and the strong brand has a dragging force and weight in the content we generate, in the value we produce for society, the experience each students has here in our classes. We must be on the alert, especially when we preach one thing and then fail to prove our words with deeds or see that others do not live up to that”. (AustralArg AdmMidMng)

Subcategory Insufficiently disclosed achieved excellence:

RESPONSES

“We are the best private Argentinean university, the number 1 in the world rankings, but people have no idea. If that is not managed with a communication and reputation long-term strategy and all of us working separately here, all the efforts that synergy would bring simply fade away”. (AustralArg RespComUnit)

“institutional excellence in Austral is well-known and endorsed by business people and more traditional representatives of that particular sector (...) however it must still do a lot more to make itself better known amongst younger people who may come for undergraduate studies. Our rectorate is slowly beginning to grasp the significance of the impact that long-term institutional communication management can have” (AustralArg RespComUnit) “When our assessors see that we do so many great things, they tell us why don't you communicate all these achievements? If you are excellent just for yourself, it does not make sense, no purpose in it. That excellence must be communicated first of all to the key internal stakeholders, then to external stakeholders (...) They should all know the events that take place here”. (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ Acd)

“Our authorities were reluctant to disseminate this information for fear of having reached that high position out of mere chance, and explaining that if we later on disappeared from the rankings that would damage our reputation. (...) There was a kind of false modesty or false collective humility of not declaring how good we are. On the one hand, perhaps we shone brighter than we really are, but on the other hand, there are many great things we do excellently and we do not communicate at all”. (AustralArg Acd)

Category: status quo of communication function	
Sub-category	Responses
Highest strategic level	"we have a long-standing communication tradition in here, our School of Communication is 55 years old, our current rector is the first journalist graduated from the first school of journalism in Spain who has become rector. Three out of the ten members of the Permanent Council of the Rectorate have studied communication. Communication here is very well-ingrained and enjoys great prestige, so you do not need to explain to anyone here how important communication is for a university". (UNAV HGB-ComMng)UNAV "We have a strong communication department that is older than our School of Communication. Admittedly, we have one of the oldest vice-rectorate of communication in the whole world, with the exception of the USA, where the first vice-rector for communication was already appointed in 2005. For 12 years now we have a rectorate where communication has always spoken before decisions are made" (UNAV HGB-ComMng). "Communication really works and is really strategic when placed at the highest executive level of the organization, so there is an organizational structure issue here. If the communication function management is somewhere at a fourth level, the senior communicator does not belong to the 'decision-making table', and cannot say what he/she must say before decisions are made, then communication is very restricted, even though it may be well organized. So this is the first key to success, point number 1". (UNAV HGB-ComMng)
Integrated in general institutional strategy	"I am really grateful that here you can address the top head of institutional communication of the whole university to tell him what you think they could improve and you feel you can trust them (...). Here communication is very transversal, with such strategic mentality and the mission in your mind, they value communication notwithstanding the position of the other person". (UNAV RespComUnit)
Mission-driven, but no clear strategy	"No communication department cannot go any further than the institutional structure where it operates and which reflects the organizational problems of the institution. We are conscious of the seriousness of this matter, because we do not really know where the rector is heading, whether he wants us to be like Harvard with very powerful and strong autonomous academic units each feeding prestige to the grand brand, or rather like UNAV where all is much more centralized". (AustralArg Acad)

Category: status quo of communication function	
Sub-category	Responses
Highly dependable on HGB approach to communication	<i>"for me the head of the rector's mind, his understanding is vital, because you may have the most brilliant communication expert, but if the rector does not understand the importance of communication..The problem in this university has to do with the fact that current rector's managerial formation is very classic (...) He has a competent person as a DirCom, but he has granted him neither structure nor resources". (AustralArg Acd)</i> <i>"The "status" granted to the communication function (formalization of processes, allocation of resources, structure) should not depend on the organization's size. The way communication is managed depends only on the understanding and attitudes of the university leadership" (PEU-Lt Acd)</i>
Highly dependable on resources (human and material)	<i>"I am not a member of the governance body of my School, the same as our institutional DirCom is not a member of the rectorate. Besides, hiring a person for communication only part-time just to ask him/her to do a couple of things is already a clear sign of how our Highest Governance understands the role of communication here". (AustralArg RespComUnit)</i> <i>"The last rector is the one we have now and he took over the university amidst major issues much more serious than the DirCom problems, so that again makes institutional communication remain always as the Cinderella. You can hire an excellent communicator, but if you do not empower him/her and assign a suitable structure". (AustralArg AcdMng)</i> <i>"when you set to prepare the institutional communication project and start thinking in terms of how expensive it is going to be, well, that is a very bad beginning. Of course it is expensive! Because if you do not communicate as a university, and nobody knows about your institution, and you do not have a strong, full-fledged and relevant institutional communication, nothing will work. And naturally this means fixed high costs; however, the key is to distinguish between cost and investments; linguistic choices are vital and words must be carefully picked. You should never speak of costs, but of investments because the returns on them will always take years to come". (AustralArg AcdMng)</i>
Short-term tactical and market-driven	<i>"This organization is working at a tactical level. So in order to make communication gain the place it needs and deserves in this organization, it must start from the mission". (PEU-Lt AcdMng).</i> <i>"right now I feel that the problem is that I am still moving at a tactical level instead of strategic. I sometimes wonder what I am doing here... I used to even prepare the Instagram posts...I think that strategic decisions should be made with the support and help of the Top executive team and then I would share them and work on them with my team" (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ComMng).</i>

Category: Status of DirCom	
Subcategory	Responses
Full membership in HGB (vice-rector or DirCom)	<i>"Communication really works and is really strategic when placed at the highest executive level of the organization, so there is an organizational structure issue here. If the communication function management is somewhere at a fourth level, the senior communicator does not belong to the 'decision-making table', and cannot say what he/she must say before decisions are made, then communication is very restricted, even though it may be well organized. So this is the first key to success, point number 1". (UNAV HGB-ComMng)</i> <i>- "nowadays all institutions face communication problems, people do not know how handle the great changes in this arena. (...) here intervenes the DirCom to support (...) even if there are problems no genius DirCom can solve, one thing is for sure clear: the number 1 in communication management must be part of the Highest Governance". (AustralArg AcdMng)</i> <i>"institutional communication must be part of the strategic decision-making, it cannot be a tactical issue. The leader of this function must make decisions together with the rector. There must be one person whose sole job is taking care of the institutional communication. But then again, they start wondering how much we are going to pay him/her for that". (AustralArg AcdMng)</i>
Directly reporting to HGB but not full member	<i>"I am the marketing department director, also member of the rectorate. However, the highest governance element in our university structure is the Executive Team made of rector and 2 vice-rectors. But fresh and relevant information is first communicated to us in the rectorate; I also have the opportunity to present information or plans first of all to the rectorate members" (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ComMng).</i>

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Category: Qualities of DirCom	
Subcategory	Responses
Advisory and executive influence	<i>"Louise Simpson, the DirCom of Cambridge University told me during a visit here: rectors would like to have vice-rectors for communication, but they are having a really hard time because they are at a loss for the suitable candidate, they have communicators with no clues to contribute during executive board meetings. A suitable DirCom should be able to couch on decision-making and explain the communicative implications that decisions may have for internal and external stakeholders".(UNAV HGB-ComMng)</i> <i>"When I was the DirCom, I did serious research and wrote scholar papers (...) Those published papers helped me to gain authority amongst the academic public because I defended my doctoral thesis. Positioning yourself as a university DirCom in front of scholars like one of them is for me one of the most relevant solutions to many problems, because then academic people listen to you much more. For me, a DirCom in a university must be able to take up some teaching hours to get acquainted with the students, and participate in seminars with other faculty members; then you also are involved with the administration staff because you hold a managerial position as DirCom". (AustralArg ComMng).</i> <i>"regarding the profile required from a university DirCom, the most difficult and critical issue is that the double profile practically does not exist: governance mind and good command of managerial practice of professional, in other words a person with policy making skills and technical abilities. There are no poly-technical candidates simply because nobody is preparing such professionals". (UNAV HGB-ComMng)</i> <i>"As I come from the Study department, so some internal partnerships with the study programmes is easier (...) that is the benefit of my being also an academic person. (...) this is a very difficult and complicated position. Even more if it were assigned to an external person with no clues about the academic world, it would a real cosmos". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ComMng)</i> <i>"We trust the needs suggested by our vice-rector for communication, because if he has a strong authority, in the rectorate all decisions are collegial; we all know it is a winning bet in the long run". (UNAV HGB)</i>

(continues)

Category: Qualities of DirCom	
Subcategory	Responses
Suitable but insufficiently empowered by HGB	<i>"We really need someone who takes the relay and lead the whole institutional communication project and who is also in love with this project (...) It must be a real leader, not necessarily a communication super practitioner. Perhaps the current person in charge of this function has sufficient leadership and expertise, but the Highest Governance body does not let him do his job. And it is not only a question of the position; it requires a wholesome approach". (AustralArg AcdMng)</i> <i>"The institutional DirCom must be a full-right member of the Permanent Council. But here, they will tell you that they have a vice-rector who supervises institutional communication. But this same person is also in charge of operations and cleaning and etc." (AustralArg ACd)</i> <i>"I think this is much more related to personal relations and the history of our university with the autonomous academic units and the internal struggles; to all this I would add the personal features of the DirCom who is never wanted to impose his will, he always tried to conciliate and gather all of us in communication committees to work together on 3 or 4 things, but there was never a real and firm alignment. A strong firm hand is lacking here from the rectorate to say this will be done like this and the last word in communication-related decisions will be that of the DirCom at macro level and the integrated communication of all academic units will support those decisions. This here has never happened, only good will and good ideas". (AustralArg ComMng)</i>

Category: Internal communication function	
Subcategory	Responses
Integrated and centralized	"I have been ten years here and for the first 5 or 6 years we had neither the digital communication direction nor internal communication. We have created those departments as we think where we want to reach." (UNAV ComMng)
Integrated and centralized in coordination with HR	"Internal communication in UNAV is not managed by the HR department as usual in many organizations; this is atypical. From the Direction of Personnel we work together with the director of internal communication from the vice-rectorate to see the key questions that must be transmitted to the whole staff." (UNAV AdmSrMng) "If you do not manage it, noise and rumours spread, that is why from this office we detect those rumours and try to predict what may cause concern and topics of interest for our employees, so from the direction of internal communication [dependent from the vice-rectorate for communication] we develop a strategy to deal with them either in written form or face-to face, whatever seems best. The same applies for students". (UNAV ComMng) "By inertia, we tend to focus on external communication outputs, because internal communication demands more creativity and imagination and you can always do more and better in this area. (...) When internal communication is properly managed, you immediately notice the improvements and start missing when it there is no strategy for that. We work through alliances with the other departments that have strong bonds with employees, like the HR office". (UNAV ComMng) "with the Direction of Personnel we still need more time to set objectives for common projects. I believe internal communication is fundamental because the is poorly internal stakeholders are the ones who will go out and tell about us to the external ones as well, but I agree that internal communication managed yet and I see that as a student as well. When you are inside you perceive the excellence, the value of this place, but it lacks communication amongst us inside! I am quite satisfied with the university, but I notice differences between what they say when they sell you the university as a future student and what you find once you are here". (AustralArg ICD).

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Autonomous at academic unit level	<i>"The central Direction of communication here does not manage internal communication. The governance body of each academic unit does it because they have the best and direct knowledge of their staff"</i> (AustralArg AcadMng)
Assigned to HR with little inference from communication staff	<i>"Here the HR department has assigned itself the internal communication function, most probably because we do not have human resources to cover this area. We do have some initiatives to take over and cover some internal communication functions, for instance the newsletter, which our university used to have. We are trying to relaunch it, because it is of extreme importance that our internal community is well informed of all that is going on in our university. This is in our agenda, but we simply could not do it". (PEU-Lt ICD)</i> <i>"I am probably the only person in PEU-Lt directly responsible for communication management and one of my colleagues in our department manages social media and HR takes care of internal com. I have no entry there."</i> (PEU-Lt ICD). <i>"5 or 10 years from now those who are keeping the institutional culture alive will probably be no longer here, so we have to work with internal communication to keep values alive because we are not a competitive organization in terms of good payments, but the value of belonging and staying lies in other intangible assets that must be communicated and refreshed. This book of the values that inspire us is a real treasure and all the new employees will get one with the welcome kit, but all the others who are already working here have never seen it! We must make it known to all. (...) we have a social board as an internal communication channel that replaced the intranet and now a person from the institutional communication department has taken over its coordination so she can gather information and channel it to the required publics". (AustralArg AdmSrMng)</i>

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Fluctuating location in Structure	<i>"Regarding internal communication, very often used to be assigned to us and then again assigned to HR and again to us. Even now, I keep wondering and I have no answer to the question whether internal communication should be included amongst the functions in the marketing department. I believe it should be under the HR umbrella. Because the marketing focus should be more on sales to external publics". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng)</i> <i>"They assigned internal communication to Marketing department and that was a wrong decision, because they seek different goals and interests. Even now it is supposed to be like this, but we still have no real internal communication. What do we get? The annual report? I am sure that internal communication does not necessarily have to be inserted in a formal structure, but it should be the assignment of a certain group of people. As regards formalization, I believe some guidelines should be written down. Because now each one does what and however he/she deems right or better" (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng)</i>

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Category : Internal communication Function	
Subcategory	Responses
Neglected function	"Awareness of the need to communicate ad intra and ad extra is still not so clear in the units; the centralized communication is seen as a service provider, but with no clear consciousness regarding the importance of managing internal communication". (AustralArg RespComUnit) "Internal communication is fundamental, because the internal stakeholders are the ones who will go out and tell about us to the external ones as well, but I agree that internal communication is poorly managed yet. I see that as a student as well. When you are inside you perceive the excellence, the value of this place, but it lacks communication amongst us inside!" (AustralArg ICD) "I just do not want to throw percentages, but I can confirm that many of the problems we have here come from the lack of internal communication. Too many. In the university, internal communication is not governed at all". (AustralArg AdmMidMng) "Here we still do not have internal communication. I believe we are missing an important aspect of excellence inside, (...) But I do not think this is the job that marketing department should take on. In my opinion, that is an HR task, because that is a question of organizational culture reinforcement and promotion. (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ ComMng) "all that has to do with internal publics that should be systematized. I constantly get spam mail from the research department (...) Perhaps all really relevant information should be delivered in a single newsletter, or departments could share their info and the full-time internal communication person in the HR department could collect and coordinate that in one weekly or monthly basis so internal publics are informed and can register if interested or needed". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ ComMng) "regarding inside communication, I think that what is missing is transparency of core things and not just repeating the narrative which does not reflect the reality". (PEU-Lt AdmMng) - "I believe that for the high quality we seek to achieve, all kind of communication, internal and external is vitally important and should be constantly and regularly maintained. In my opinion, in this university there is simply too little communication". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng) "I will separate it completely from marketing, because I consider communication as a totally different thing. So then I can say that our internal communication is very fragmented. (...) Some few people control and manage a lot of information while others have no control of any information at all. I believe this a direct impact on quality. Because each one then starts to understand quality in a different way". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng) "We grew out of a smaller almost friendship or family-based organization. When all of a sudden PEU-LT grew almost up to 150, it should have been a clear moment to make the right decisions. Like in a family, if you have 8 children, you no longer fit in a small Fiat 600, you need a van or larger car. So we did not do that in time, and we are still leaving in a kind of corridor-communication culture". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng)

Category Stakeholder identification and prioritization	
Subcategory	Responses
Clear identification	<i>"Distinguishing your publics (now called stakeholders) is a fundamental start and each of these groups must be well attended, taken care of through adequate contents and channels, coherence and quality of internal and external messages. (UNAV HGB+ComMng)</i>
Poor Identification of key stakeholders	<i>"I think we as an institution have not drawn or defined our institutional stakeholders". (PEU-LT AdmSrMng+ ComMng)</i> <i>"according to the newest approaches to mission, you need to identify your key stakeholders and reflect it in your mission. And the only stakeholder in our mission is the student and we have only a one-way communication with our students, because our mission now states that we are here to educate, which means one-way communication with our students. So right now we do not have any formal stakeholder map". (PEU-Lt AdmMng)</i> <i>"in fact here I think we do not have a very well defined stakeholder map, at least loud voice and openly communicated to everyone". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng)</i>
Priority of students	<i>"From the Direction of Personnel we do all we can to instil the core idea that the student is at the centre of all we do and professors are there to educate students through all their actions. This is a great tool to diminish the permanent tension between faculty and administration, because each fights to defend their interests, but we all want the best". UNAV AdmSrMng</i> <i>"Students are the most important stakeholder. We must provide them with knowledge, introduce them with our academic staff, show them also in the media".</i> <i>"The priority is always the student. Because without them we would not be here, we would have no job, no one to work for". (PEU-Lt ICD)</i> <i>"I believe that our primary stakeholder is the student, stakeholder is as the learner, the participant in our educational services, because we are a HEI. Then the rest of us would follow: faculty, administration staff". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng)</i>

(continues)

Category Stakeholder identification and prioritization	
Subcategory	Responses
Priority of faculty	<i>"First students, then the second stakeholder is of course our academic staff and naturally the third place goes for administration and with this the primary stakeholder map would be complete". (PEU-Lt ICD)</i> <i>"We cannot really handle so much the relations with the academic staff here, we have discussed this with the governance boards of the academic units. But keeping track on faculty performance is extremely important (...) also with reference to their identification with the institutional culture of our university and that is built from day one, so I see faculty as a delicate stakeholder group, set as my next priority in our internal communication management". (UNAV ComMng)</i> <i>"the professor must be your main spokesperson. You have to take care of this stakeholder because he/she is the interphase with the students and their families. Besides, professors are those with more visibility outside the institution. I believe the institutional DirCom should support professors much more because professors are live communication channels and means, they can be a great bridge. If you do not carefully selected and instructed faculty, also trained with proper communication skills, they will go to the classroom and may say whatever they want. And plenty of conflicts arise from this". (AustralArg Acad)</i> <i>"Professor are the main ambassadors and a student comes to study here not because of the enrolment office, they come because they know about the high academic standards of our faculty". (UNAV AdmSrMng)</i> <i>"It really takes more time with professors than with students and the development team see the need to communicate while often academic staff don't, so you must generate that need. This year I went office from office introducing myself to professors". (UNAV RespComUnit + ICD)</i> <i>"In this university all the activity is going on in the academic units, so you must have a direct line of communication with them, or else the strategy is lost. Our direct link is the manager in the academic units, who is member of the Governance Board, because this persons manages all the resources. So we have total communication through them". (UNAV AdmSrMng)</i>

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Category Stakeholder identification and prioritization	
Subcategory	Responses
Neglected key stakeholders	<i>"The most important stakeholder here amongst the internal ones is the management, the executive team who consider themselves to be the most important one, the core of the organization. And second, the administration, so the organization here is more administrative- driven organization than a classical university. Then on the third level might be the students, and on the fourth level may be the faculty, which is fundamentally different from any other Western university where faculty is number one". (PEU-Lt AcdMng)</i> <i>"We have institutional communication here focused on administration staff and looking too little to the reality of faculty. I told this to our director of internal communication, because there are basic questions they do not know about our faculty. We all seem to have clearly understood that in our corporate culture the professors play a central role and the central administration services are here to serve the faculty. But the institutional discourse does not match the reality and professors are burning out". (UNAV AcdMng)</i> <i>"I cannot believe that after 25 years in this university we still do not have any system to showcase all our faculty. I searched for my name. I could find was my CV, a brief bio and then the longer CV only in Spanish and some publications, my email address and perhaps an updated photo. You can find outdated in cache information. Why don't we have a normal cell in the institutional Web? The rectorate knows and understands this as a priority, but I have been trying for six months to tackle this myself. But why should professors do this if we have a communication department? (...) I feel that our communication is always lagging, it is not visionary. We should be stopping them because they go too fast and we should be asking them not to bother as so much with so many requests and calls asking professors to participate here and there, to share information that can be disseminated, etc." (AustralArg Acd)</i>

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Category: Communication patterns and channels for stakeholders	
Subcategory	Responses
For students	<i>"Form the Direction of Internal Communication we have launched a new project: the Students Communication Direction, with an appointed delegate and a deputy delegate. They get the same newsletter we prepare for all staff, they can make suggestions and forward relevant information to all students, because they are entitled as members of the University Senate". (UNAV ICD)</i> <i>"There is a unit for event management that emerged in the Direction of studies, so from the communication department we helped with the communication campaigns for events open to all students. They are always grateful for whichever help from us". (AustralArg ICD).</i> <i>"the current PEU-LT student is forming his/her own opinion about ISM through his own experience and the bits and pieces they can find inside PEU-Lt and in PEU-Lt Facebook. There is no systematic communication. On second thoughts, communication occurs and reaches the students through Facebook and Instagram. But another backfire is that even if you create contents for them and write to them, the students do not read it. How to reach them? (...) The rector is easily accessible and they can talk to him. So this seems to be right. But there seems to be no institutional gesture to show that the students matters to us. I have no clue whether PEU-Lt does any satisfaction measurement, because we have no vice-rector for students. (...) We have one person working part-time in the career centre who is in charge of coordinating all the students' clubs and extracurricular activities. But I am not sure how else we pay attention to the students' needs at institutional level". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng)</i> <i>"From the communicative perspective, it is very clear. We make an annual plan and we keep track on their main events and landmarks. We prepare contents for press releases and get them published. They do not that on their own, we train them, we monitor their performance and the way they organize and conduct the events. How the events will be announced... Students can approach us whenever needed". (PEU-Lt ICD)</i> <i>"Our students are very strong, motivated, active and they manage themselves very well, in fact they do better when the PEU-Lt administration does not intervene. (...) PEU-Lt relates with the students, through the Students' Association. That makes our life easier. For instance, we have now 3 students members in the Ethics committee and they tend to take a stricter stance than other members. ISM is still a small organization, no need to multiply channels. When a new PEU-Lt students' association is elected, he or she immediately comes to talk to me, and we have regular conversations whenever needed". (PEU-Lt HGB)</i>

Category: Communication patterns and channels for stakeholders	
Subcategory	Responses
For faculty	<i>"the communication with students has its own channels managed by the communication staff. Direct contact with the faculty is always available here; we have an open door policy at the rectorate. For instance, if a professor is retiring, he/she comes to talk to the rector and me. Open doors is a brand feature of this house; full accessibility facilitates matters"</i> (UNAV HGB) <i>"we cannot really handle so much the relations with the academic staff here, we have discussed this with the governance boards of the academic units. But keeping track on faculty performance is extremely important, not only in terms of their professionalism, but also with reference to their identification with the institutional culture of our university and that is built from day one, when they do their PhD and stay as core faculty. There are plenty of part-time lecturers, a lot of visiting faculty, so I see faculty as a delicate stakeholder group, which I would really set as my next priority in our internal communication management".</i> (UNAV ComMng) <i>"Of course, there are all kinds of professors, but they many of them take the initiative and inform us whenever they plan a trip abroad to cooperate with the promotion and take materials with them, or tell us the dates so we can arrange meetings with our delegates or even an open lecture. Professor are the main ambassadors and a student comes to study here not because of the enrolment office, they come because they know about the high academic standards of our faculty".</i> (UNAV AdmSrMng) <i>"we have an assigned person responsible for communication, but all communication with students is our job at operative level". (...) I would dare say that the secretary office (study administration) is the heart of the whole university, because everything goes through us" ".</i> (AustralArgAdm) <i>"We have no problem with professors, emails works fine and we also have an internal forum. The main issue with them is the double site, it is a logistic and human factor so we need to create new communication spaces for them".</i> (AustralArg RespComUnit).

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Subcategory	Responses
For Alumni	<i>"We have a communication person who meets every week for operative issues, but at strategic level nobody has given me any communication guidelines, we are very autonomous, but I perceive they do not take Alumni into account (...)</i> There is a passive communication channel established with the vice-rectorate for international relations, communication for me should be transversal, no matter who is in charge. Instead, lots of communication actions take place with students, who after all will become Alumni one day". (UNAV AdmSrMng) <i>"Austral is very well-positioned in the rankings because of its excellent academic quality and the excellent relations student-professor is also emphasized (...) so I think it is vital to maintain these relations with graduates like me, because one day my children may come to study here"(...) "it is a very positive decision to launch the centralized Alumni project which will bear fruit only after some time". (AustralArg ICD)</i> <i>"it is a very positive decision to launch the centralized Alumni project which will bear fruit only after some time". (AustralArg ICD)</i> <i>"Since 2017, we took measures and appointed one of our graduates to take on the Alumni relations, some internal communication questions and also students and all that part-time. These are just little steps, but we have tangibly improved internal communication". (AustralArg HGB)</i> <i>"UNAV considers Alumni both internal and external public. Most Alumni are deeply involved, we keep in contact with 80 % of them. Since I joined this Alumni direction I saw that this internal public made of 160.000 people is huge and sadly neglected from the institutional point of view, and they are the best prescriber generally in favour of the institution, the best ambassadors and the institutional prestige can feed from the professional success of former students, so it is a totally virtuous circle. You cannot overload them with information, but we cultivate relations from which others will harvest in terms of new enrolment, fundraising, internships places, our new entrepreneurship and innovation factory, all the university" (Unav AdmSrMng)</i>

(continues)

Subcategory	Responses
For all staff	<i>"For each public I have a certain channel and a concrete person assigned to take care of that. Digital communication affects internal and external stakeholders, so you must always have transversal elements as well. As I cannot manage everything from here, we try to have all the autonomous units with sufficient coordination for the unity of the institutional brand". (UNAV HGB+ComMng)</i> <i>There is great porosity combined with strict and stable channels and patters, like the Unclick [meaning one click and at the same time Universidad de Navarra=UN]. Then of course, all sorts of meetings and gatherings where teaching and research staff invite the rector as well". (UNAV HGB)</i> <i>"The only official and formal communication channels for internal communication are the Rectorate meetings and the Staff meetings, where communication is asymmetric and one-sided, information is only delivered. We no longer have round tables, discussions. We are definitely underexploiting our participative potential and we have few established channels and patterns, and collective discussion. I cannot say this university never had them. With one of our previous rector, we at least used to have some open discussions, for instance about KPIS, or called round tables or breakfasts with the rector. So we may claim that these decisions are related to the personality of the rector and executive team and their management style...and we cannot change that" (PEU-LT AdmSrMng)</i> <i>"I was hired for internal communication, Alumni relations and communication with students. I do not say it is a bad approach, but internal communication is joint work with Human Resources (here called Direction of Personnel), then Alumni depends from the Graduate Office and for issues with current students I should report to the Direction of studies. A part-time person cannot embrace these three things because in the end it is practically impossible to focus and do any of them well. From the rectorate there is a good wish to do good things, but no sufficient resources and no adequate structure. From the communication department little is being done, but at least this is a start, now we have a referent in the communication team to liaise with the Direction of studies and our people, since they were really feeling that vacuum". (AustralArg ICD)</i>

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Subcategory	Responses
No established patterns or channels	<i>"Our students are very strong, motivated and active; they manage themselves very well, in fact they do better when the PEU-LT administration does not intervene. (...) PEU-LT relates with the students, through the Students' Association. That makes our life easier". (PEU-Lt HGB)</i> <i>"the current PEU-LT student is forming his/her own opinion about PEU-LT through his own experience and the bits and pieces they can find inside PEU-LT and via Facebook and Instagram. There is no systematic communication. (...) even if you create contents for them and write to them, the students do not read it. How to reach them? (...) But there seems to be no institutional gesture to show that the students matters to us (...) we have no vice-rector for students". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng)</i> <i>"We do not communicate inside the organization, a very frequent problem in many organizations, but this is not an excuse. There are bottle-necks where communication gets stuck, does not flow. And that makes mission fulfilment more difficult. Then employees do not find themselves in the process and start to wonder what my role is here in this mission and vision". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ Acd)</i> <i>"the grapevine communication through informal channels is natural, but the problem is that such grapevine communication constitutes a very large percentage of all the internal communication, so the organization weakens and loses the real control of its communication, because it is not properly managed. (...) This informal, not managed communication flows, then drowns and chokes people and they split up or get hurt". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ Acd)</i> <i>"We have a huge turnover of administration staff, almost 20 % leave every year and even more often. But faculty is almost zero % of turnover (...) So when you have the same people, why would you need formalized paths? (...) So communication at faculty level occurs naturally through opinion leaders, informally self-proclaimed role. (...) I do hear what they say: communication patterns should be formalized, put in order. But this is not a large factory. When you live at home in a family, there is no single person assigned as responsible for communication". (PEU-Lt HGB)</i>

(continues)

Subcategory	Responses
No established patterns or channels	<i>"Our executive management is constantly talking about the importance of faculty inclusion. So in brief a lot of attention is paid at least in words and talks, but that does not happen automatically, words do not become a reality. They are too busy, work a lot, teach a lot. (...) The main problem: lack of established channels. If faculty knew more about the university daily life and issues, they perhaps would be more actively engaged, and they would feel more important". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng)</i> <i>"Formal channels are really very few. I believe that those channels could be of all sorts and directions, like in a matrix structure, as long as they exist, not necessarily written down in an official document. But sure those communication and information flows channels should be cleared agreed, established and known to everyone. They could be email, online communication. But the main problem is that requires a responsible person for internal communication because when all are responsible or in charge, then no one is, it is not possible, there must be one assigned person. The only official and formal communication channels for internal communication are the Rectorate meetings and the Staff meetings, where communication is asymmetric and one-sided, information is only delivered. We no longer have round tables, discussions". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng)</i> <i>"I know a new brandbook is being prepared but again, no communication about it, only when it is already done. So we should establish clear patterns and channels to avoid overload and overlapping. There was a moment when we had too much communication, so many emails without filtering and segmenting the target addressees. So, people got tired and did not want to read emails. But in such overload, you may lose and miss important information". (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ Acd)</i> <i>"From my position, down here at the bottom [of the service chain who directly deal with students and faculty], I see many things but I can change none, I may say my opinion, but there are no pre-established channels or bridges to make it reach decision-makers" (AustralArg Adm)</i> <i>"here internal communication doesn't work. I heard there are some vents called Austral Talks and I got really angry because I never heard of the call for registration, and this a bad habit here. We do not share information amongst us here inside the same building, because we do not believe in the strategic value of this. And when we QS rankings are published we do not go out like on a demonstration to celebrate it, because the institutional communication problems we have are also internal. And we have communication 1.0 so we get emails but no chance of interaction". (AustralArg AcdMng)</i>

Category: Balance between centralization and autonomy	
Subcategory	Responses
Full centralization	"...in the institutional Web, let me have a space to tell my stories! because the vice-rectorate for communication make all the centralized decisions in digital communication for the media. At least we have our own social media accounts, where we can run our own campaigns and generate our contents. Too much centralization is not good. Some process perhaps, because we have grown too big, but then, which is the strategy, centralize, align? The key lies in the equilibrium, but then allocate space for my contents in the common institutional Website!" (UNAV AdmMidMng) "I do not agree with the achievements of the rectorate in making communication a centralized strategic function, because that often affects my School. The last news about the rankings levelled us down with the whole university; our School was the only academic unit with good position in the TOP under 50 and they did not mention that in the institutional news. So [centralized] corporate news may lead to this, though there may be no other way". (UNAV AcdMng) "From here, the Direction of Internal Communication we launch a newsletter for all employees; doctoral students, interns and retired employees and our foreign delegates also get it. One of us keeps track on staff communication, another is more in charge of communication with students. The CUN (university hospital) and IESE (business school) have their own newsletters, but every week we share information and make suggestions of general institutional contents each unit could include. And the other way round, the same". (UNAV ICD)
Centralized with double reporting	"We [responsible for communication in units] have a double role, I depend from the Direction of internal communication for my work with students, so I have the advantage of knowing all the internal issues from close". (UNAV RespComUnit+ICD) "There is a responsible person for communication in each academic unit, each reports to the dean and to the central DirCom for operative work. But those communication who could be part of the centralized communication have stayed under the governance of the academic units because here deans kept them, autonomous policy prevailed" (AustralArg AcdMng)

(continues)

Category: Balance between centralization and autonomy	
Subcategory	Responses
Full centralization	<i>"...in the institutional Web, let me have a space to tell my stories! because the vice-rectorate for communication make all the centralized decisions in digital communication for the media. At least we have our own social media accounts, where we can run our own campaigns and generate our contents. Too much centralization is not good. Some process perhaps, because we have grown too big, but then, which is the strategy, centralize, align? The key lies in the equilibrium, but then allocate space for my contents in the common institutional Website!" (UNAV AdmMidMng)</i> <i>"I do not agree with the achievements of the rectorate in making communication a centralized strategic function, because that often affects my School. The last news about the rankings levelled us down with the whole university; our School was the only academic unit with good position in the TOP under 50 and they did not mention that in the institutional news. So [centralized] corporate news may lead to this, though there may be no other way". (UNAV AcdMng)</i> <i>"From here, the Direction of Internal Communication we launch a newsletter for all employees; doctoral students, interns and retired employees and our foreign delegates also get it. One of us keeps track on staff communication, another is more in charge of communication with students. The CUN (university hospital) and IESE (business school) have their own newsletters, but every week we share information and make suggestions of general institutional contents each unit could include. And the other way round, the same". (UNAV ICD)</i>
Centralized with double reporting	<i>"We [responsible for communication in units] have a double role; I depend from the Direction of internal communication for my work with students, so I have the advantage of knowing all the internal issues from close". (UNAV RespComUnit+ICD)</i> <i>"There is a responsible person for communication in each academic unit, each reports to the dean and to the central DirCom for operative work. But those communication who could be part of the centralized communication have stayed under the governance of the academic units because here deans kept them, autonomous policy prevailed" (AustralArg AcdMng)</i>

(continues)

Centralized supervision of institutional brand	<i>"We focus the centralization of communication in the media relations, and not in the generation of contents of each unit, we expect them to make their expert contribution to society through applied knowledge transfer so as to show our excellence in the media. The main assignment of the institutional DirCom is to take all that to the media with the unified format showing the one single Austral logo and to take care of the brand common Austral surname. "The rectorate is the guardian of the Austral surname and each academic unit should look after their own names" (AustralArg HGB).</i> <i>"Centralization does not imply depriving the units and services from what they own now. But a good matrix, transversal structure that goes across the whole university and communicates us all is vital" (AustralArg AdmSrMng)</i> <i>"The relocation to the new campus meant a physical shift that should be accompanied by a change in our mind-sets and this will naturally cascade into centralization of services: from finances to communication, with appointed communicators in the units, but a unified communication policy. I consider this vital and this is slowly taking place (...) Because are all part the same university. I belong here, I am not and do not want to be isolated". (AustralArg AcdMng)</i> <i>"We received an official communication policy document that establishes our duty to share contents with the DirCom". (AustralArg RespComUnit)</i>
Autonomous communication staff reporting to governance body in academic units	<i>"Now the governance body of any UNAV academic unit, each board has absolute freedom to organize as they wish. The director of development embraces all the external relations of the academic unit and all issues related to promotion, communication, career possibilities, internships, Alumni". (UNAV AcdMng). "The director of development inspires and motivates the communication work in his/her unit and at the same time is the one who liaises me with the governance board, so whatever is relevant for communication, I will get to know through him". (UNAV RespComUnit+ICD)</i> <i>"The director of development inspires and motivates the communication work in his/her unit and at the same time is the one who liaises me with the governance board, so whatever is relevant for communication, I will get to know through him". (UNAV RespComUnit+ICD)</i> <i>"We seek to preserve the genuine features of the academic units. But when I joined this office I realized that a lot had to be done to show the university as whole, it is much more than a university and what is being communicated. Here each unit did whatever they wished and now here we are and must slowly prove the value of our work and try to synergize with each unit through common projects". (AustralArg ICD)</i> <i>"I always say that the position of the director of development is unique in this university and is a sign of the corporate culture here, if you govern collegially. My director of development delegates to me everything that has to do with communication, so he has more time for other matters. And he takes all my suggestions to the governance board of our School. I do not report to the vice-rectorate of communication, but to my governance board through the director of development and of course I discuss al with our dean". (UNAV RespComUnit)</i> <i>"There is plenty of autonomy in the governance of each unit, even more so if the director of development does not supervise you too much, like in my case. Because after all, those who work in communication know the culture and tone of the university very well". (UNAV RespComUnit+ICD)</i>

Category	Balance between centralization and autonomy
Subcategories	Responses
Desirable aligned use of visuals	<i>"The main goal of the new Brandbook is to preserve our integrity and solidity, because at the moment the messages look different in style or format (...) and it does not contribute at all to the honour and prestige of our brand (...) so we must behave and communicate accordingly. That is why we must show our level, wholeness, solidity, unified tone and visual style". (PEU-Lt ICD)</i>
Waste of resources; loss of created value	<i>"We have our own marketing and communication office, but then there is an autonomous enrolment office in each academic unit. However, each of us produce our own brochures and do our own market research. So all that work is also lost". (AustralArg AdmSrMng)</i> <i>"This office is like a separate world, here always solve problems as efficiently as possible, but there is no alignment whatsoever in terms of communication processes and contents. We went from zero processes to bureaucratization, which is not good either, because the human factor of the relations is lost and each person is unique. So the university must think of a balance to maintain the personalized communication as an identity feature and cope with growth". (AustralArgAdm)</i>
Lack of alignment	<i>"There is no aligned strategy, no aligned image, and the narrative we release to external observers is absolutely not favourable to show we are all Austral. (...) I have no synergies with the other responsible for communication in academic units. There is so much autonomy that it causes noise and chaos, terrible damage". (AustralArg RespComUnit)</i> <i>"Institutional communication is also image communication so I still think that it should be under the umbrella of marketing, because we do branding and positioning communication. We do not only sell our products or programmes. However I agree there is a clash (...) in the Executive school here, because they do not have a communication person, when they need something they come to us, but then a kind of matrix emerges that is not logical at all" (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ComMng)</i> <i>"Yes, internally, there is a lot of confusion, because some call this office student enrolment, but I call it marketing and communication, and to tell the truth, I do not even remember which position I was offered here when I came back to work here. We are all very confused, there are no clear guidelines, each academic unit has its own names for similar or even the same positions. (...) this lack of internal coherence is a very serious institutional problem, beyond the necessary autonomy of the academic units". (AustralArg AdmMidMng)</i>

Category	Balance between centralization and autonomy
Subcategory	Responses
Claim for Full Self-sufficiency	<i>"For the Executive School more centralization and integration would not have positive effects, because it means restarting many processes from scratch and it takes a lot of time to unify channels, to decide which ones remain autonomous. It could be done well and lead to saving costs, if we centralize internal communication and then media relations, for the administration that would be positive, but for our strong brand, this would mean losing position". (AustralArg ComMng)</i> <i>"In the Executive school here, because they do not have a communication person, when they need something they come to us, but then a kind of matrix emerges that is not logical at all" (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ComMng)</i> <i>"Marketing and sales people in the Executive School should be under the same umbrella. This is a question of ownership as well, because I have no role in managing the marketing activity of our executive school, I cannot claim any ownership of the content we may produce for them" (PEU-Lt AdmSrMng+ComMng)</i> <i>"If you asked me whether we could do well on our own with our sub-brand, that is without contributing to strengthening the umbrella Austral brand and without centralized communication management, well in fact this is the main problem! Because the LAE Business School and the Hospital could perfectly continue on their own, we do not need each other" (AustralArg ComMng)</i> <i>"a positive thing is that the Austral brand is powerful and nobody here seeks total independence, perhaps with the exception of the LAE (Executive School) and that is serious issue, because they developed their own strong stand-alone brand for decades and it was at some point even stronger than the whole university brand, so they see integration and centralization as a setback. But I think reputation research should be done in this respect to prove where the two brands stand. Because the LAE keeps repeating this old story of the past, the university began to grow and strengthened its brand, (...) this unification is an identity crisis is still unsolved". (AustralArg Acd)</i>

Category Regular self-assessment of performance	
Subcategory	Responses
Evaluation Of communication department	"we are still working on a communication management model that is conceptual, rational and academic at the same time, so that it gives cohesiveness and coherences to all we do. It would allow us to assess what we are doing right and what is wrong, what is missing to reach our goals. Because this is a university and not just a private enterprise; so we want to be the ones who not only do the best in university communication, but also the ones who know best how to do it, which implies two different phases. One thing is doing and another is knowing how and why". (UNAV HGB+ ComMng) "the communication department must frequently reflect on its own work. In some organizations the administrative departments grow in power and ambition and that is a mistake a communication department should avoid". (UNAV HGB + ComMng) "Right now I am preparing the year plan (...) then it is revised by the directors of each area and finally presented to my director of development. All the responsible for communication in academic units have regular sessions to refresh our duties and tasks, because our job is very dynamic". (UNAV RespComUnit+ ICD) "Together with the rector we supervise the DirCom work: the rector takes care of the most strategic and content-related questions. A budget question that has been a drawback for a long time, so we made cuts to the minimum indispensable to go on, focus on essentials, maintaining the autonomy of the academic units, so that they each generate and manage their own contents and the DirCom only takes care of the external relations, media relations and contents for general institutional positioning. (AustralArg HGB) "We have a coaching project with the American Chamber and their major concern has to do with metrics to measure the results of the DirCom. This is the main problem for communication managers: to prove the value of their work. Nobody really seems to know what DirComs do, because communication must be communicated. Marketing specialists get all the laurels because the measure, but communication managers only measure press clipping, which is increasingly losing relevance now. The most important now is generating discussions, conversations on trend topics thus there is an evident need to develop new metrics to prove results that satisfy the expectations of your authorities. We are at present only in preliminary stage designing quantitative indicators to measure several dimensions of communication: crisis, CSR, press, social media, etc. ". (AustralArg Acd)

(continues)

Category Regular self-assessment of performance	
Subcategory	Responses
Status and competence of communication staff	"We believe we are blending practice with theory by proposing a model and since 2015 with our congress on building universities reputation (BUR) we exchange knowledge and experience, reflections. In the business sector communication is much more developed than in the HEIs. So here we have a lot of relation with Dircoms from business companies and we focus our discourse on building bridges to bring the most modern concepts of communication and corporate strategy into university communication. We ended up with a successful formula: sharing all our knowledge in our BUR congresses open to all". (UNAV HGB+ ComMng)
Contribution to reputation	"even if we still do not have quantifiable evidence, we all value the communication management work here, with common sense, Naturally, we may try one way and see the results". (UNAV HGB) "We have begun to give increasing importance to world university rankings and we are quite active now, we reached the first position in teaching in the whole country and 45th place worldwide for graduate employability. How did we get here? Through reputation and communication management. We are now thinking of ways to measure all this and that is a communication management duty. Reputation has its effect on rankings and rankings impact enrolment." (UNAV HGB) "I was rather sceptic and even a bit annoyed when I saw the tremendous growth of communication staff both at central and academic unit level, and did not really buy too much about the recently created Reputation Management department at the vice-rectorate for communication. I really thought it was too much budget we could have better used for faculty or more promotional activities to increase the number of students. But later on a foreigner candidate for masters studies contacted me and mentioned that amongst the criteria of eligibility for grants from Carolina Foundation, the HEIs had to be around the top 300 best by world rankings. And we are there, so from then on I almost became a fan of rankings and reputation because I saw the tangible benefits. But then it means our communication staff must make more efforts, communication work must be better communicated, in particular to academia, so we appreciate better the value of their work for the institution" (UNAV AcdMng)

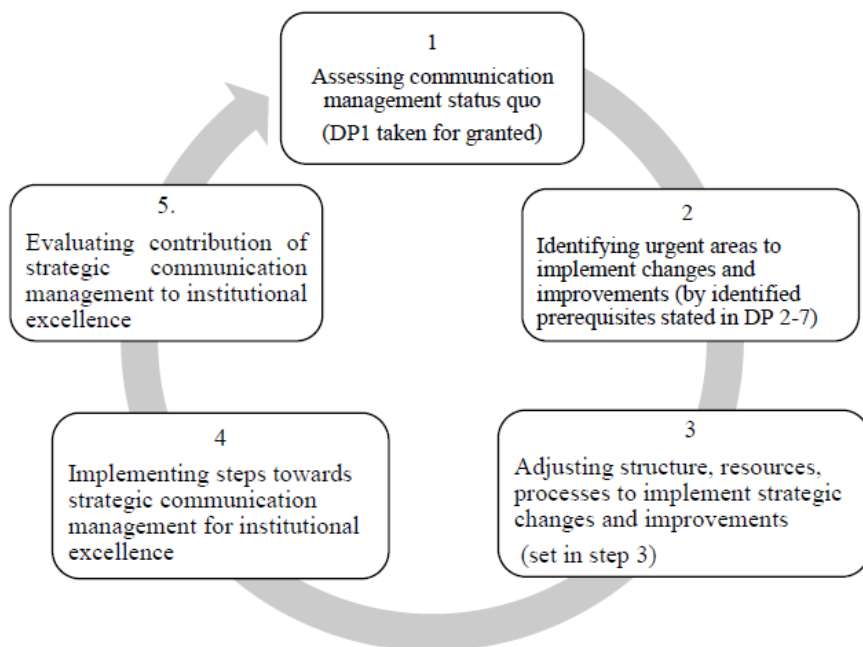
(continues)

Category Regular self-assessment of performance	
Subcategory	Responses
Only media clipping; monitoring social media account	<i>"as far as I perceive our work here, I see the DirCom as centred on the press, our DirCom is doing 90% press coverage, but right now our team is re-organizing"</i> (AustralArg ICD) <i>"If institutional communication is just measuring the mentions of the university in the press and other mass communication means, or appear on trendy topics this week, well, that is our declared death. Admittedly, this is also part of the job, but only one".</i> (AustralArg AcdMng) <i>"we monitor our media coverage daily, and we have annual goals for our campaigns. We constantly keep track on our social media accounts, also Google analytics. Our daily job starts with statistics, measurements. (...) We do not have a certain number of clicks or followers as set goals, but of course seek to do it all the best way possible. That is reflected in what it is said about us in the public sphere. Probably we doing quite well, judging but what the public opinion is about PEU-Lt if there are no crisis or communication conflicts as other organizations have".</i> (PEU-Lt ICD)

Appendix 11. Models for strategic institutional communication management (elaborated by the author)

The circuit model (figure 29) may be a reminder for the institution to keep spinning along with the evolution towards communication and institutional excellence, a life-long aspiration that can never be considered fully attained.

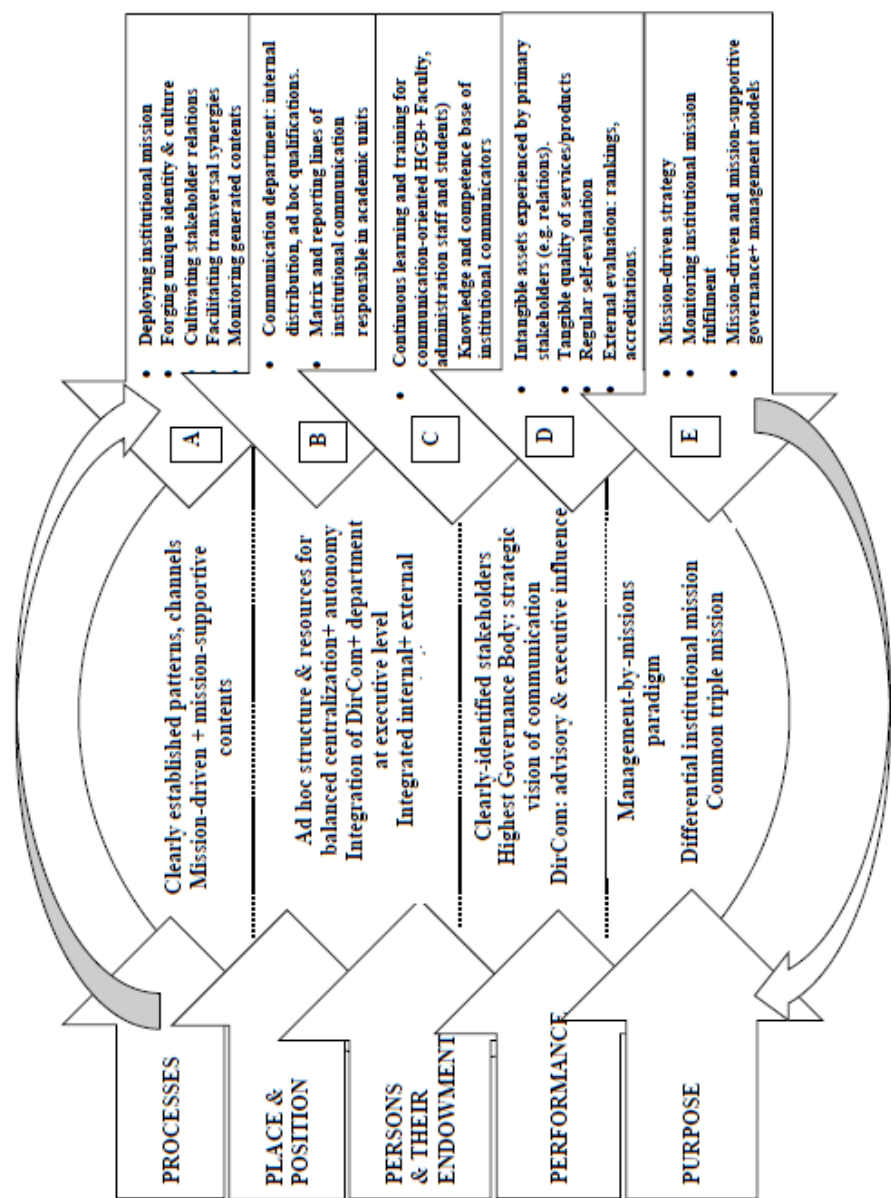
Figure 29. Diagnostic circuit model of strategic communication management in private entrepreneurial universities



Own elaboration

The dissertation author also proposes a comprehensive assessment model (figure 30), which blends the identified and thoroughly examined prerequisites for mission-driven strategic institutional communication management that can contribute to institutional excellence. This integral model can serve for retroductive analysis of the different stages and strategic level of communication management that this neuralgic function should encompass in private entrepreneurial universities.

Figure 30 Comprehensive model for assessment of communication management *status quo*



Own elaboration

These essential components result from extensive analysis of scientific literature and have been grouped into five main categories: *processes* (tasks and functions) entrusted by the executive board to the communication department; (Villafañe, 2005);(Nieto-Tamargo, 2006); (Mora Garcia Lomas, 2006); (Scheinsohn, 2010) *place and position* (Mora, 2009); (Méndez, 2013); (Gregory, 2013) the communication function should have in the institutional structure (Dozier et al., 2013); (Ramírez, 2014); then come *persons* and their *personal endowment*, meaning the legitimate status recognized, as well as granted and gained by qualification, skills, abilities (endowment) required from the Highest Governance Body, the DirCom (senior communication manager) and his/her team to fulfil their job with excellence (Dozier et al., 2013); (Vercic & Zerfass, 2016);(Zerfass et al., 2017). The fourth element is *performance*, which should always depart from and return to the institutional mission. The fulfilment of the declared institutional mission is no other than the fifth component: the overriding *purpose* and North-star that guides self-evaluation and accountability (Capriotti, 2009); (Scheinsohn, 2010); (Gregory, 2013); (Dozier et al., 2013).

Each of the five *P* blocks (processes, place/position, persons and endowment, performance and purpose) displays a dynamic flow that can be successfully mediated by mission-driven strategic institutional communication management.

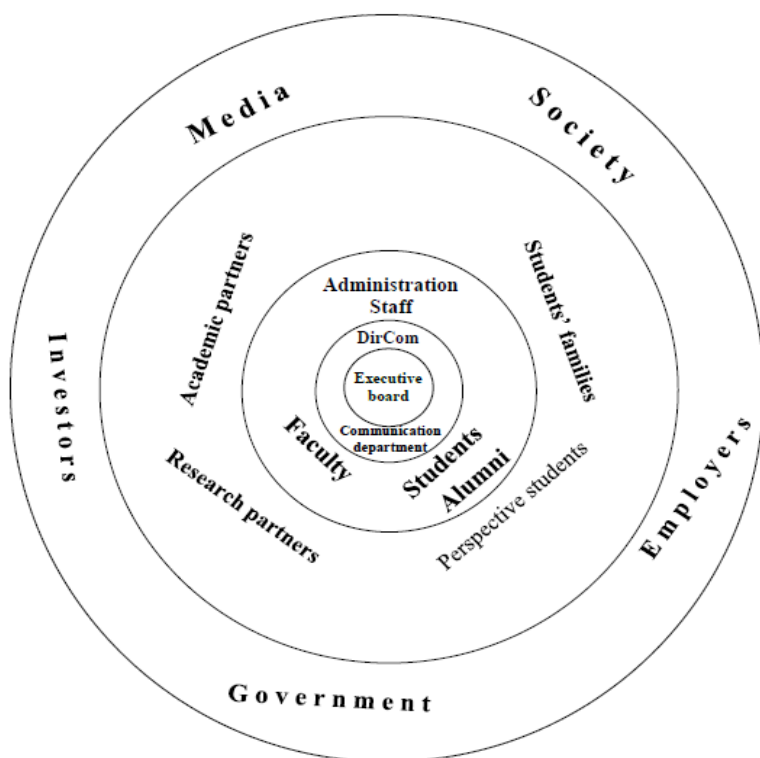
The third model (figure 31) displays a hypothetical map of university stakeholders, based on the presented comprehensive summary of HEI stakeholders' typologies as well as HE stakeholders mapping insights (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010).

This dissertation draws more attention to the primary stakeholders, namely: students, academic and administrative staff, the main actors who will transcend the institutional boundaries and influence the other stakeholders in outer subsequent rings.

The author's model graphically highlights the integrating role of the institutional communication manager/DirCom as a bridge between the Highest Governance Body (executive board), administrative staff, faculty and students.

The author envisions distinctive elements of HEIs stakeholders. In a university, the primary stakeholders are insider. They all together conform a complex internal public and play reception and transmission roles and is co-responsible for their institution's unique communicative identity.

Figure 31. Hypothetical map of University stakeholders



Own elaboration

The fourth model in this set provides a selection of key factors to assess the communication management status quo with numerical value assigned to measure the five P elements displayed in figure 32. Results should lead to strategic decision making towards the necessary improvements that may ensure a more fruitful contribution of mission-driven strategic institutional communication management to a long-lasting institutional excellence.

The communication process in an institution has to do with intangibility, at first sight hardly measurable by quantifiable means; but it can and must be thoroughly evaluated to understand how communication flows *ad intra* and *ad extra* the institution.

Figure 32. The 5P-factor communication management assessment model

	5P-FACTOR COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT	*3	2	1	0
A	Initiation and coordination of transversal integrative projects for synergy across structure Inter-departmental alignment through effective mission-driven and mission-supportive contents, institutional discourse, style, choice of channels and formats.				
B	Existence of institutional communication department Management level (reporting to whom) in the organizational chart Ad hoc resources allocation (budget, staff, infrastructure) for communication function Balance of centralization and autonomy through clearly established reporting lines, defined areas of self-management Internal communication integration through function allocation to Communication department or joint management/coordination with HR department				
C	Highest Governance Board awareness of, support to and reliance on communication department contribution to institutional aims of excellence Leadership of DirCom, gained authority and trust (from executive board, Communication department, institutional community) Relational capacity and availability for stakeholders Stakeholders participation through purposeful information, formation and active engagement Institutional communicators qualification + continuous development				
D	Evaluation and measurement of stakeholder engagement and satisfaction Continuous feedback analysis after performance (service/activities, events; evaluation/satisfaction forms for attendees) Active non-commissioned presence in relevant areas of social concern Monitoring position held in rankings (local, national, international), accreditations, awards and other acknowledgements				
E	Elaboration of institutional communication management strategy ad hoc for mission-driven institutional excellence Integration of strategic institutional communication management into overall mission-driven institutional strategy Adjustment of mission-driven overall institutional and communication strategies towards goals of mission-driven institutional excellence				

*3= highest score, clearly identifiable management actions and processes can be recorded;

2= middle score- initiated processes can be recorded indicating low development;

1= minimum score revealing few isolated and fragmentary management actions;

0= non-existent: critical point to start from.

Own elaboration based on multiple sources: (Nieto-Tamargo, 2006); (Manucci, 2009); (Scheinsohn, 2010);(Dozier et al., 2013); (Juan Manuel Mora et al., 2015a); (Vercic & Zeffass, 2016);(Zeffass et al., 2017).s

Appendix 12. The Higher Education context in Spain, Lithuania and Argentina

(Information has been adapted from The European Higher Education Area for 2018 Bologna Process Implementation report.(European Commission, EACEA, & Eurydice, 2018)

European context: Lithuania and Spain

Student population

Spain, Italy, Ukraine and Poland have more than 1 500 000 tertiary students each, while there are fewer than 1 000 000 students per country in 38 EHEA countries analysed in the Looking at the entire period from 2010 to 2015, the total number of students enrolled in tertiary education is lower in 2014/15 than in 2009/10 in almost half of the EHEA countries for which data is available. The decrease was most pronounced in Romania (45.8 %), but in two more countries the decrease was higher than 30 % (Lithuania and Ukraine) and in seven other countries the decrease ranges between 20 % and 30 % (Latvia, Armenia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Hungary and Estonia). This marks a noteworthy change from the 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report when only one country (Georgia) recorded a decrease higher than 30 % and one country (Latvia) reported a decrease between 20 % and 30 %.

The changes over time in the total number of students enrolled in tertiary education shown can be a product of both demographic changes and changes in the economic and institutional conditions that may make entry into tertiary education more/less desirable and more/less difficult. Therefore, in order to evaluate the capacity of the education system to enrol students eligible for tertiary education, it is important to analyse the enrolment rate relative to the total population in that age group.

In 13 countries, there is a continued trend of increase in the enrolment rate, amongst them Spain. In six countries, amongst them Lithuania, there is a continued decreasing trend in the enrolment rate.

There is wide variation between the countries with the highest and lowest enrolment rates for 18-34 year olds. Turkey had the highest enrolment rate in 2015, at 25 %, followed by Denmark, the Netherlands, Greece, Finland and Lithuania, all above the 20 % mark.

Demographic changes affecting the number of students have to be taken into consideration when designing higher education policies and goals. Many countries are concerned about the decreasing number of young people and how such changes will affect higher education participation and funding.

Higher education institutions and staff

In most EHEA countries analysed, the largest share of academic staff is concentrated in the 35-49 age group. This group represents, depending on the country, between

around one third and a half of all academics. In half of the countries, academic staff under 35 (the youngest age group) account for 17 % of all staff. In Switzerland, Spain, Italy and Slovenia less than 10 % of staff falls into this age group. The 50-64 age group is bigger than the under 35-year-olds in most countries (23 of 30 countries in the analysis), but smaller than the 35-49 age group in 25 countries. No specific data is provided about Lithuania, thus it can be included in either of these last groups. In 2016, in half of the EHEA countries for which data is available, 44.4 % of academic staff identified as female. In only five countries, female academic staff accounts for 50 % or more of all academic staff, in Lithuania (56.5 %).

Expenditure on higher education

European higher education institutions are funded predominantly from public sources. In 2014, half of the countries in the EHEA spent more than 1.2 % of GDP on tertiary education. Annual public expenditure on tertiary education is the lowest and below 1 % of GDP in several countries, Spain included. Two groups of countries are identified when analysing the evolution of the share of public expenditure directed to tertiary education between 2008, 2011 and 2014. In the first group of countries (nearly half of the EHEA countries for which data is available), the percentage of total public expenditure devoted to tertiary education is higher in 2014 than in 2008. In these countries – Switzerland, Lithuania, Sweden, Estonia, the Netherlands, Malta, Austria, Iceland, Germany, Latvia, the United Kingdom, Poland and Georgia – annual public expenditure on tertiary education increased faster than the total public expenditure (or decreased at a slower pace than the total public expenditure). In the second group of countries (nearly half of the EHEA countries for which data is available), the percentage of total public expenditure devoted to tertiary education was lower in 2014 than in 2008. In these countries – Norway, Ireland, Belgium, Spain, France, Cyprus, Slovenia, Romania, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Bulgaria, Italy and Hungary – public expenditure on tertiary education increased at a slower pace than public expenditure (or decreased more rapidly than public expenditure). Six of them (Ireland, Belgium, Spain, Romania, Portugal and Bulgaria) reported three consecutive decreases in 2008, 2011 and 2014. Big increases in annual public and private expenditure on tertiary education in the same time period were recorded in Slovakia (62 %), Poland (56 %), Lithuania (55 %).

Values and governance

This strong emphasis on shared values is the foundation of a renewed vision of European higher education, and it comes at an important time. The EHEA is comprised of very diverse countries in almost all aspects – size, socio-economic conditions, history, culture, etc. And yet these very diverse countries have agreed to work together in the larger interest of constructing an open and inclusive higher education area on the basis of shared values.

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy: legal protection and other measures

Academic freedom, institutional autonomy and respect for the rule of law in relations between public authorities, higher education institutions and students are essential to democratic societies, and can be considered as the fundamental values of the EHEA.

Legal basis for academic freedom

EHEA country representatives reported on whether or not the concept of academic freedom is mentioned in national legislation. It is indeed mentioned in the legislation of all but four systems – the Flemish Community of Belgium, Belarus, Hungary and Malta.

Composition of governing bodies

There is substantial variation in how institutions of higher education are governed and in how the membership of the governing bodies is (s)elected. In one third of the higher education systems in the EHEA there are different types of governing bodies for different types of public higher education institutions (e.g. universities, universities of applied sciences, etc.). In almost all systems, the membership/composition and the decision-making responsibilities of these governing bodies is regulated in legislation. The requirements for the composition of governing bodies vary across countries in the EHEA. In half of the education systems, there is a requirement for the governing bodies of higher education institutions to include a government representative. Almost all education systems require student and staff representatives, and about two thirds of the systems require other representatives (e.g. local authorities, unions, business/industry, science councils). In two thirds of the education systems, there is a legislative framework for the organisation of academic structures for teaching and research within higher education institutions.

Appointment and dismissal of higher education executive heads

There is more uniformity among EHEA countries when it comes to the appointment and dismissal of higher education institution executive heads (rectors) and staff (e.g. professors).

In only three education systems can the government appoint professors: the French Community of Belgium, the Czech Republic and France. And in only two higher education systems can the government dismiss professors: the French Community of Belgium and Spain.

The Higher Education context in Argentina

Administration of the Education System

Despite recent reform attempts to increase standardization, Argentina presently has one of the most decentralized education systems in Latin America. The country is constituted as a federation of 23 Provinces and the self-governing Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (24 jurisdictions in total). According to the current national education law, the federal government and the governments of the provinces and the autonomous city of Buenos Aires share responsibility for the “planning, organization, supervision and financing of national education in a joint, concurrent and agreed

manner”. In concrete terms, this means that the Federal Education Council sets overall guidelines for elementary, secondary and vocational post-secondary (non-university) education, while the provincial governments retain formal jurisdiction over curricula, funding, planning and administrative policies.

The Argentine higher education system consists of two subsystems: the post-secondary non-university system and the tertiary university system, which has a much higher degree of academic and institutional autonomy.

The federal government finances most public universities (61) with the exception of five universities, which are funded by provincial governments.

Decentralization has created challenges and opportunities alike. Critics argue that decentralization is detrimental to quality and a reflection of efforts by the federal government to externalize costs in the wake of the fiscal crises of Argentina

Admission to Higher Education

All secondary school graduates who hold a *Bachiller* or *Tecnico* are legally entitled to enrol at a public university. This was reaffirmed in a 2015 Higher Education Directive which mandated free and unrestricted access to university-level education at public institutions and enacted a prohibition on tuition fees for undergraduate programs at public institutions. The fact that the new directive prohibits university entrance examinations raised concerns among university authorities and critics who contend that the reform violates university autonomy and hinders universities from selecting the right candidates for their programs. Private institutions are still allowed to require entrance examinations for admission.

In the absence of entrance exams, admission criteria at public universities in Argentina vary by institution and program. Some universities require a minimum high school GPA or completion of a preparatory program, especially for programs in high demand. The Universidad de Buenos Aires, for instance, requires all students to complete a one-year preparatory program prior to admission into undergraduate programs. These types of prep-programs have become more common since 2015 as some universities now use prep-programs in lieu of entrance examinations.

At the same time, preparatory programs help promote equal opportunities by equalizing student preparation among students from socially disadvantaged families or under-performing provinces. Universities therefore have established prep-programs also with the aim to ensure that promotion and graduation rates are not dependent on the place of origin or socioeconomic background.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

There are two distinct types of HEIs in Argentina: The first category includes universities and university-level institutions, while the second category includes post-secondary institutions dedicated to technical/vocational education, as well as teacher training schools and arts schools. As mentioned before, these two sub-systems are administered by different state agencies and follow different regulations.

Universities

As of 2018, there were 111 universities and 19 university-level institutions in Argentina. Out of these, 57 universities and 4 university-level institutions were publicly funded. Unlike multi-disciplinary universities, institutions classified as ‘university-level’ institutions are typically mono-disciplinary institutions that offer university programs in specific fields (medicine, arts, aviation etc.) and include training institutions for the army and the police.

In addition, there are 49 private universities and 13 private university-level institutions. Private institutions were not allowed to operate in Argentina until 1958 and their degrees were not officially recognized until the late 1980s unless graduates also sat for a qualifying state examination. Today, private institutions are fully recognized, but are not allowed to operate as for-profit institutions.

Finally, the University of Bologna and the Latin American Social Sciences Institute (FLASCO), which operate in Buenos Aires, are recognized as foreign institutions.

Higher Education Grading Scale		
GRADE		WES CONVERSION
10	Outstanding <i>Sobresaliente</i>	A
8 - 9	Distinguished <i>Distinguido</i>	A
6 - 7	Good <i>Bueno</i>	B
4 - 5	Passed <i>Aprobado</i>	C
0 - 3	Fail <i>Reprobado</i>	F

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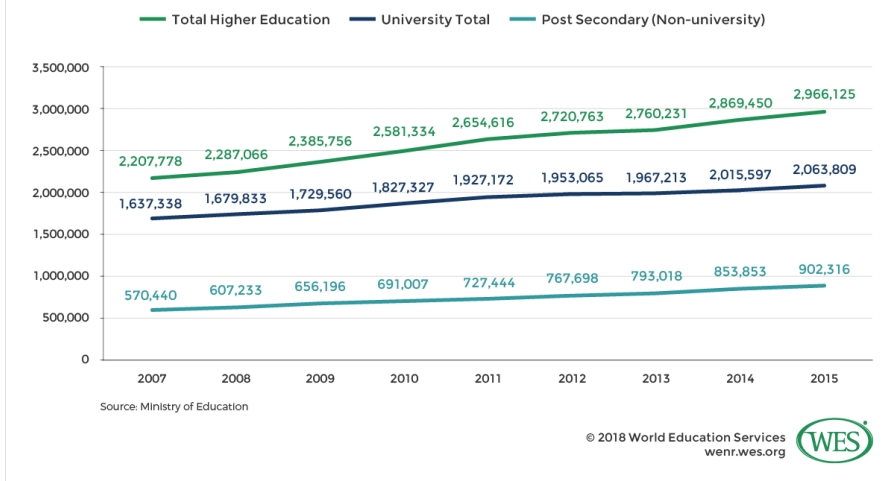


Student Enrolment

Argentina’s student population has grown strongly over the past decades: according to the UIS, the number of students at all levels of tertiary education almost doubled between 1998 and 2015. As per data published by the Argentine Ministry of Education, the number of students enrolled in post-secondary education (university and non-university) increased by 34 percent between 2007 and 2015 alone, from 2.2 million to 2.97 million students.

About two thirds of students in Argentina study at university level institutions. In 2016, there were a total of 2,100,091 students (1,939,419 undergraduate students and 160,672 graduate students) enrolled in Argentina’s university system. Females outnumbered males among these students by a significant margin of 57.6 percent to 42.4 percent. By comparison, 902,316 students were enrolled in *institutos no universitarios/terciarios* in 2015 (there is no data available for non-university enrollments in 2016).

Student Enrollment in Higher Education in Argentina, 2007-2015



In the university sector, students are primarily enrolled at public institutions – fully 79 percent of students attended public institutions in 2016. Private HEIs are mostly smaller institutions located in urban centers. While 25 percent of students in Buenos Aires and the Central Region were enrolled in private HEIs, private enrollments in the Southern Region made up only 6 percent of the student population.

Eighty-one percent of private institutions have less than 10,000 students, while the majority of public institutions enroll more than 10,000 students with big national universities like the National University of Córdoba having student enrollments above 100,000. The University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Argentina’s largest HEI, is among the universities with the highest number of students in all of Latin America (it had 328,361 students in 2012).

Private institutions have a larger market share among post-secondary. Forty-six percent of students in post-secondary technical vocational programs (excluding teacher training programs) studied at private institutions in 2014 compared to 53.6 percent at public institutions. As in the university system, female students outnumbered male student in this sector by a significant margin of 58.1 percent to 41.9 percent.

University Rankings

Given its advanced economic standing in Latin America, Argentine universities do not fare as well in some international university rankings as one might expect when compared to universities from other Latin American countries like Brazil, Chile, Mexico or Colombia. In the latest 2017 Times Higher Education ranking of Latin American universities, only one Argentine university, the National University of Córdoba, ranked among the top 50 (rank 26-30) . That said, Argentine universities

ranked much higher in the latest QS 2018 Latin America rankings, where six Argentine universities featured among the top 50, with UBA ranking 9th out of 50. UBA is also the third-highest ranked Latin American university after Brazil's University of Sao Paulo and Mexico's National Autonomous University of Mexico in the latest Shanghai Ranking. The disparity in rankings is perhaps testimony to the sometime unreliable nature of university rankings as a measure of institutional quality.

Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education

Faced with a growing number of HEIs and student enrollments, Argentina in 1995 created a dedicated body for quality assurance in university education – the National Commission for University Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEAU) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. Universities are required to undergo evaluation every six years – a two-step process that involves institutional self-assessments (*Autoevaluación Institucional*) and an external evaluation by CONEAU (*Evaluación Externa*). New universities need approval from CONEAU to operate in Argentina.

In addition, CONEAU accredits individual study programs in state-regulated professions. There are presently about 20 state-regulated professions that are considered critical for public safety and range from medical doctors to architects, lawyers, accountants, nurses, chemists, geologists or computer scientists (a list of state-regulated professions is available on CONEAU's website). Programs are first accredited for an initial 3-year cycle followed by 6-year cycles. Evaluation is based on institutional self-assessment and external evaluation by CONEAU. The commission maintains an online database of accredited undergraduate and graduate programs. Outside the university system, quality assurance and oversight is provided by a variety of different institutions with the Federal Council of Education being the main coordinating body. The National Institute of Technological Education (*Instituto Nacional de Educación Tecnológica* – INET), for instance, is responsible for ensuring quality in vocational and technical education, while the National Institute for Teacher Training (*Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente* – INFD) evaluates and accredits non-university-level teacher training institutions and programs. INFD maintains an online registry of accredited teacher training colleges and programs.

Overview of the education system in Spain, Lithuania, Argentina (EAG 2018)

Data adapted from (oecd., 2018)

Spain

In Spain, there is no upward intergenerational mobility in educational attainment for 55% of the children of low educated parents who have also not attained an upper secondary education. This is also reflected in the large percentage of young adults in Spain without an upper secondary education: 34% in Spain compared to 15% on average across OECD countries, in spite of significant increase by 25 percentage points in upper secondary first-time graduation rate between 2005 and 2016 (Spanish figure becoming closer to OECD figure: 81% and 87%, respectively).

Tertiary students in Spain pay relatively low tuition fees (USD 1 800) for a bachelor's degree in public institutions, but only half of the students receive scholarships or grants: 47% of students in Spain at this level benefit from these financial aids. However, 27% of them received scholarships or grants covering more than just the tuition fees.

Spain spends relatively less, as a share of gross domestic product (GDP), at all levels of education (in aggregate, 4%) than the OECD and EU23 averages of 4.5% and 4.2% respectively. Expenditure per student has also fallen between 2010 and 2015, by 11% for non-tertiary education and by 13% for tertiary; this is partly explained by the increase in the number of students at all levels of education for the same period.

Participation in education

- The enrolment rate of 20-24 year-olds in Spain is one of the highest among OECD and partner countries with available data. (49.3 %, rank 10/40 , 2016)
- The average age of new entrants into doctoral programmes is one of the highest among OECD and partner countries with available data. (34.5 Years, rank 4/34 , 2016)

Public and private expenditure in education

- The share of private expenditure on all levels below tertiary education is one of the largest among OECD and partner countries with available data. (13.6 %, rank 7/35 , 2015)
- In Spain, public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP is comparatively low. (3.7 %, rank 30/39 , 2015)
- The change between 2005 and 2012 in private expenditure on tertiary educational institutions is one of the largest compared to other OECD and partner countries with available data. (146 Index, rank 1/27 , 2015) Between 2010 and 2012, the change in public expenditure on primary through tertiary educational institutions is comparatively small. (90 Index, rank 29/31 , 2015)
- Spain has one of the smallest shares of public expenditure on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary educational institutions among OECD countries and partner economies with available data. (86.4 %, rank 30/37 , 2015)
- In Spain, total public expenditure on primary through tertiary educational institutions as a percentage of total public expenditure is comparatively low. (8.4 %, rank 31/39 , 2015)

Neither in education nor employed

- The proportion of 20-24 year-olds who are neither employed nor in education or training is comparatively large in Spain. (23.2 %, rank 8/39 , 2017)

Governance

- The percentage of decisions taken at the central level or state level of government for public lower secondary education is one of the highest among OECD and partner countries. (55.2 %, rank 6/16 , 2017)

- The percentage of decisions taken at the regional or sub-regional level of government for public lower secondary education is one of the highest among OECD and partner countries. (21.9 %, rank 2/16 , 2017)
- The percentage of decisions taken at the school level of for public lower secondary education is one of the lowest among OECD and partner countries. (10.4 %, rank 29/34 , 2017)

Lithuania

Lithuania has one of the lowest shares of adults without upper secondary education, and has a good potential for social mobility. Yet, the gap between the top and bottom income deciles is one of the highest in Europe.

The teaching workforce is ageing, with almost half of Lithuanian teachers aged over 50. While teachers in Lithuania earn less than in most other OECD countries and have limited career prospects in terms of salary growth, they have similar earnings to other tertiary-educated adults.

Lithuania spends a relatively high proportion of its gross domestic product (GDP) on early childhood educational institutions, and enrolment rates in early childhood and care have increased considerably over the last decade.

Participation in education

- The share of young adults who choose vocational programmes is low, and so is Lithuania's spending on vocational programmes compared to other European countries.
- In Lithuania, the percentage of today's young people expected to graduate from an upper secondary general programme is one of the highest among OECD and partner countries with available data. (73.4 %, rank 4/33 , 2016)
- Lithuania has one of the highest percentages of young people expected to obtain a bachelor's or an equivalent degree during their lifetime. (49.6 %, rank 5/38 , 2016)
- Among OECD countries and partner economies with available data, Lithuania has one of the highest percentages of young people expected to graduate from tertiary education during their lifetime. (52.6 %, rank 9/27 , 2016)
- The share of female students entering doctorate or equivalent programmes in Lithuania is one of the largest compared to other OECD countries and partner economies. (50.8 %, rank 10/40 , 2016)

Public and private expenditure in education

- The share of private expenditure on all levels below tertiary education is one of the smallest among OECD and partner countries with available data. (4.5 %, rank 29/35 , 2015)
- In Lithuania, public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP is comparatively low. (3.5 %, rank 33/39 , 2015).

- The change between 2005 and 2012 in private expenditure on tertiary educational institutions is one of the smallest compared to other OECD and partner countries with available data. (82 Index, rank 24/27 , 2015)

Neither in education nor employed

- The proportion of 15-19 year-olds who are neither employed nor in education or training is comparatively small in Lithuania. (2.3 %, rank 36/38 , 2017)

Governance

- The percentage of decisions taken at the local level of government for public lower secondary education is one of the highest among OECD and partner countries. (27.1 %, rank 8/33 , 2017)

Argentina

Employment rates among young adults (25-34 year-olds) display a distinct gender bias, with 43% of women with below secondary education employed in 2017, compared to 84% for similarly educated men. This gap tends to narrow with rising levels of education.

Access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) is less widespread among 2- and 3-year-olds in Argentina than OECD countries and neighbouring Brazil and Colombia. Argentina's expenditure on these services as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) is about half the average across OECD countries.

Participation in education

- The share of tertiary-educated 25-34 year-olds is lower in Argentina than the OECD and G20 averages; however, more women than men attain tertiary education, a similar trend to other OECD countries.
- In Argentina, the percentage of today's young people expected to graduate from upper secondary education during their lifetimes is one of the lowest among OECD and partner countries with available data. (62.5 %, rank 35/38 , 2016)
- The level of upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary attainment among 25-34 year-olds is one of the highest among OECD and partner countries with available data. (51.8 %, rank 7/45 , 2017)
- The enrolment rate of 25-29 year-olds in Argentina is one of the highest among OECD and partner countries with available data (20.7 %, rank 8/40 , 2016)
- The share of female students entering doctorate or equivalent programmes in Argentina is one of the largest compared to other OECD countries and partner economies. (55.8 %, rank 1/40 , 2016).

NOTES

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