

**ENHANCING THE MANAGEMENT OF
STRATEGIC PROJECTS WITHIN
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

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the award of Doctorate of Business Administration

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification, and that it is the result of my own independent work.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping, fluid strokes that form a stylized representation of the name Christian Olivier Graf.

Christian Olivier Graf

14.11.2025

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Abstract

HEIs are facing major challenges such as globalisation, digitisation or social ideologisation. In this regard, the strategic agenda and its execution determine the viability of HEIs, and projects are viewed as an effective method for driving forth changes and establishing a competitive advantage. The academic literature, by contrast, reveals a fragmented discourse and untested tools and techniques on how strategies are implemented through projects in HEIs. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to improve the comprehension of strategic projects, thereby facilitating organisational changes by discussing particular implementation steps. A project portfolio management model served as a theoretical guideline for understanding the different phases within a strategising process involving projects. Additionally to the use of strategic- and project management, aspects the perspective of academic managers as key actors for strategy implementation was considered. A case study approach was used for the research: Twenty-three interviews were conducted with a representative of the HEI sector's business school, which was selected as an impact case. The results revealed that the strategic processes are well established at upper management level; however, a limited knowledge of the existing strategy in the lower hierarchy levels was identified. This is also associated with individuals' reduced understanding of involvement in strategic work. As strategic operational tasks are equated with project work, the implementation of strategic goals only takes place via a project to a limited extent. It also becomes apparent that the role of programme- and portfolio management are not well resourced through appropriate structures. Furthermore, academic managers find themselves in an ongoing field of tension: in addition to cutting edge research and teaching, they are required to fulfil demanding management tasks, which presupposes high expertise in strategic- and project management. This all-rounder method leaves little room for realising the benefits and further development of strategic projects as well as for improving specific project management competencies. Therefore, based on the findings, a framework for HEIs is proposed along with organisational measures to enhance the management of strategic projects. The framework offers guidance on the principal steps to undertake when delivering strategic projects in HEIs. The procedure follows a top-down logic that simultaneously incorporates the overarching strategy architecture, and the strategic thinking of the key actors involved. This study contributes to the future integrated research stream on strategic- and project management in HEIs.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my Saviour Lord Jesus Christ in
deepest bowing, highest reverence, and most respectfulness

In His mighty appearance and due His immeasurable grace
Jesus gave me a second chance to live in this world after my accident

*“I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever” (Psalm 86:12)*

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Presentation of the Interim Results

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List of Abbreviations

APM	Association for Project Management
AMBA	Association of MBAs
AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ACBSP	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs
BRM	Benefits Realisation Management
EQUIS	European Quality Improvement System
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IT	Information Technology
ICB	Individual Competence Baseline
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPMA	International Project Management Association
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
OPM	Organisational Project Management
PM	Project Management
PBO	Project-based Organisation
PMI	Project Management Institute
PMM	Project Maturity Model
PMO	Project Management Office
POO	Project-oriented Organisation
PPM	Principles of Project Management
PMIS	Project Management Information System
PMBOK	Project Management Body of Knowledge
RQ	Research Question
SIG	Special Interest Group

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Higher Education in a State of Flux

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in the economic development of a country (Lane, 2012; Pinheiro and Pillay, 2016; Kempton et al., 2022). In an ever-more complex and competitive knowledge marketplace, education is becoming a global service which operates mainly on the basis of economic considerations (Naidoo, 2003; Parker et al., 2023). With regard to the global higher education market, it continues to grow with a market size of roughly USD twenty billion and is expected to more than USD sixty billion over the next six years (Verified Market Research, 2021; IMARC, 2023). HEIs are experiencing a major shift as globalisation, digitalisation and ideologisation offer enormous challenges to society (Dameron and Durand, 2018, p. 2; Callender et al., 2020, p. 5). On the one hand, they must be adaptable, flexible, modern, digital, global and receptive to the ongoing and brisk changes in the labour market and the global market economy (Posselt et al., 2019; Bouchrika, 2023). On the other hand, budget cuts and rising prices are affecting academia. As a result, academic institutions must frequently make strategic choices to accomplish the necessary changes while managing financial constraints. Furthermore, the role of HEIs as a significant stakeholder and agent in innovation and regional development has drawn more attention in recent decades (Wakkee et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2021). Simultaneously, however, HEIs are increasingly facing more competition. For instance, private providers in the field of custom learning and learning management systems are rapidly challenging HEIs by providing their own learning technology-driven solutions (ELM Learning, 2022; eLearning Industry, 2023). Hence, the trend of emerging technologies will continue to change teaching, learning and collaboration (Pelletier et al., 2022). While some scholars point out the overload of demands placed on academic institutions in overcoming the challenges (Sam and Van der Sijde, 2014; Benneworth, 2015), the United Nations still sees HEIs at the forefront of creating new solutions to address global challenges (United Nations, 2022; Schmelkes, 2022).

The current debate about the challenges within HEIs reveals an interesting viewpoint on whether the strategic objectives of HEIs can be better supported by more effective execution of strategic projects (SP). How to enhance the management and delivery of strategic projects will be presented in the context of

HEIs as bodies of knowledge do not address this problem (Kozak-Holland and Procter, 2019, p. 5; Badewi, 2022). For instance, neither the guidebooks “Project Management Body of Knowledge” (PMBOK) from PMI nor the “Individual Competence Baseline” (ICB) from IPMA describes SP as a separate project type. Since academic managers are taking on a leading role in the advancement of the organisation (Kallenberg, 2020; Hulme et al., 2023), it is their viewpoint in particular that should be expressed. Academic managers are highly educated performers in HEIs with their own responsibilities for their organisational units. In addition to research, teaching and counselling, they take on management tasks, which also include managing projects with a strategic focus.

Managing Organisational Change through Strategic Projects

Based on Buchan’s survey (2022), 80% of business school leaders worldwide believe that business schools are under pressure to change their fundamental value proposition. Jian (2022) emphasises the importance of clearly identifiable change management strategies to lead and ensure the success of a HEI’s planned transformational change. Using the example of the internationally renowned Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) as a single case, he describes such a successful organisational change, despite many internal impediments and strong resistance from faculty. Frølich et al. (2013) confirm that a key instrument to managing institutional change is the design and development of strategising processes as they bring together elements framing decision-making structures and processes. An organisational change approach, according to Boggs et al. (2021), can help institutions emerge from today’s issues on better footing and prepare for those of the future by enabling them to operate more flexibly and resiliently over the long term. But such a change requires an intense, operations-wide programme focused on improving student outcomes and boosting organisational health and performance. Therefore, targeting strategic growth can expand the impact of an institution’s mission and establish a more financially resilient university. Zubac et al. (2022) view this kind of approach under the label of agility: an organisational capability to strategically deal with a continuous need for change (p. 66) which requires a specification of how implementation activity can make a contribution. Thus, the authors’ stance is to liberate implementation from planning and develop a new perspective that acknowledges strategy implementation as an independent endeavour.

Kozak-Holland and Procter (2019, p. 110) see these change processes of work as a business transformation, and they stress that project management (PM) should take a lead here because it provides the overall framework for all the elements of a transformation (p. 111). Hence, projects are acknowledged as a means to organise strategy-driven innovation and change processes (Aubry et al., 2007; Cerne and Jansson, 2019), resulting in the importance of successful project execution. In particular, internal projects are used to implement organisation-level strategy objectives in the context of internal innovation and change processes (McElroy, 1996). Huemann (2022) stresses that the power of projects is derived from their future-orientated, solution-based focus where their temporary character reflects their urgency. Concurrently, projects have been recognised as a multifaceted phenomenon, and the amount of project work has risen (Schoper, 2019). In relation to the aspect of strategy execution, Shenhar et al. (2001, p. 703) regard projects as “powerful strategic weapons, initiated to create economic value and competitive advantage”. The strategic importance of projects was originally pioneered by Cleland (1990) and discussed intensively in the 2000s by researchers such as Andersen and Jessen (2003), Morris and Jamieson (2005) or Cooke-Davies et al. (2009). Therefore, strategy implementation through projects is essential for the growth of an organisation and to minimise the likelihood of failure (Cândido and Santos, 2015; Carucci, 2017).

Significance of a Sound Strategy in HEIs

In the context of organisational changes, the importance of having a sound strategy in HEIs can be recognised by the statistics of closing colleges and universities. For instance, Castillo and Welding (2024) report that at least 59 US public or nonprofit colleges have closed, merged or announced closures or mergers since March 2020 with a rising tendency. Additionally, in 2024 several US universities have announced that they would close (Marcus, 2024), while the majority of universities in the UK will face deteriorating finances in the next few years with the risk of closure (Foster, 2024). It is presumed that almost all HEIs do have a mission statement and associated strategic documents, but the direction of travel seems to be problematic, and, in some cases, the goals are too “short-term”. Having a long-term strategy has become mandatory to overcome the current faced by the education institutions (Parker, 2020; Jesse, 2024). Therefore, HEIs must continue to develop in order to remain sufficiently competitive in a changing environment and to fulfil their basic

mission of economic support (Miotto et al., 2020). Accordingly, academic institutions are adapting their strategies (Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016) in fields such as sustainability (Ramísio et al., 2019) or digital transformation (Hashim et al., 2022). Likewise, Uslu (2018) identifies the requirements of strategic flexibility in European universities in the field of service; service to society; research-based teaching; internationalisation; governance; and decision-making in learning and teaching with quality assurance. These requirements arise for various reasons such as new priorities which are not sufficiently recognised by HEI strategy makers or being too slow to adapt or to integrate new strategic choices. As a consequence, over the last twenty years there has been considerable pressure to develop operational- and organisational structures and decision-making processes for substantial improvement in institutions' process performance as well as in their quality level (Ehrenstorfer, 2015, p. 180). In view of this, the development of competitive strategies by HEIs is essential to assess drivers of change; identify effective answers to the change; and create policies and strategic directives that support evolution (Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016). The survival of HEIs is therefore a function of their strategic agendas (Guillotín and Mangematin, 2015; Mathies and Ferland, 2023, p. 91).

Nevertheless, strategy implementation is highly demanding in practical execution. The struggle with developing and implementing an institutional strategy despite great efforts seems to be a phenomenon at most HEIs worldwide, including universities in Australia (Shah and Nair, 2011; Devinney and Dowling, 2020, p. xi), East Africa (Moshtari and Safarpour, 2023), the UK (Baxter, 2019) and the USA (Kisamore, 2022). Against this background, the delivery of HEIs' strategies has an implication on their organisational working environment as it becomes necessary to adapt the way of working or to design new work content (Cassell, 2019; Ekstedt, 2019).

The Alignment between PM and HEI Strategy

The logic of strategic project alignment comes to the forefront as literature recognises the underestimated link of the organisational strategy with the corresponding project in practice (Alsudiri et al., 2013; Samset and Volden, 2016). Scholars view the contextual connection between an organisation's strategy and its corresponding organisational PM environmental influences as crucial (Vuori et al.,

2013). In addition, the PM system and mechanism must be adjusted in order to aid the project work (Cooke-Davies et al., 2009). A PM system designates a set of tools, techniques, methodologies, resources and procedures in guiding a project to completion (Cleland and Gareis, 2006, p. 17-6). Accordingly, the organisational implementation of PM, which is a means of implementing strategy, needs as a prerequisite a well-developed and organisation-fitted strategy plan, as stated by Nicholas (1990), and should therefore not be done precipitously (Brown, 2008). In the context of integrating PM within an organisation, the PMI itself understands project integration management as the integration of a methodology in which all elements of a project, such as tasks and resources, are to be coordinated (PMI, 2021). In this regard, literature provides a series of specific thematic areas and refers to the correct design, such as temporary organisation (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995) or the right application of project determinants. For example, the configuration of PM in organisations is associated with a project management office (hereafter PMO) (Aubry et al. 2009), governance (Bekker and Steyn, 2009), project maturity models (Kerzner, 2019), benefit (Zwikael et al., 2018), success (Cook-Davies, 2002), performance (Mir and Pinnington, 2014) and capability management (De Melo et al., 2020). The topics of project portfolio management (Clegg et al., 2018) and project maturity models (Brooks et al. 2014) are increasingly prominent and refer to the strategy implementation of projects (Görög, 2016). In contrast, there is minimal use in PM literature aligning project objectives with the broader strategic objectives of an organisation in practice, referred to as “strategic project alignment” and discussed by scholars (Singh, 2017; Stretton, 2018). As such, the concept of organisational project management (OPM) is gaining ground as it conceptualises the integration of all project management-related activities throughout the organisational hierarchy or network in order to deliver projects to exceed the ever-increasing expectations of stakeholders (Drouin et al., 2017, p. 10). Müller et al. (2019) proposed the OPM concept, which will be explained below as an important source for the further development of this thesis.

The Academic Project Manager

Regarding business strategy implementation, scholars agree that as skilled staff is the most important resource, the need for highly skilled workers has risen (Walter and Zimmermann, 2016; Bartłomiej and Przemyslaw, 2016). This is also relevant for the implementation of strategies through projects by skilled personnel (Gomes

et al., 2008; Alsudiri et al., 2013). As a consequence, the effectiveness and the success of projects depends on project managers and their PM competencies (Turner and Müller, 2005; Geoghegan and Dulewicz, 2008; Maghareh and Mohammadzadeh, 2013). These findings can be applied to HEIs' strategy work through the implementation of projects. In this context, academic (middle) managers are seen as the main change agent and facilitator to implement strategic change objectives (Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013; Rudhumbu, 2015). Additionally, such managers in HEIs take on special responsibilities in their roles as change agents (Buick et al., 2018). This encompasses all management tasks that guide the existing organisational structure and its employees toward the new desired strategic direction as seamlessly as possible. This is also associated with the challenges of managing new projects with leadership skills and appropriate PM methodologies, while simultaneously balancing the trade-off between academic and managerial responsibilities. Floyd (2016) highlights a frequent lack of management knowledge among academic middle managers. Nevertheless, the managers are required to meet organisational and project-like performance targets such as time, cost or quality. In light of the background provided above, it can be summarised that a number of different unknowns in the meaning, design, implementation and further development of projects within the strategic setting of an HEI can be identified. These ambiguities give rise to a researchable and significant specific phenomenon (Merton, 1987) and lay ground for the descriptive research problem (Sandelowski, 2010) in this thesis.

1.2 Problem Framing

With reference to the notion of engaged scholarship, Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) argue that the reality from which a particular problem comes can be found in a theoretical field or in the real world of things. Therefore, a recognition has arisen that theory and practice can be seen as two distinct forms of knowledge, which leads to a gap according to the authors. Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) emphasise that the practitioner's thinking; the construction of his or her thoughts and actions; and the understanding of how he or she approaches knowing "in" practice should be considered. Following this approach for the problem identification, the distinction between the academic and practical perspectives should be differentiated and are detailed below.

Problem Identification from the Academic and Practice Perspectives

The embedding of strategic projects within the strategising process in the context of an HEI can be viewed from various research disciplines. This thesis draws mainly on the disciplines of strategic management and PM, additionally in a supporting form, academic personnel and competence management. Strategic management in HEIs is researched on different levels of analysis such as the institutional field, organisational levels and individual levels (Fumasoli and Hladchenko, 2023). According to Vuorinen et al. (2018) strategy work and its processes are divided into the areas of architecture (strategic analysis, formulation and planning), action (organising activities and translating strategy to operations), and adaptation (monitoring and learning). Based on this breakdown and when transferred to educational organisations, the following described areas shall be considered for the problem identification as research justification for this thesis.

Strategy Architecture: The way a business is formed from the ground up is known as strategic architecture. It encompasses strategising as an activity conducted as part of overall strategic planning (Bolland, 2020, p.2). Bolland (2020) described strategising as “a way of thinking about possible states of nature that may come from concocting different paths to future, desired states of nature” (p. 55). Strategising in the context of HEI is an elusive term as it is understood from different perspectives in literature (Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023). The authors note that two research means have emerged in this context: studies that take field conditions as causal for HEI strategising and those which consider internal organisational dynamics as the main or sole driver of strategic responses. They call for bridging those divergent perspective. Therefore, the process of strategising is continuous and varies by stage and organisation. While earlier strategy research tended to assume stable environments and focused independently on the analytical, institutional and systemic approach to strategy, the attempt of bringing integrated logics and multiplicity in strategy formulation and strategic choice is now in demand (Rey and Ricart, 2018; Goudsmit, 2020, p. 11). Yet a research effort for the extended illumination of new, multiplicative and integrative strategy approaches in higher education is still modest.

Strategic Project Alignment: Literature has recognised the significance of setting up a logical alignment from the institutions’ strategy to the corresponding

organisational PM environment (Garcia et al., 2018; de Medeiros Júnior, 2021), and scholars agree that a corresponding mismatch between the parent strategy and PM can result in less successful projects (Alsudiri, 2013; Kaiser et al., 2015). For instance, planned international cooperations with other partner universities or participation in national research programmes should advance the overarching strategy. Unsuccessful projects can then have a negative impact on an organisation, such as a loss of its competitive advantage (Patanakul and Shenhar, 2012). In his dissertation, Masombuka (2018) concludes that the project strategy and the corresponding project plan are essential for the successful implementation of strategic projects in the alignment process. But in academic institutions, the involvement of the project strategy and project planning within the alignment process is minimally discussed.

Strategic Plan Implementation in HEIs: An extant literature describes the importance of strategic planning in HEIs (Williams, 2021) and its vital contribution to the success of universities (Fathi and Wilson, 2009). However, a generally recognised theory that is applicable to an academic institution has not yet emerged. Rather, HEI strategic planning makes use of existing theories such as resource-based view theory (Barney, 1991), institutional theory (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) or stakeholder theory (Freeman, 2010), but all lack practical implementation (Aljuwaiber, 2023). Now more than ever, carrying out a strategy plan seems to be an elusive phenomenon (Bourgeois III and Brodwin, 1984) which continues to engage researchers and consultants alike (Sull et al. 2015; Sminia and Salinas, 2022, p. 65). The criticism of the implementation gap between strategic plans and their actual outcomes and performance is also true for academic organisations (Enders et al., 2013). Various attempts have been made to explain the factors (Bassa, 2015; Kirinić, 2016), but scholars still view the implementation gap as a black box in HEIs that has neither been fully understood (de Haan, 2014) nor crystallised as a significant intervener between planning and performance as partial mediator (Kabui, 2020).

Decision-making Process: The literature presents a whole range of strategy tools (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2015; Vuorinen et al., 2018) such the SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) framework (Andrews, 1971), Porter's (1980) Five Forces or the BCG matrix (Armstrong and Brodie, 1994). These

methods and instruments are intended to allow the strategy to be translated into realisable steps. Alike, evidence for factors which influence strategy implementation (Yang et al. 2010; Lee and Puranam, 2016) and measure its conceptualisation (Amoo et al, 2019) are comprehensively analysed. Furthermore, various scholars point out that there are pitfalls and challenges in the strategic planning process, especially in connection with the corresponding execution (Girma, 2022). However, the decision-making process regarding why a particular implementation procedure or a process of activities is chosen for each (sub)strategy still remains unclear in the context of academic institutions (Zipparo, 2023). In this respect, minimal research has been conducted on the development process of a strategic project in HEIs within the decision-making process, i.e., the justification and design.

Organisational Project Management (OPM): It is unclear whether the goals of the academic institution's strategy are underpinning the need to enhance the current PM environment and whether the system in place, including the measuring system, is flexible enough in its response to change. This means that the value of PM in the context of strategic planning and actions is probably not known or fully acknowledged within HEIs. Therefore, how the supporting system adapts to achieve the strategic goals is minimally clarified as a PM framework applicable for the HEI context is missing. It is therefore not obvious whether HEIs consider an established organisational PM to be significant for the execution of strategic projects. The literature provides various proposals for modelling OPM (Drouin et al., 2017; Müller et al., 2019), but despite these numerous descriptions, there are only a few holistic theoretical constructs, such as those from Turner (1999, cited in Morris and Jamieson, 2005), Srivannaboon (2006), Stretton (2018), Maylor and Turner (2022) or Müller et al. (2019). These models aim to reflect the conceptual embedment of PM within an organisation. Their methodological drivers are an effort to fill the gap in literature, namely by aligning programmes and projects with business strategies and strategic business planning. But an empirical based foundation is hardly evident. Similarly, these models have not been further developed by other researchers, nor have they found a predominant place in a specific sector. Thus, there is still a considerable need for further research in this area.

Strategic Project Work: Scholars indicate that there is little contemporary literature on exactly how PM can help to overcome the challenges in HEIs

mentioned above and how academic managers can be supported in taking on a leading role in business changes and transformations since bodies of knowledge do not address this problem (Kozak-Holland and Procter, 2019; Badewi, 2022). The literature is fragmented with regard to the management of strategic project work delivered by academics, how this kind of strategic work is changing over time and how its value contributes to the organisational strategising process. Most academic managers in academic institutions are non-trained or non-certified project practitioners, as further explained below. In particular, the roles and competencies required of the actors responsible for undertaking this endeavour remain vague in literature. Ballesteros-Sánchez et al. (2019) examine the common challenges that project managers face in an environment with an increasing number of projects and reveal that project managers often feel disconnected from work and face stressful situations. Consequently, the authors conclude, more support is needed for project managers to find useful strategies to cope with stress and manage their time. In particular, the development of their personal competencies plays an important role here; in fact, PM competence research has analysed and listed many competencies for a project worker over the last two decades (Alvarenga, 2020), but not in the context of an HEI.

With reference to the practice problem identification, the practitioner's perspective refers to consultants and senior executives who publish reports and books on strategy based on their management experiences. For instance, contributions such as the two highly regarded books by Bossidy and Charan (2002) or Lafley and Martin (2013) describe the issues of strategy implementation in practice. Additionally, in various surveys, the gap between ambition plans for growth and actual performance is becoming apparent. For example, a survey of 6,000 executives from different companies showed that only one in three believes his or her strategy will be ultimately successful and less than one in three believes their organisation has the capabilities needed to execute their strategy (PWC, 2019). Furthermore, 40% of companies are classified as "adrift" in terms of strategy and execution. The consultants Kaplan and Norton (2005) stated that 95% of a company's employees were unaware of their strategy, or did not understand. Neilson et al. (2008) also reported that, based on a survey of over 1,000 organisations, 60% of employees rate their organisation as weak at strategy implementation. Additionally, Desroches et al. (2014) came to the conclusion with their survey that 57% of respondents felt

that their ability to execute a strategy was “somewhat or not successful”. The examples above demonstrate that there is still space for improvement in terms of how well organisations can carry out their strategies. Whether the findings from practice can be transferred to an academic institution is unclear due to the lack of publicly accessible data sets.

Problem Evaluation

Van der Ven (2007, p. 17) states that in search of new theories in social science, there may be a lack of relevance perceived by the intended audiences. But literature indicates that the phenomenon of project work within a strategic setting of an HEI is an under-researched field. This thesis examines the phenomenon with the involvement of and through the lens of the people affected, thus categorising itself in the field of social science. Learning about the nature and actions of the world is the aim of social science, which also seeks to expand on what is already known (Khalifa, 2010). Therefore, in fulfilment of the research criterion “usefulness and worthwhile” (Akanle and Shittu, 2020) and based on the issues listed above, a comprehensive understanding and solutions to how strategic projects can be organised efficiently and effectively in the context of the current challenging HEI transformation are necessary. Weick (1979, p. 2) argues that “an organisation is a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer, and decision makers looking for work”.

Based on these considerations, the key problem in the above-described social phenomenon emerges as follows. A system is driven by the behaviour of individual actors who are moved by their own incentives, goals and calculations according to Jervis (1997, p. 15). Within the system of the described phenomenon, strategy formulation, planning and its implementation are a process that consists of a pivotal mechanism and can lead to the lacking bridge between those strategy phases (Whipp, 2003; Martin, 2010). It is the link between strategy planner and strategy executor. As outlined by Hedström and Ylikoski (2010), a mechanism has a structure, is identified by the kind of phenomenon it produces and is an irreducibly causal notion. It refers to the entities of a causal process that produces the effect of interest, and effects on action are always multiple (Albarracin et al., 2018).

The mechanism between an HEI's principals and strategic planners of implementation instructions on the one hand and the recipients of such instructions (in this thesis, academic managers) on the other hand is blurred. It is therefore a serious problem because the resulting effects of the mechanism are not recognisable and fully known to the organisation and its members in literature and practice.

The subordination relationship (macro-micro level) between the involved human agents (planner and executor) leads to the mechanism-based explanation perspective (Hedström and Ylikoski, 2010). The authors relate to the framework of Coleman's boat, which describes three mechanisms on the micro-level: first, the "situational mechanisms through which people's behaviour is restricted by social structures, and their cultural contexts meld their views and wants; secondly, the "action-formation mechanisms" connect individuals' beliefs to their actions; thirdly, the "transformational mechanisms" that people use to create a variety of intentional and unexpected social outcomes through their interactions and behaviours are outlined. These three mechanisms fundamentally undergrid the macro-level associations (Cowen et al., 2022).

Having insights into these three mechanisms and their key components reveals the causes for facilitating or decelerating strategic work delivery. Hence, HEIs need to consider strategising in a broader way.

Reflection

A number of significant issues indicate that there is a lack of understanding in academia and practice with regard to how strategic project work happens within the HEIs. How strategic projects are acknowledged, generated and how the execution in the form of project work takes place due to strategic adjustments is still fuzzy. This means that little information can be derived about the resulting effects on the strategy architecture and organisational performance, which also reduces the potential for improvement.

To better comprehend these aspects, the research setting of this thesis is presented accordingly. To further understand the meaning of projects in a strategic setting, this thesis attempts to shed light on the arrangement between strategic planning and its implementation. It considers the competencies of academic managers in fulfilling

strategic missions in academic institutions. The strength of such an approach is that it analyses the efficiency and effectiveness of project work through the view of those academic key actors. As a result, the question of which PM competencies are considered critical is open and will be further investigated in this thesis. The challenges fit in this collective of business educators trying to respond to the manifold external demands. As strategic projects should act as agents of change to deliver the overall organisational objectives, the research seeks to better understand the meaning of projects in a HEI strategic setting.

1.3 Terminology

Language for special purposes, as applied in this thesis, has to consider its readers, its communicating knowledge and the vocabulary it uses to do so (terms), according to Desmet and Boutayeb (1994). Bowker (2019, p. 579) states that terminology is the study of endeavour concerned with the gathering, characterising, processing and presenting of terms, which are lexical elements relating to a language's specific areas of usage. In order to avoid misinterpretation of the terminology used here, the most relevant terms used for the understanding of this study are described as follows.

Strategic Management: Strategic management comprises of strategic formulation and planning; implementation; and control to ensure an effective performance improvement (Angiola et al., 2019). Making decisions, choosing priorities, creating foci and ensuring that activities are effectively planned, coordinated and structured are all part of strategic management (De Haan, 2014).

Strategising: Strategising is the practice of continuously considering the strategies that an organisation should use to achieve its objectives and implement them by its members (Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023). This activity is closely connected to the decision-making process and is deemed an integral part of the management as it takes into account a whole range of internal and external impediments (Bolland, 2020, p. 2).

Strategic Planning: Clarifying an organisation's mission and vision; outlining key goals and objectives; and creating long-term strategies are all considered parts of the strategic planning process. This premise helps to ensure that an organisation will perform at a high level over the long term (Poister, 2003, in Angiola et., 2019, p.

375). Strategic planning is seen as the process of deciding on initiatives/actions that will help the organisation keep or strengthen its position as rivals make advancements or enter the market (Mathew et al., 2020).

Strategy Implementation: The realisation, execution or putting into practice of an organisation's strategy through tasks, initiatives or programs is known as strategy implementation. It is an endeavour that focuses on the management of strategic change; the organisation of structure and design; resource planning; and the allocation of order to translate strategy into organisational activities (Amoo et al., 2019, p. 448). Strategy implementation provides value and plays a crucial part in the processes of strategic management.

Strategic Project Management: Strategic PM is defined as a series of practices, procedures, processes, tools and behaviours that define how organisations benefit from the interaction between PM and business practices in order to advance organisations' strategic objectives (Heerkens, 2007, cited in Ferrer Romeo, 2018).

Strategic Projects: While a project is seen as non-repeated planned work intended to enhance organisational performance (Zwikael and Smyrk, 2019, p. 3), it is considered strategic if it is related to a company's strategic objectives. It aims to improve performance and is therefore essential for the organisation's survival. SPs are characterised by ten different criteria to differentiate them from other project types and operational activities (author's derivation from Chapter 2).

Project Management: A project is a collection of interconnected acts that are constrained by time and location, placed within; interact with a political, social, and economic context; and directed toward an objective that is continually being redefined due to the dialectic between the idea (the project plan) and the actual situation (DeClerck et al., 1983, cited in Bredillet, 2004, p. 4). In this sense, a PM infrastructure consists mainly of systems of policies, standards, procedures and guidelines that define how PM work is to be performed (Knutson, 2000).

Academic Manager: An academic manager is responsible for the coordination of courses, people management, budgets and income generation (Gleeson and Shain, 1999) in an academic environment.

Competence vs Competency: While competence is outcome-based oriented and refers to function with a focus on job action, performance and assessment (Jamil, 2015), competency is attribute-based with a mandatory set of underlying individuals' behaviours, motivation and personal traits (Hoffmann, 1999).

1.4 Purpose, Research Aim and Objectives

Organisational change and transformation of HEIs requires an understanding of how strategies can be implemented efficiently and effectively to ensure the continued existence of their organisation. Looking at the HEI business management, what kind of opportunity are in place within the strategising space that HEI utilise to exploit outcomes and benefits shall be explained in this study. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to enable changes through strategic projects in HEIs by demystifying strategy implementation in HEIs. Consequently, the research aims to propose a holistic framework of managing strategic projects and to provide the necessary enhancements for the fulfilment of an HEI's strategic objectives. In addition, identifying ways and setting interventions to solve emerging issues shall be reasoned to solve emerging issues.

To what extent can HEIs support strategic initiatives and how can this process be improved inside the organisation shall be covered by the following research objectives:

RO 1: To understand the environmental dimensions, conditions and key factors influencing the implementation of a HEI's strategy.

RO 2: To identify the individual components of a HEI's strategising process.

RO 3: To examine the logic of sequence for executing strategic projects.

RO 4: To comprehend the responsible academic manager in their way to deliver strategic projects.

Based on the rationale above those research objectives are transformed into the following research questions for the specific inquiries of the study.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQ) of the study relate to three thematic fields as listed below.

Strategising Process

RQ1: What are the mechanisms between strategic initiation and its corresponding implementation and how do they work?

This question emerges from RO1 and RO 2 and seeks to comprehend the steps involved in the process from establishing a strategy to implementation handover to the responsible academic manager. It also attempts to understand how strategic planners consider the practical realisation within the organisation and the subsequent fulfilment of the implementing objectives.

Nature of a Strategic Project

RQ2: How significant are SP's strategic project within the strategising process of HEIs?

This question stems from RO3 and aims to identify the significance, types and characteristics of the strategic projects that align with the strategic objectives. Furthermore, how those projects contribute to the overall strategy and the meaning of OPM in facilitating strategic project implementation are addressed.

Academic Manager as Strategic Project Worker

RQ3: What are the challenges faced by academic managers in executing strategic projects and how can they be overcome?

This question, which is based on RO4, attempts to understand the difficulties academic managers face and how to methodically overcome the obstacles that arise. In addition, the key PM competencies that the person in charge believes he or she needs most in the situation of project delivery are examined.

Figure 1 below summarises the linkages between the purpose, research aim, research objectives and research questions.

Purpose	To enable changes through strategic projects in HEIs by demystifying strategy implementation in HEIs.			
Research Aim	To propose a holistic framework of managing strategic projects and to provide the necessary enhancements for the fulfilment of an HEI's strategic objectives?			
Research Objectives	To what extent can HEIs support strategic initiatives and how can this process be improved inside the organisation?		Research Questions	
	RO 1	To understand the environmental dimensions, conditions and key factors influencing the implementation of a HEI's strategy.	Strategising Process	
	RO 2	To identify the individual components of a HEI's strategising process.		
	RO 3	To examine the logic of sequence for executing strategic projects.	Nature of a Strategic Project	
RO 4	To comprehend the responsible academic manager in their way to deliver strategic projects.	Academic Manager as Strategic Project Worker		
			RQ1	What are the mechanisms between strategic initiation and its corresponding implementation and how do they work? -> To comprehend the steps involved in the process from establishing a strategy to implementation handover to the responsible academic manager.
			RQ2	How significant are SP's strategic project within the strategising process of HEIs? ->To identify the significance, types and characteristics of the strategic projects that align with the strategic objectives.
			RQ3	What are the challenges faced by academic managers in executing strategic projects and how can they be overcome? -> to understand the difficulties academic managers face and how to methodically overcome the obstacles that arise.

Table 1: Linkage between ROs and RQs (author's)

The three research questions are intended to answer the above-mentioned research aim: to propose a holistic framework of managing strategic projects and to provide the necessary enhancements for the fulfilment of an HEI's strategic objectives. In addition, identifying ways and setting interventions to solve emerging issues shall be reasoned to solve emerging issues.

1.5 Significance, Contribution and Impact of the Study

In this thesis, an impact case will be used to explore the above-described points in literature. As the case is representative of a growing educational institution, the chosen business school offers a real-world context. Taking into consideration the challenges of business schools that are theorised by scholars (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2015; Kaplan, 2018) and described in trend reports (for example, International Higher Education, 2022), a strong commonality can be observed in the way with which the challenges are dealt. Against this background, the case organisation is currently in an important phase of changing which reinforces the strategy adjustments and development of further sub-strategies. Moreover, it aims to become an internationally leading business school and lays foundation to this study's significance.

The study acknowledges that business schools fulfil an important role in the production and dissemination of knowledge in society as well as their contribution to economic growth (Ojala, 2019). Therefore, they must constantly respond to short-term and long-term challenges such as providing contemporary education for

students, addressing the right research fields and effectively serving their social purpose to maintain their existence and development (Dyllick, 2015). Thus, every improvement in the school's strategic work is ultimately also an added value for society.

Proposed Contribution

The contribution of this work considers the statements of Whetten (1989), Sutton and Staw (1995), and Makadok et al. (2018) and follows a six levers method shown in appendix 1. Following those levers of the theorising process, the contributions listed below serve to enrich theory and practice in the following thematic areas:

Contribution to Project Management Comprehension in HEIs: In recent years, the PM literature has increasingly focused on industries beyond IT and construction and the assessment of organisational PM. But relatively few scholars are exploring PM in HEIs. This thesis seeks to clarify how PM is operationalised in HEIs. The use of empirical data will provide a better understanding of the PM context in that setting.

Contribution to HEIs' Project Strategic Alignment: PM theory examines the importance of projects to successfully implement strategic goals within an organisation. In the case of a business school, however, it is not clear how the link between strategic goals and operational implementation tasks is designed. This thesis will identify the different types of projects and their contribution to the strategic agenda. This is a further step towards developing a suitable strategic alignment framework for business schools.

Contribution to the Academic Manager as a Project Worker: Few scholars take the perspective of non-professional project managers to determine how they deal with the available PM system. Project managers in business schools are not to be considered generically as distinct professional types, but as individuals who, with their different personalities and behavioural patterns, influence the projects and the project landscape. This study attempts to create a new framework of PM working in a changing HEI landscape. The non-professional project worker is at the centre and is positioned as the key decision maker who interacts with organisational HEI systems.

Contribution to Research on PM Competencies in HEIs: PM literature and international PM associations identify a wide range of PM competencies. This thesis

attempts to create an understanding of the elements that make up a competence in the context of non-trained project workers. PM competencies are related to the behaviour of a person and express the transformation of the personal abilities and skills into the success of a project. Furthermore, the literature describes situation-specific competencies only for certain industries. Accordingly, the identification of the necessary key competencies for an academic manager should broaden the discussion in the field of competence research. The thesis contributes additional findings on how systematic PM competence acquisition can be effectively organised in HEIs.

Research Impact to the Practice

According to Greenhalgh et al. (2016), impact occurs when research provides benefits in addition to expanding the body of knowledge in academia. Literature distinguishes between the “academic impact”, which is the intellectual contribution one makes to their field of study within academia, and the “external socio-economic impact”, which is the impact on society outside of academia (Penfield et al., 2014). Research impact has many definitions. For instance, the UK’s system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions, abbreviated as REF, defines impact as “an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia” (REF21, 2023). As several proposals have emerged over the years to measure the research impact at the institutional level (Greenhalgh et al., 2016) such as the REF21-Framework, societal impact assessment (SIAMPI, 2011) or the Payback Framework (Buxton and Hanney, 1996), an impact measurement approach for single-case studies has not yet prevailed. Thus, this study attempts to achieve a more thorough comprehension of the education sector by empowering people in their strategic delivery actions and enabling them to use it. By examining details within the strategising process to better understand the organisational strategy itself, the way of the improvement process for SP will be enhanced.

1.6 Chapter Conclusion

To summarise, the first chapter has reflected the current debate about strategic work in HEIs. To keep up with this constantly shifting terrain of contemporary education delivery, academic institutions must change swiftly and shrewdly. This indicates that the HEIs must define their strategic cutting corners. As a consequence, strategy

adaptions and the review of strategic processes become crucial for the purpose of aligning the organisations with strategic objectives. In order to achieve the strategic agenda, PM as a management tool has proven beneficial in literature and practice, especially in the context of increasing projectification. However, the lack of a systematic PM integration setting prevents the understanding of the strategic project alignment. How project work supports strategy implementation is obviously a blurred element in HEIs, although the literature attests the effectiveness of strategy implementation through projects due to their stringent logic. Assuming that academic managers are seen as high performers in strategy work, project activities take on particular importance in this context. The challenges in balancing the trade-off between academic and managerial responsibilities while overseeing new initiatives with leadership abilities and a suitable PM methodology is an important aspect of this. Simultaneously, numerous organisational and project-like performance targets are established that must be accomplished. In light of project delivery, three major views of how PM is perceived in the literature are categorised by Shenhar and Dvir (2007). First, in the process-centred view, the implementation process of a unique undertaking is in focus (PMBOK); the major challenge is the balancing act of serving the local community as a public institution on the one hand and being part of the international community of high-level management educators on the other. The second view recognises projects as temporary organisations. The third major view is business- and strategic-oriented. It interprets projects as having a strategic role in organisations. The following chapter takes the third view, bringing together the arguments from the fields of strategic PM, academic managers and their competences to derive a new framework as mentioned above. The literature states that the relationship between a company structure and PM is influenced by several factors such as personnel, governance, division of labour or culture values, and this affects the type of project organisational structure (San Cristóbal et al., 2018).

1.7 Structure of the Remainder of the Study

The remainder of this paper is divided into seven chapters. The general introduction is included in Chapter 1 of the study. RQs stated in Chapter 1, the next chapter then covers the literature review of the research disciplines strategic management, PM and competency development of academic managers in the context of HEIs. To answer the three research questions, the literature is used to determine how SPs

are viewed and embedded within the organisation. With the help of a strategising method, selected topics will be identified and linked to each other. This is followed by an explanation of the methodological approach to data collection and the corresponding analysis of the data in Chapter 3. Based on the literary findings and the strategising concept, a case study was chosen to generate in-depth knowledge of the strategic process mechanisms of a representative HEI. The focus was placed on the voices of its academic managers as key actors of delivering SPs. The aim of the interviews was to develop further elements for a practical strategising framework. Results and discussions are provided in Chapter 4, where the significance of these voices will be emphasised. This is intended to give an authentic picture of the organisation without the intention of criticism. In Chapter 5, the findings from the literature and the interviews are presented in a proposed framework for strategising SPs. Suggestions are also made on how to make such a framework work in the field. Following the evaluation of the impact plan in Chapter 6, the final chapter closes with a summary and critical reflections.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Way of Inquiry

One of the main goals of ongoing higher education policy reforms in a number of nations (European Commission, 2023) is considered as the development of HEIs into more strategic players within the global knowledge economy (Deiaco et al. 2012; Stensaker, 2017). Numerous universities worldwide have improved their strategic capacity by modifying governance structures through institutional leadership that is more empowered; the development of institutional strategies; and new methods for allocating and distributing resources within the organisation (Daiaco et al., 2012; Wildavsky, 2010, p. 5). In this view, probably one of the greatest difficulties that organisations are facing is the implementation of their strategies (Srivastava and Sushil, 2017). Simultaneously, successful strategy execution through projects in companies has gained attention from practitioners and researchers (Patanakul and Shenhar, 2012; Sabourin, 2015; Olivier and Schwella, 2018).

Against this background the provided literature review aims to identify areas of prior scholarship on how strategic implementation through projects is organised in HEIs and how academic work in the form of projects aligns with strategic initiatives. The chosen way of inquiry attempts to address the research questions. First, what are the mechanisms between strategic initiation and its corresponding implementation and how do they work? In this regard, a project is considered strategic if it is related to a company's strategic objectives, aims to improve performance and is therefore crucial for the organisation's survival. As SP are considered in the context of business school strategy in this study, the literature on strategic management is also consulted. Second, the nature of a SP shall be considered in the sense of what signification is assigned to a project linked to organisational strategic objectives. Third, the academic manager as a key person in implementing SP shall be illuminated. With these three questions, the close connection between the implementation of the project and the person responsible for doing so comes to light and should be explored accordingly in the literature.

The areas of the required literature for answering the research questions are presented in the following subchapters. Five domains shall consider the two dimensions of "Organisational design" and, choosing in this study the ontological

view of constructionism and interpretivism, the dimension of “Human influence on the shaping of the organisational development”. Chapter 2.8 (Literature Reflection by Mapping) visualises the thematised domains of the HEI sector, strategic management, PM and OPM, academic personal Management and PM competencies.

Strategic Project in the Context of Project Management

Project has established itself as a suitable form of activity in strategy implementation (Fernandes et al., 2015; Anantatmula, 2015). Various surveys and reports such as those from Audoin Consultants and Hays (2015), KPMG (2019) or Chaos Report (2022) analyse the success rate of projects provide little insight into which project types are successful. Scholars point out that the choice of success criteria is dependent on the project type (Albert et al., 2017). Equally unknown is the success rate of the strategic projects. As PM research on HEIs is still nascent, it can be assumed that project execution failure rates in HEIs will be similarly high. The increasing market value of the global higher education allows for the presumption of the development of growth by means of strategic projects. Olivier and Schwella (2018) criticise that while research on strategy execution provides solutions either in the form of certain critical elements or factors that are required, very few models propose how this integration should take place. This is also the case in the field of strategic projects within the HEI where an appropriate framework has not yet become established. It is therefore not obvious for this sector whether an established PM is required for the successful implementation of SP, and if so, what the main determinants are.

PM is on track, however, to establishing itself as a recognised scientific discipline (Clegg et al., 2018), and it entails many parallel streams of enquiry under differing perspectives; nevertheless, there is still a lack of convergent theories (Padalkar and Gopinath, 2016). Geraldi and Söderlund (2018) agree that scholars have to continuously adapt their frames of reference and forms of conceptualising organisations as a “research field” and a “research object”. In their manifesto for PM research, Locatelli et al. (2023, p. 4) observe two overarching and conflicting notions of projects that dominate the literature: “a relatively narrow view where projects are construed as deliberate leaps into a planned future and a broader view where projects are seen as processes of pursuit, experimentation and discovery.” In an

effort to find a suitable HEI SP framework to answer the research questions, the wider view will be beneficial and therefore considered in this thesis. According to Locatelli et al. (2023), the conceptualisation of a project can be described as a “unique constellation of experiences and consequences, of direct and indirect effects,” as a result of the “varied inter-play” between the structural complexity of the job at hand and the socio-political setting. This description reflects the broader view as outlined before. In order to successfully manage a project, a set of managerial actions is required, including an understanding of the context surrounding it and its stakeholders (Locatelli et al., 2023). Following these considerations, a framework was sought in the literature that can reflect the structural complexity of an organisation and the socio-political setting of the implementation of strategies through projects into a logical context. This approach refers to the process of strategising, which “includes all practical actions performed by people to devise long-term goals (mission and vision), plans (strategies) and courses of action (processes and structures). Strategising is closely connected to strategic thinking” (Bolland, 2020, p. 2). Table 3 below attempts to capture the key representation of such complexity in an HEI context but is not sufficiently suitable for mapping the strategising process. In the search for a suitable starting point to answer the three research questions in the context of the strategising process, the PMI concept of portfolio management (PMI, 2013, p. 8) proved to be the most suitable course of action. In the next section, this concept is discussed in more detail and the strategising with several levels is described.

Proposed Way of Strategising by Multi-Levels

As explained above, strategising involves a sequence of individual steps that can be viewed as a top-down process in a rather rigid organisational structure such as an HEI. Starting with statements such as vision and mission, or understanding the HEI's strategic position, continuing with the corresponding choice of strategy, the decision is to be made in the form of implementation to be chosen through projects. These topics mentioned so far should be reflected in a framework that builds on them. With the PMI concept of Portfolio Management (PMI, 2013, p. 8), which is well recognised in the literature (Al-Arabi and Al-Sadeq, 2008; Alves and Gonçalves, 2018), this proposal comprises several levels of strategising projects in an organisational context. Project Portfolio Management (PPM) is seen as a holistic activity. It deals with the coordination and control of multiple projects that pursue the

same strategic goals and compete for the same resources (Vacík et al., 2018). Meanwhile, there has been a significant increase in the number of organisations using PPM worldwide (Orlandi, 2020). Thus, the PMI concept of Portfolio Management is a suitable base in this study for understanding the relationship between the components in executing the activities of accomplishing the organisation's strategic objectives. Locatelli et al.'s (2023) project conceptualisation, which emphasises the "various inter-play" between the structural complexity of the task and the socio-political context, is represented in the PMI's concept. The proposed concept considers the three main elements of strategy, PPM, and organisational process and each element will be outlined in more detail in the following sections. The relationships between those elements are depicted in a triangle format reflected in Figure 1 below and mirror the alignment of the project delivery value with its strategic direction. The enactment of strategy through organisational member practices is regarded as strategising (Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023) which encompass a multi-level process of activity. At the top of the triangle the elements utilised to establish the organisation's performance goals and to construct the strategy are depicted under the headings (i) "Vision", (ii) "Mission" and (iii) "Organisational Strategies and Objectives". The distinct efforts required to meet the organisation's performance goals are established in the triangle's centre, which includes (iv-a) "High-level Operations Planning & Management" and (iv-b) "Project Portfolio Planning & Management". The terms (v-a) "Management of On-Going Operations" and (v-b) "Management of Authorized Programs & Projects" refer to carrying out operational-, programme- and project activities in order to achieve the organisation's performance goals. And lastly (vi) the available "Organizational Resources" impact the different levers. The red arrows reflect the respective direction from one thematic field to the next. The chart indicates the absence of a feedback loop, bottom-up- or dual direction communication to allow vision/mission to remain relevant in the dynamic environment such as HEIs. The omission of an understanding of the interfaces between the individual levels is also to be criticised. Furthermore, the shape of a pyramid does not explain the different lengths of the base and the top, but only suggests the prioritisation of the individual thematic fields. Despite these weaknesses, the top-down way with the main relevant thematic fields of this chart serves as a starting point for further research steps. With the use of its portfolio of programmes and projects for the development and delivery of strategic

business results, the organisational PM (OPM) synchronises the development of strategy with implementation as reflected in the last two levels of the pyramid (Bull et al., 2012).

Based on this structure, the multi-level process is adopted for the HEI context. The individual levels are explained below and are the starting point for the research. The aim of the six proposed themes is to better understand how strategy is executed through projects considering a structural complexity of the HEI organisation:

- (1) Context of HEI Sector: An understanding of the HEI sector shall be given as well as the importance of business schools based on the exemplary case used.
- (2) Level of Strategic Management: The concept of (multi-level) strategies, as well as that of strategic planning and implementation variants is explained.
- (3) Level of Strategic Project Management: The concept of Strategic Project Management (SPM) and a basically understanding of PM is explained. In addition, project types, successes and methods are introduced. Strategy Execution through Projects and the concepts of SP and Strategic Project Alignment are also discussed.
- (4) Level of Organisational Foundation for SPM: The concept of OPM and the path of implementation of OPM is presented as well as a reflection for use in the HEI area.
- (5) Academic Manager as Strategic Project Worker: The perspective of this group of individuals in the academic setting is deliberately adopted, as they are seen as the main actors in the implementation in academic departments and operate in the socio-political environment.
- (6) Competencies in Delivering Strategic Projects: The specific competencies and experiences are evaluated.

Figure 1 below visualises the adaptation of the PMI concept to the level ranges to be examined for the HEI sector.

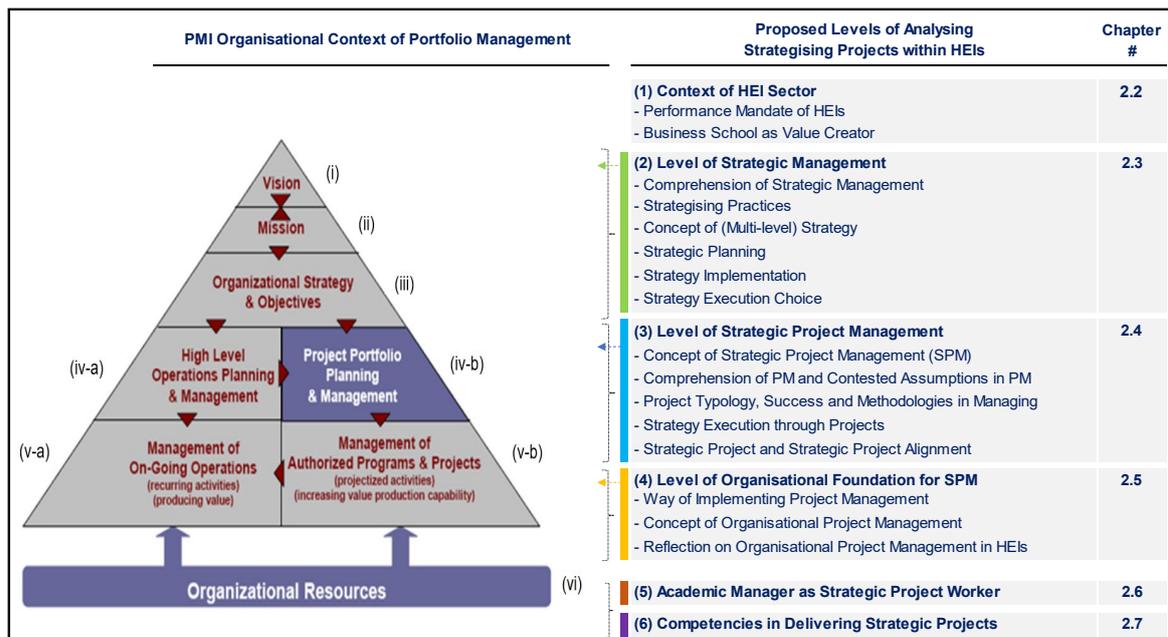


Table 2: Proposed Levels of Analysing Strategising Projects within HEIs (adapted from PMI, 2013, p. 8)

The proposed levels of strategising projects are discussed with a focus on business school in more depth in the next sections following the same level sequence.

2.2 The Context of HEI Sector

Performance Mandates of HEIs

HEIs can be described as a tertiary education formation which includes institutions of higher learning such as universities, colleges or professional-oriented institutions. According to Sunder and Antony (2018), they are characterised as a pure service sector that is intangible, perishable and heterogeneous, offering a wide range of programmes, courses and knowledge (Sunder and Antony, 2018). For supranational organisations such as the European Commission or the World Bank, tertiary education is a basic prerequisite for all countries to generate economic growth, remain competitive with innovations and ultimately reduce poverty (European Commission, 2021; Worldbank, 2021). Such economic prosperity is a result of a sophisticated production of knowledge through human capital within a favourable educational environment (OECD, 2020). Universities play a crucial role in today's global knowledge and information-based society (Snellman, 2015; UNDP, 2020), and they strive to align their activities to help resolve some of the challenges described by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (Bothwell, 2018). Thus, universities are seen as agents through their assimilation and adaptation of global knowledge to national needs (Szyszlo, 2016). As they fulfil a social mission

by contributing through applied research, teaching and providing innovative services and products (Mendes de Oliveira et al., 2017), academic institutions are expected to continuously build strong relationships with all marketplace stakeholders (Camilleri and Camilleri, 2018). This connection is particularly important for local and regional economic development (Cantoni and Yuchtman, 2014; Kantor and Whalley 2014; Toivanen and Väänänen, 2016). As such, the positive effect on a region's income through the increase of universities was analysed by Valero and Van Reenen (2016).

In fulfilling their mission, HEIs are confronted with a variety of technological, (geo)political, social, financial and market-volatile challenges. The consequence leads to the two distinct phenomena of “change” and “transformation” for HEIs. Scholarship (Ashkenas, 2015; Woiwode, 2020; Laulusa, 2024) see the difference of the two terms as followed. "Change" describes a singular, beginning-and-ending movement. Initiatives for change are therefore precise and well-defined. They concentrate on modifying processes, rules, and practices to accomplish certain objectives and cause a particular shift within the company. On the other hand, transformation refers to a process that, once started, never comes to an end. The whole organisation is shifting due to transformation and can lead to rebuild its structure and processes. Thus, the question of whether HEI members are aware of which of the two organisational phenomena they currently find themselves in is raised, an issue that will be taken into consideration in the research setting that follows in Chapter 3.

Business Schools as Value Creator

One of the greatest examples of educational success from the 20th century is business schools (Hay, 2008). The purpose of business schools is to create value resembling academic; personal and public; or social value (Hay, 2008; Amara et al., 2016). The schools are university-level institutions or independent organisations which confer degrees in business administration or management (Kaplan, 2018). Typically, a wide range of business-related topics are taught, including strategy, leadership, finance, marketing and information systems. But in doing so, the business schools face a wide range of challenges in the course of constant economic, social, environmental and technological changes. Simultaneously, business educators are subject to manifold criticism, such as having a vague role in

contemporary society (Schlegelmilch and Thomas, 2011); lacking more forward and creative thinking (Starkey, 2015); not displaying better collaborative behaviours (Currie et al., 2016); having weak social embedment (Murillo and Vallentin, 2014); and needing improvement in responsible management (Dyllick, 2015). Additionally, with the pressure to participate in the international ranking system (Borden et al., 2019, p. 89), they must offer up-to-date and cost-covering courses and programmes; provide consulting services for companies; and conduct research in compliance with accreditation regulations (such as the AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS), socio-political frameworks and technological developments (Teixeira and Maccari, 2018; Casell, 2019). In these circumstances, business schools attempt to find new and sustainable strategies for their future (Ojala, 2016; Kaplan, 2018) which can be illustrated with the example of the impact case. The case organisation has set out to enter the Financial Times ranking system and to become internationally accredited. These accreditation processes are considered a seal of approval as those associations verify the business school's internal quality assurance system. Since only 1% of all business schools worldwide have triple recognition (MBAToday, 2022), those that do are considered among the best. This increases recognition, enables new partnerships with other top universities and companies, and ultimately enhances economic benefits (Zhao and Ferran, 2016; Teixeira and Maccari, 2018). The pressure to meet the diverse requirements of these accreditation authorities is correspondingly high. This is evident with the accreditation body of EQUIS. Its focus of assessment is mainly on the business school's strategic agenda and its position in the regulatory and competitive environment in which the organisation operates. Therefore, business school benchmarks its educational organisational performance against international standards (EFMD Global, 2022), which means that a whole series of organisational thematic blocks must be aligned with the overarching strategy.

2.3 Strategising Level of Strategic Management

Comprehension of Strategic Management

Strategic management comprises the formulation and implementation of key objectives and initiatives. Those are adopted by a company's executives on behalf of the shareholders, based on the consideration of resources and an evaluation of the internal and external environments in which the organisation operates (Hyv ari, 2016). Thus, the following key elements should be considered for a strategy:

mission, vision and values; organisational goals; strategic analysis; strategy formulation; strategy implementation; and controlling and monitoring (Mišanková and Kočišová, 2014). Understanding how business should be conducted by enhancing organisational structure, establishing policies and plans, taking initiative, accomplishing long-term objectives, and increasing environmental awareness is the significance of strategic management in organisations (Tapera, 2014; Fuertes et al., 2020).

Strategy itself is a widely described discipline in the management literature, but there is still no universal definition (Mishra and Mohanty, 2020; Tawse and Tabesh, 2021). The aim of competitive strategies is to enhance organisation-level performance (Oyewobi et al., 2015) which requires change within the organisation, often amounting to innovation (Bjorvatn, 2022). Accordingly, there is a broad range of theories and concepts, such as the ten schools of strategy proposed by Mintzberg et al. (2020) or the Strategy Diamond developed by Hambrick and Fredrickson (2005). Furthermore, Johnson and Scholes (2009) distinguish three strategy perspectives summarised by Lundin and Hällgren (2014). First, “Strategy as design” (a top-down approach) is defined at the executive level and then followed by the realisation of subordinated levels. Second, “Strategy as experience” focuses on decision-making where the strategy design considers social aspects and collective experiences. Third, “Strategy as ideas” reflects successful strategies from the point of innovation and swift reaction to the environment. In addition, Whittington et al. (2020, p.12) describe three main levels within an organisation: First, the corporate-level strategy comprises both the entire scope of an organisation and the manner in which value is added to the constituent business of the entire company. Second, the business-level strategy deals with the individual businesses competing in the particular markets. Third, the functional strategies deal with the components of an organisation that effectively provide resources to the corporate- and business-level strategies. These three perspectives shall help to clarify the relationship between the impact case strategy setting and its SP’s which will be discussed further in Chapter 4 (Findings).

Current Strand of Strategy Research in HEI

In the field of strategy related to HE management a wide body of contribution has emerged in recent years. Analysis has been done on national level (Gazizova, 2012;

Barbato et al., 2021) and in different countries such as Australia (Shah and Nair, 2011), Canada (Milian, 2016), Finland (Vuori, 2016), Portugal (Mourato et al., 2019), South Africa (Davis et al., 2016) and Ukraine (Hladchenko and Benninghoff, 2020). Furthermore, the type of higher education establishments were looked at for strategy such as for teaching in research-intensive universities (Milian, 2016), colleges (Couper and Stoaker, 2010) or universities of applied sciences (Vuori, 2016). Various aspects of strategic management have been examined like strategic management issues (Ahmed et al., 2015), mission statements (Hladchenko, 2016; Seeber et al., 2019; Arias-Coello et al., 2020), organisational strategising (Guillotin and Mangematin, 2016; Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023), as well as institutional legitimacy through strategic planning (Morphew et al., 2018, Stensaker et al., 2019; James and Derrick, 2020). Research has been also conducted regarding university strategy in relation to an assortment of activities, like competition for research funding (Talib and Steele, 2000; Litwin, 2009; Boezerooij et al., 2007), internationalisation (Kristensen and Karlsen, 2018; Soliman et al., 2019; James and Derrick, 2020; Bulut-Sahin et al., 2023), the marketing promotion of higher education institutions (Milian, 2016) or teaching (Newton, 2010). In reaction to shifting environmental conditions strategy has also been investigated such as emergent (Hashim et al., 2022) and response strategy (Miller, 2021), e.g., the Covid-19 pandemic (Bebbington, 2021).

Strategising Practices

Having emerged in the field of strategic management in recent years, the definition of strategising has become manifold as it is neither a precisely described activity nor a set of rules for business practice. Thus, strategising appears to be an elusive term. Bolland (2020) attempts to grasp the diversity of the definitions as follows: Strategising is continuous thinking and acting based on the past, present, and future of the organisation and its environment resulting in a clearly defined path toward a desired organisational state involving analysis of internal and external factors with opportunity for participation by all members of the organisation (p. 3). In this regard, Hasanefendic and Donina (2023) conclude that strategising practices for HEIs must consider the internal dynamics of a complete or fragmented organisation by simultaneously adapting to the external field conditions of coherency or complexity. A fourfold matrix which combines these analytical dimensions of complex/coherent

fields and complete/fragmented organisation (Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023, p. 394) is depicted in Table 1 below.

	Complete Organisation	Fragmented Organisation
Complex Field	Field 1 - Strategic selectivity - Participative strategising	Field 3 - Strategic arena - Strategic specialisation of subunits
Coherent Field	Field 2 - Strategic consistency with field demands	Field 4 - Strategic compliance under pretext - Strategic coherence without centralised intention

Table 3: Generic strategising alternatives (Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023)

In terms of fields, HEIs work in highly institutionalised areas where field actors such as regulatory groups, general public or funding agencies set rules, norms, conventions and behavioural standards which generate contradictory and sometimes incompatible demands (Ocasio and Radoynovska, 2016). Such fields are described as complex and pluralistic, and they have the potential to develop into arenas of contention (Zietsma et al., 2017). In contrast, field coherence is characterised by congruency, alignment and the compatibility of institutional field actors' needs and pressures (Greenwood et al., 2011). Here, field actors reach a consensus regarding acceptable and desirable organisational behaviour, which restricts the strategic options available to the company (Fumasoli and Lepori, 2011).

In terms of internal organisational dynamics, a complete organisation is expected to consider its uniqueness; mission and methods; and what sets it apart from other competitors in the field. According to Seeber et al. (2015), it can be characterised by the three dimensions of identity, hierarchy and structure. First, identity highlights the mental and symbolic aspects of organisations. Establishing autonomy, managing group resources and creating boundaries that shield the organisation from outside influence on important choices are more ways that identity is imposed (p. 1451). Second and accordingly, the establishment of a hierarchy is considered essential for organising efforts and coordinating action. The centralisation of tasks and responsibilities and the bolstering of managerial positions, which provide direction and create an organisational strategy and profile, are the two main ways that hierarchy is constructed. Third, organisations that are rationalised are

"intentional". They monitor outcomes, performances, project goals, objectives and preferences, and they assess the pros and cons of various courses of action. A process of rationalisation involves implementing accountability measures, incentive programs, quality assurance and evaluation in order to create impersonal regulations that permit upper management to monitor employee behaviour and evaluate performance without resorting to overt force (Whitley and Gläser, 2007; Frolich, 2011). In contrast, a fragmented academic institution is characterised by internal plurivocality where internal sub-groups disagree about organisational goals due to the disjointed internal structure of higher education organisations (Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023). Such fragmented organisations are referred to by Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2000) as arenas and are generally managed by coalitions using mechanisms for reaching consensus.

With these considerations in mind, fields 1-4 are to be understood as follows:

Field 1 (complex field/complete organisation) reflects a situation of pluralistic, incompatible and conflicting demands which stem from the field where leadership is the dominant actor within the organisation and controls the strategising conformity to its vision, agenda and priorities (strategic selectivity). But for organisations under situations of diffused powers such as business schools, multiple internal (and external) stakeholders attempt to influence the strategic direction. Thus, leadership teams choose to use collective and participative strategising practices to ensure that all internal actors are involved and committed to the emergent strategy.

Field 2 (coherent field/complete organisation) mirrors coherent fields which demonstrate harmony between national field actors in terms of pertinent normative, cognitive and regulatory institutional frameworks as well as institutional demands. Thus, there are fewer opportunities for pluralistic norms and values to form in the area, and leadership must comply with what the field imposes ("strategic consistency with field demands"). This type of HEI can occur in smaller and specialised institutions, such as private business schools without an international focus.

Field 3 (complex field/fragmented organisation) addresses an organisation that is typically split in disciplinary communities, each with its own professional norms and values, and loosely coupled to each other such as public universities. This frequently results in disconnected strategies (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) that

are centered around influential chairholders and/or individual academics who manage crucial internal resources (Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023). Consequently, as field pluralism becomes more ingrained in the organisation, collective and shared strategising methods become more challenging to attain. The process of strategising is a bottom-up way in which sub-organisational units and chair-holders run the risk of political battles (“strategic arena”) and influence negatively the strategic direction (Denis et al., 2007).

Field 4 (coherent field/fragmented organisation) shows consistent field demands but with powerful chair-holders or faculties/departments with an isolated identity, loosely connected to each other similarly to the case of “strategic arena”. As a result, organisational sub-units interpret the same field demands differently depending on their own internal norms and values. Thus, merging, weighing and filling in the internal value frames that already exist within the constraints of the outside world constitutes the process of strategising. Subject-specific HEIs, namely technical universities, are an example of this.

Albeit simplified and ideal-typical, the four fields are useful for this study in understanding the process of strategising as a response from organisations with their own internal dynamics to condition and will be discussed with the findings in Chapter 4 (Results and Discussion) as well.

In the context of strategising practices, strategic thinking is an important determinant for the design of strategising processes in HEIs and will be addressed in Chapters 4 (Results and Discussion) and 5 (Proposed Framework and Recommendations) as well. Strategic thinking is intent-focused by concentrating employees’ energy on achieving strategic goals and both creative and critical rather than being the dichotomy of analytic-intuitive (Liedtka, 1998). Because strategic thinking is the result of a development process, a strategic thinker is a learner rather than a knower. In their surveys with 220 professionals from various industries in India (Dixit et al., 2021) and 270 individuals from various ICT companies across Jordan (Al-Abbadi et al., 2024), the significant relationship between strategic thinking and competitive advantage is proven.

Concept of (Multi-level) Strategy

HEIs not only pursue an overarching organisational strategy, but also extend their strategic capacities to subordinate levels which are referred to as multi-level strategies (Stensaker and Fumasoli, 2017). Deiacco et al. (2012) point out that multi-level strategies take into account the specific characteristics, assets and goals of the sub-units and serve as more thorough and operational outlines of the institutional strategy. Thus, multi-level strategies aim to improve organisational coordination of initiatives and actions, and they are viewed as a tool for the university's organisational integration. In this view, such concentrated strategic capability across the entire university as a result of such coordinated strategising would improve the central level's influence over strategic matters according to Fumasoli et al. (2015). Furthermore, it would stimulate greater flexibility within the organisation and increase their organisations' legitimacy towards internal and external stakeholders.

However, Stensaker and Fumasoli (2017) also draw attention to the fact that much of the important work in research and education is carried out at the lower levels of the university, which is a hampering element of such coordination (contestation). There, the academic staff continues to have a considerable amount of influence and control and has the potential to further increase the significant autonomy of these units by securing outside funding. Falqueto et al. (2020) identify academic managers as "dependent stakeholder[s]" within strategic planning. They may claim urgency and legitimacy, but they depend on another stakeholder's power for their claims to be considered. Furthermore, Mintzberg (1983, in Angiola et al., 2019) sees a bureaucratic- and a professional soul especially in public universities.

The bureaucratic soul is related to administrative employees characterised by hierarchy and the standardisation of processes and results. The creation of strategic plans could be viewed by technical and administrative staff with bureaucratic eyes as a compulsory process. The professional soul, on the other hand, refers to academics that have greater autonomy in the management of their work. Angiola et al. (2019) express here their concern that academics might view the drawing of strategic plans as a procedure that only involves administrative staff and is therefore a waste of their time. As a consequence, strategic plans may not be effective and may not actually be relevant to the administration's goals. In this view and in the sense of a creolisation process, local strategy plans need to be linked to overarching

strategies in order to transform ideas and innovations through all organisational levels; however, this is difficult to undertake in practice according to Stensaker and Fumasoli (2017). Also shared by other scholars is the view that strategic planning and implementation decisions in academia must be made in a collective and cooperative manner through all management levers with a practical approach (Sternberg, 2015, p. 39; Thompson, 2017; Angiola et al., 2019; Kabui, 2020). The discovery of a practical mindset can be summarised through Sanaghan's (2021, p. 117) experiences as a consultant for strategic planning in HEIs: "When people know what level of decision-making they are dealing with, they understand their authority boundaries and can move effectively within them. Implementation is vastly improved because clarity allows people to move forward with actions".

Strategic Planning

In addition to the understanding of strategising practices and multi-level strategy, strategic planning is added, which is described in the literature as complex and therefore a difficult process (Williams, 2021). Mintzberg and Waters (1985) address the discrepancy between strategic plans and intentions on the one hand (strategy formulation) and what organisations actually do on the other hand (strategy implementation). Strategic planning is a fundamental component of strategic management. Furthermore, it plays an important process of governance by formulating and implementing decisions about the future destination of an organisation (Ferrer Romeo, 2018). According to Bryson (2018), it is defined as a deliberate and disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation (or other entity) is, what it does and why. As stated by Mathies and Ferland (2023, p. 92), strategic planning explains how an organisation will carry out a determined strategy to position itself in the future and how it will achieve this. It has been demonstrated to be an effective tool for providing institutions with the framework they need to create and implement their strategy. Thus, strategic planning follows two principles according to Mathew et al. (2020). First, it is initiative-based: A strategy describes a set of initiatives which, when combined, ensure that an institution's results are superior to those of its rivals. Second, it is a discernment process to identify initiatives that are proven to generate strategic value. Initiatives with scalability and a focus on comparative advantages are referred to as having strategic value. In this regard, the importance of strategic planning for HEIs has been widely discussed by scholars (Mathew, 2020; Williams,

2021; Mathies and Ferland, 2023). Akyel and Arslankay (2012) emphasise the significance of regular revisions of strategic planning due to the many pressing factors on HEIs. Establishing flexible strategic planning in order to cope with external forces and challenges is also confirmed by Chen et al. (2017). Likewise, Leal Filho et al. (2018) state that HEIs need to use sustainable development and effective planning to remain both economically and institutionally viable in a competitive marketplace. Therefore, strategic planning is an important instrument for HEI's management but differs in the configuration of the implementing process (Immordino et al., 2016).

Strategy Implementation

Without successful implementation, a strategy (plan) is merely a fantasy, according to Hambrick and Cannella Jr. (1989, p. 278). Strategy implementation research is still fragmented, and has been applied differently in various management disciplines such as marketing literature (Sashittal and Jassawalla, 2001) or organisation behaviour (Kohtamäki et al., 2012). In their most notable book Bossidy and Charan (2002) see strategy implementation as a (leadership) discipline. According to the authors, execution is in its most fundamental sense a “systematic way of exposing reality and acting on it” (p. 22) and therefore views people, strategy and operations as the main stages. But they are brief regarding how an organisation might use those three stages to put strategies into practice. Mintzberg and Waters (1985) propose two characteristics of implemented strategy: deliberate strategy (executed as intended) and emergent strategy (realised despite preparation or even in the absence of plans). Unrealised strategy is the term applied when some aspects/elements/features of the desired strategy are not implemented. However, neither of those two strategy types actually happens; instead, they combine. In order to achieve a competitive advantage and increased performance, strategy implementation envisions how businesses might create and integrate their organisational cultures, day-to-day processes, control systems, and organisational structures in a way that leads them towards a predetermined strategy (Kabui, 2020). Therefore, an organisation's ability to operationalise and institutionalise its plan into executable actions is a prerequisite for accurate implementation. Some scholars argue that implementation and performance are inseparable with strategic formulation and planning (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Kabui, 2020). In this context, Hill and Jones (2014, p. 9) point out that a person's behaviour is influenced by their

organisation's structure, strategic control and culture, as well as their own views and values. This subsequently affects how the strategies of the company are put into action. Consequently, the successful integration, updating and operationalisation (application) of these subactivities are considered part of strategy implementation.

Amoo et al. (2019) analysed different dimensions or subactivities of strategy implementation while trying to consider human (manager) behaviour and organisational conditions. The authors determine in their research study with executives that "Feedback and Control" ranks the highest, and they emphasise the importance of vital senior management involvement for successful strategy implementation. Furthermore, leaders believe that in order to implement the strategy they have created, it is crucial to listen to the middle managers and lower hierarchical members of the business (Amoo et al., 2019). It can be inferred that the dimension with "human/soft aspects" such as "Feedback", "Perception" or "Personal involvement" is viewed by the executives as more crucial than the dimension with "conceptual/technical aspects" such as "Project and Programme" or "Resource Allocation", which is ranked last.

The literature has examined the idea of fit between various implementation components. Most proposals available contain a variety of themes, including firm strategy, people, values and culture; organisational procedures; and other aspects, but essentially overlap (Boyd, 2015). These components are frequently referred to as "levers" (Crittenden and Crittenden, 2008), reinforcing the idea that implementing a strategy involves a collection of switches, each with a variety of settings (Boyd, 2015). Such well-known examples in the literature are for instance the strategy implementation framework from Okumus (2003), the McKinsey 7-S model (Waterman et al., 1980), the Galbraith Star model (Galbraith, 2011) or Balanced Scorecard (Tawse and Tabesh, 2023). However, it is evident that no model can be described as consistently successful in practice to date. Scholars are still attempting to find the right method of strategy execution by considering the key factors and components of the implementation activities (Srivastava and Sushil, 2017; Olivier and Schwella, 2018; Tawse and Tabesh, 2021). It is therefore not surprising that most organisations do not choose a uniform procedure for their strategy implementation. It can be assumed that Mintzberg (1983) stated that a bureaucratic- and a professional soul within an HEI could lead to the mixture of different methods.

Consequently, the decision that organisations must make regarding the execution form of their strategy is covered in the next section.

Strategic Implementation Choice

By converting the selected strategy into organisational activities, strategy implementation answers the questions of who, where, when, and how to achieve the desired goals and objectives (Brenes et al., 2008). This means in practical terms that strategic planning revolves around “doing the right things” (McClellan, 2015, p. 93 in Powers and Schloss, 2023), while “doing things right” occurs at the operational and tactical planning level. Here, various scholars naturally assume that strategies in organisations are implemented by means of projects (Holzmann et al., 2017, p. 33; Kopmann et al., 2017, p. 94; Clegg et al., 2018), typically using a portfolio mechanism such as PPM. But this is not obvious because the perceptions about the existence and application of in-house PM vary, especially among HEIs. De Haan (2014) emphasises that much less attention has been paid to looking into the black box of the “implementation gap” that exists in the hierarchical levels such as public universities. As organisations typically pursue a best way to fulfil strategic goals, the choice of the execution strategy for educational institutions still remains unclear in literature and practice. To date, no research needs have resulted from converting strategic activities into either operational modus like a standardised process with repetitive character or a kind of project with finite lifespan to address the novelty character with risk and uncertainty. But this is important to understand because accurate knowledge of the implementation concept for strategic activities can reveal inefficiency and ineffectiveness, both of which impact organisational performance. Therefore, as shown in Figure 2 below, the decision-making mechanism for the type of implementation as well as the interface between the areas of operation and PM within the organisational context needs more exploration.

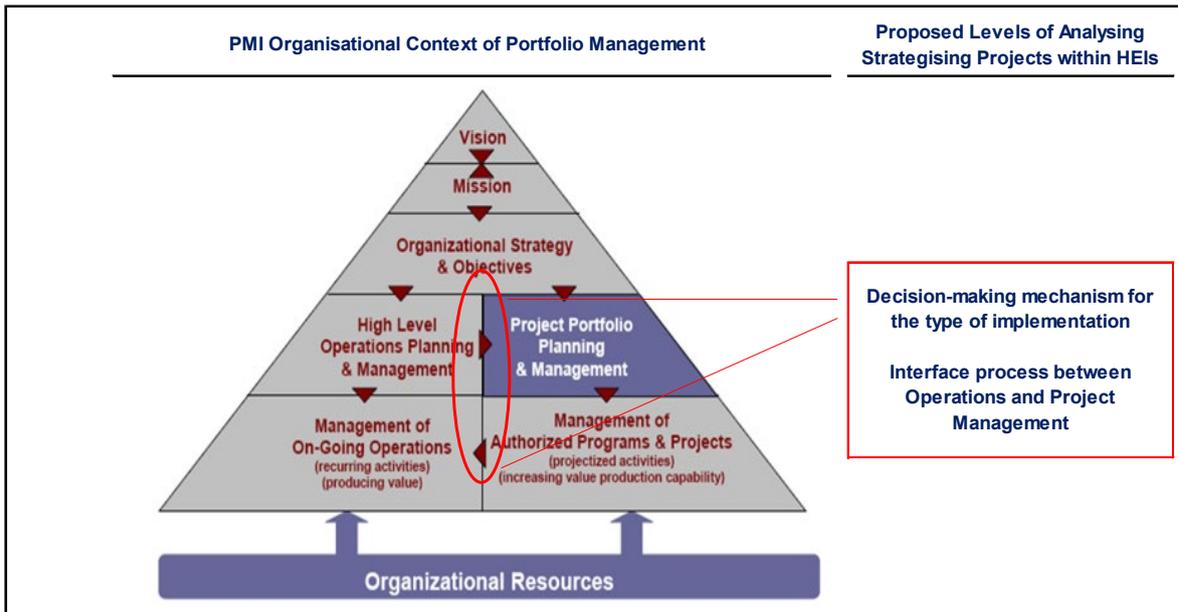


Table 4: Decision-making Mechanism for the Implementation Type (adapted from PMI, 2013, p. 8)

Implementation choice therefore refers to the clear understanding of which type of strategic activity should be carried out with which implementation procedure in order to achieve the goals and objectives. The deliberate choice must consider a system that addresses the issues of uncertainty, risk and measurability of progress in order to fulfil the expected performance.

2.4 Strategising Level of Strategic Project Management

Concept of Strategic Project Management

Strategic project management (SPM) is defined as a series of practices, procedures, processes, tools and behaviours that define how organisations benefit from the interaction between PM and business practices (Heerkens, 2007), cited in Ferrer Romeo, 2018). Patanakul and Shenhar (2012) assert that a strategic PM approach is mostly based on the realisation that projects are initiated to achieve business results, and that PM should be aligned with the higher-level enterprise strategy. Less than 42% of the organisations surveyed declare a high alignment of projects to the organisational parent strategy (PMI, 2014) and therefore high costs in terms of non-conformity (Ferrer Romeo, 2018). In this context, according to Holzmann et al. (2017, p. 36), organisations are capable of recognising projects with operational goals from those with strategic goals. But it is far less certain if this realisation is reflected in the actual usage of their PM practice. The authors conclude that most of the analysed case studies did not document any strategic elements in their project management styles (p. 38). While SPM considers the situation as a whole since the

project's contribution to the organisation's effectiveness and competitiveness is linked, PM focuses on completing a project fully. PM is deemed as a vibrant, dynamic and evolving field that engages with other management fields such as strategy, innovation or entrepreneurship, as well as with technical disciplines such as engineering (Huemann, 2022).

Nature of a Strategic Project

While the term "project" is explained extensively in the literature, the character and criteria for a strategic project are described rather reluctantly. A project is considered strategic if it is related to a company's strategic objectives, aims to improve performance and is therefore crucial for the organisation's survival. Strategic objectives are purpose statements defined by the business vision, and they set high-level goals as support for an organisation achieving the desired outcome (Bora et al., 2017; Fuertes et al., 2020). They can be categorised into the financial-, customer-, internal processes- and people (learning and growth) types; these are often referred to as the Balanced Scorecard Concept (Fuertes et al., 2020). Patanakul and Shenhar (2012, p. 7) define a project strategy as "the project perspective, position, and guidelines for what to do and how to do it, to achieve the highest competitive advantage and the best value from the project". According to Martinsuo et al. (2020), strategic projects refer to single goal-oriented endeavours while strategic programmes are complex multi-project entities with several parallel or sequential efforts. The authors propose the following classification for strategic projects and programmes: (1) large-scale organisational change and transformation; (2) inter-organisational strategic projects and programmes, such as those that deal with mergers and acquisitions or other forms of inter-organisational relations; (3) new business ventures and radical innovations either within the organisation or through inter-organisational collaboration; and (4) major- and megaprojects and alliances for creating new institutional or business infrastructures.

Based on the project typologies and their characteristics described in literature, the following criteria for a strategic project in HEIs are proposed as followed:

- (1) *Fulfilment*: SP is related to the company's strategic objective(s) and must fulfil it/them;
- (2) *Benefits*: SP generates clear and visible benefits;
- (3) *Performance*: SP aims to improve organisational performance;

- (4) *Criticalness*: SP is seen as crucial for the organisation's survival;
- (5) *Impact*: SP creates an impact on the organisation and/or triggers change(s);
- (6) *Novelty*: SP has a novelty level or factor (unique and not repetitive);
- (7) *Resources*: SP uses intensive resources;
- (8) *Opportunity costs*: SP incurs internal opportunity costs (no external mandate);
- (9) *Time / Pace*: SP is time critical / has time constraints;
- (10) *Complexity*: SP contains elements of structural, social and emergent complexity.

Not all criteria must be fulfilled in each case. Depending on the type of project, these can be divided into mandatory, important and negligible criteria considering the strategy execution.

Strategy Execution through Projects

PM has continuously advanced in the last several decades and has been accepted as a strategic competency over time (Cooke-Davies, 2009) as well as a process for developing new products (Pajares et al, 2017, p. 122). Therefore, it has been recognised as a strategic role (Kolltveit et al., 2007; Artto et al., 2008), and projects are a structured way to execute business strategies and to implement business changes in organisations (Anantatmula, 2015). In view of this, strategic PM is defined as a series of practices, procedures, processes, tools and behaviours that define how organisations benefit from the interaction between PM and business practices in order to advance organisations' strategic objectives (Heerkens, 2007, cited in Ferrer Romeo, 2018). Bjorvatn (2022) highlights the importance of strategy implementation through internal projects by aligning them with organisation-level strategy objectives. But he still notes a "white spot" on the map of PM theory. It has already been observed by Naaranoja et al. (2007) that many managers give insufficient acknowledgement to the context that projects have within organisational strategy. This supports the critique presented by Kerzner and Saladis (2011, ix) that executives and strategic thinkers struggle to learn the language of PM. In this context, Kerzner (2014) emphasises that executives must take responsibility when implementing projects. There is an apparent hesitation among executives to combine organisation-level strategy with PM to implement disruptive organisational change with internal projects (Accenture, 2018). The implementation of a strategy is seen by top and middle managers as the most challenging and intensive part of

the strategy process; therefore, it can often cause performance gaps (Van der Merwe and Nienaber, 2015). In this sense, the project portfolio, which is a set of projects and the relationship among them, and which an organisation carries out during a given period (Saiz et al., 2022), has become an important concept for strategic transformation (Hyväri, 2014), and Tabrizi et al. (2015) argue that strategic project portfolio selection is a significant problem that can undermine efficient and effective PM. The portfolio strategy, derived from the corporate strategy, defines what the portfolio is expected to achieve, directs the ongoing portfolio management (Voss, 2012) and links project selection with the strategic objectives of the organisation (Kaiser et al., 2015). As project success is considered a strategic management element, the setting up of a portfolio strategy takes on special importance (Al-Tmeemy et al., 2011). The portfolio strategy drives the project portfolio management by evaluating, prioritising and selecting projects in line with the business strategy (Meskendahl, 2010). Organisations must manage a wide range of projects simultaneously in a structured way; consequently, project portfolio management is deemed a key competence to implement strategies and to remain competitive (Beringer et al., 2013). Martinsuo (2013) mentions two methods that can be distinguished and pursued in the process, considering the context and situation of the organisation: either a more rational and process-related approach, or a more subjective and outcome/political approach to project portfolio management. Optimisation must be considered as well. The literature provides numerous proposals in this regard such as mathematical concepts using financial perspectives (Sharifi and Safari, 2016) or qualitative and subjective approaches (Müller and Stawicki, 2006). These different perspectives are summarised in three frequent patterns by Cooper et al. (2004) and are applied singly or in combination: First, value maximisation is related to the optimisation of the portfolio in terms of achieving a certain threshold (the greatest financial value) for all projects such as return on investment. Second, balancing is the mutual cancellation of risks in heterogeneous groups of projects, whereby the selection of projects is based on a balanced weighting of parameters such as the level and type of risk, duration and technological novelty. Third, with strategic alignment, each strategic objective takes into account an allocated budget value that adds up to the portfolio budget. Projects must clearly fall within the scope of one of these objectives to be funded through the strategic finance vehicle.

Strategic Project Alignment

While the importance of strategic PM is emphasised by scholars (Patanakul and Shenhar, 2012), the absent link between business strategy and PM strategy with its execution is noted (Aronson et al., 2013; Steinþórsson, 2014, p. 53). Van Der Walldt (2016) argues that project failure often occurs when organisations do not ensure that specific projects are aligned with their core strategies. He applies in his study the principles of interdisciplinarity, systems thinking and organisational integration. Scholars agree that in order to increase capabilities and success as well as minimising risk, the alignment of projects to strategy is favourable to organisations (Boston Consulting Group, 2016; Baptestone and Rabechini, 2018). In particular, risks such as unclear accountability, poor decision-making, slow response times, control issues and staff stress occur when working on unorganised bundles of projects (Steyn and Schnetler, 2015). The pursuit of the alignment is the process of reaching an agreement on strategic objectives, and during the pursuit, the procedure should be followed to complete the activities needed to meet those objectives (Van der Hoorn and Whitty, 2017). Consequently, several aspects must be considered.

Scholars agree that the span from the strategic to operational level can be complex; this span also requires a level of communication-, interpersonal- and negotiation skills (Baptestone and Rabechini, 2018). Marnewick (2018, p. 27) contributes to the discussion that any kind of framework used to link strategy with projects is purposeless if a change in strategy is not communicated to those who are tasked with implementing the strategy through project activities. Furthermore, the author points out the issues many organisations have in deriving projects from business objectives due to an unstructured process. Mullaly (2014) notes that researchers share the view that the only way to improve alignment between strategy and projects is to understand how decisions are made about and within project implementation. In doing so, using best practices can provide help for the implementation and controlling of projects (Kerzner, 2014, p. 23). Arguably, there are difficulties in integrating projects throughout the organisation when linked with weak governance for strategy implementation and poor communication. Some scholars therefore assert that careful pre-project planning can improve project strategic alignment and facilitate successful projects (Hoeger, 2013). However, governance, which includes monitoring and controlling projects within the alignment process, simultaneously has

a meaningful impact on organisational performance (Bekker, 2014; Montes-Guerra et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that restraints occur in all phases of project execution and are related to time, cost, scope, quality, risks and resource availability (Parker et al., 2017). Lastly, Martinsuo (2013) emphasises that the behavioural and organisational viewpoints have received too little attention and should be considered for PPM success. Yet a universal framework for how projects are aligned to strategy (Young et al., 2012) and how a systematic approach should be developed is still absent (Srivannaboon, 2006; Atkins, 2019).

As the polysemic concept of “project” means different things (such as a product, an initiative or a process) to different people in different contexts at different times (Locatelli et al., 2023), the following aspects are considered briefly to provide an understanding of PM in the context of this thesis: the aspects of history; the contested assumptions in PM research; project typology and success; and the methodologies and methods in managing projects.

Comprehension of Project Management

To understand today’s variety of research methods for PM, the application of PM in practice and the identification of new areas to explore, Young (2015, p. 19) recommends enhancing awareness of PM history first. The development of PM was based on scientific theories during the 1950s and 1960s (Kabeyi, 2019); therefore, project studies have a short history as a scientific field compared to others such as organisational theory (Booth and Rowlinson, 2013; Huemann and Martinsuo, 2021). PM in a contemporary management context first appeared in 1953 during the rise of the US defense and aerospace sector, when in the 1950s and 1960s systems development was in focus (Garel, 2013). With the birth of the professional PM associations of PMI in 1969 and IPMA in 1972, PM took on greater importance. This can also be seen as the transition from “managerial practices” to “management models” with the beginning of the institutionalisation and formalisation of PM (Garel, 2013). Industries such as the gas, oil or nuclear power sectors were facing major, expensive technological challenges at the time; consequently, between the 1970s and 1990s, PM gained wider application, new strands and ontological divergence (Morris, 2012). It was further developed in connection with new product development, supply chains and quality management, as well as with health, safety and environment issues. In particular, a more detailed analysis of project success,

project failure, efficiency and effectiveness in different industries became important (Alzahrani, 2013). In the 1990s and early 21st century, enterprise-wide PM became increasingly popular; this highlighted the importance of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), which was becoming for many enterprises a core competence (Morris, 2012). Around the turn of the millennium, agile PM, as a new procedure, was established to address the distinctive challenges of software development (Fernandez and Fernandez, 2008).

For the context of this thesis, which is to understand the current PM situation in an organisation, three conclusions are proposed from the historical evolution of PM. Firstly, PM is accepted as important with regard to consciously shaping change in a solution- and value-oriented manner (Martinsuo and Hoverält, 2018). Yet the importance of top management support still remains critical for the success of project execution (Young and Jordan, 2008). Although HEIs, in particular business schools, are becoming more commercialised alongside increasing pressure toward a return on investment, PM continues to be regarded only as a part of operations and expects their teams to simply execute a business strategy. With reference to the executives of HEIs, there is still the need for PM to be accepted as an application for providing values to stakeholders (Fernandes et al., 2020). Secondly, originating from operations management (Packendorff, 1995, p. 252), PM has transitioned into a social (Sergi, 2012) and behavioural research field (Turner, 2022) which has in turn also gained a foothold in the more recent controversial discussion in project complexity research (San Cristóbal, 2017). As successful change is managed in the form of a project, PM still needs to cope with the systematic complexity of the reality in business, especially with social complexity (Klein, 2016). Regarding this thesis, the perspective on the practice of strategic project work in HEIs derives from the academic managers which are constantly integrated in a social complexity which is driven by various political interests and cultural forces (Klein, 2016). Thirdly, PM as a research field is considered important for business and management, and it should therefore influence the practice (Pettigrew, 2011).

Scholars confirm that the theoretical pluralism (Brunet, 2022) and the different research paths in the applied field of PM (Pemsel, 2022) is advancing. There has been an increasing emergence of new PM areas of research with a focus on the individual and their behaviour, such as in project leadership and teams (Drouin et

al., 2021); ethics (Bredillet, 2014); Human Resource Management of project professionals (Keegan et al., 2018); or sustainable development (Sabini et al., 2019). Overall, the understanding of projects and project grouping has diversified and become more nuanced (Geraldi and Söderlund, 2018). In the context of this thesis, the strategic projects in HEI organisations carried out by academic managers will be seen as a new and nuanced PM research field with practical implications.

Contested Assumptions in Project Management Research

In order to provide enough relevance for practitioners and academia, the main contemporary critics of PM research must be considered for this thesis. Scholars emphasise that the contribution of the PM academy to modern practice is limited (Maylor and Söderlund, 2015; Denicol, 2022). Similarly, Kozak-Holland and Procter (2020) observe a significant gap between PM research and implementation as the theory does not equip managers well for disruptive or transformational projects. In addition, Artto et al. (2017) conclude that project research is still in its infancy. Contributions in PM are also criticised by Pasian (2016, p. 26) as reductionist, and Lundin and Hällgren (2014) emphasise that time should not be spent recreating something, particularly when it costs unnecessary effort. This refers to new value-added contributions; the authors question whether any theory on projects or on temporary organisations has emerged to date. In addition, Padalkar and Gopinath (2016) state that PM research is dominated by empirical and deterministic perspectives while non-deterministic research enquiries remain weak and sporadic. According to Kwak and Anbari (2009), the management education community puzzles whether “project management” is a practice or an academic discipline. Maylor and Söderlund (2015, p. 12) see the real contribution for practice as modest and observe that practitioners find the highly valued journals “too abstract to be of value”. There appears to be no consensus among scholars regarding to which management discipline PM should be assigned if PM is not considered an independent discipline. In this thesis, project work is taken from the discipline of strategic management. But Maylor und Söderlund (2015) highlight this missing practical value in the field of the management discipline strategy and conclude that while strategy research has a much-provided impact and relevance for the academy, practical discussions of strategy implementation are still ignored. These serious criticisms can be linked to the challenge of assumptions in the PM literature.

According to Alvesson and Sandberg (2011), assumptions of underlying theories on a specific subject matter should be more illuminated and questioned. The authors criticise the often-practiced method of simple gap-spotting or gap-filling in the existing literature and its subsequent application to a qualitative or quantitative research approach. They propose five different typologies of assumptions for problematisation: (1) Inhouse: assumptions that exist within a specific school of thought; (2) Root metaphor: the broader images of a particular subject matter which is in the underlying existing literature; (3) Paradigm: ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions in the underlying literature; (4) Ideology: political-, moral-, and gender-related assumptions in the underlying existing literature; and (5) Field: assumptions about a specific matter that are shared across different theoretical schools.

In the context of the chosen literature domain of this thesis, the notion of field assumption seems suitable. As Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) argue, these assumptions are difficult to apply since “everyone”, such as scholars of different schools of thought, shares them and thus the assumptions are rarely thematised in research texts. Consequently, they recommend examining the common consensual ground that is not being debated. Following this, the gap identified in the literature which is related to the investigated topic in this thesis refers to Engwall’s (2003) assertion that “no project is an island”. The subject matter of the organisational set-up of PM and the project worker’s ability to navigate is shared by various schools of thought and science disciplines. It can be observed that these theories generally consider project work as only limited in a general context, and either they focus on an execution-based flow using specific tools and methods (Morris, 2012) or they consider only people and their competencies (for example, organisational behaviour). But rarely do these assumptions consider the interaction between the project worker and the project environment or the relationship between the project and the institutional context (Grabher and Thiel, 2015). Adopting the perspective of organisational theory, in which the assumption of dependences between units of an organisation (Bacharach, 1989) or the assumption of rigid bureaucratic structures in organisation (Manning, 2017) is disputed, the assumption of project embeddedness within stable contexts has been questioned (Turner and Müller, 2003). The conceptualisation of projects as temporary organisation (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995) and their discrepancies with a permanent organisation have led to a manifold

discussion between scholars. The assumption is that organisations maintain projects as fixed entities, and companies ultimately become less effective when attempting to establish temporary organisations by creating boundaries for the entire enterprise (Dwivedula et al., 2018). In the debate of the conceptualisation of projects, Dwivedula et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of more thoroughly understanding the nature of interaction between the project, its environment and the various elements within the project itself. In addition, a holistic theoretical perspective must evolve that underpins traditional PM, temporary organisation and temporary organising (Dwivedula et al., 2018). Therefore, what is proposed is a systems perspective to conceptualise projects where soft and hard systems are merged to better manage projects (Gustavsson et al., 2014; Siriram, 2017). Dwivedula et al. (2018) propose three different theoretical lenses on the system. First, traditional PM is described as an “autopoietic system” in which elements within an arrangement interact to reproduce elements of the system, and interactional openness of the system with the environment triggers processes within the structure through self-organisation. In this case, boundaries are defined by the system itself. Second, a temporary organisation is defined as an “allopoietic system” in which elements within the system interact to produce a new system, and where the interactional openness of the system follows the “input-process-output-feedback” loop when engaging with the environment. Boundaries are then defined by the observer. Third, the temporary organisation as a “practopoietic system” consists of elements within the system which are constantly interacting with a dynamic environment to develop processes based on categorisation, decision and comprehension of stimulus. The system then undergoes the transformation and adapts to the environment. In the context of the strategising process and thus also the implementation of SP, all the three theoretical lenses mentioned can be taken into account. The “autopoietic system” is rather rigid strategic planning process; the “allopoietic system” is reflected in the creation process of the actual SP; and the “practopoietic system” represents the implementation process itself. This consideration is intended to express the fact that within the strategising process, a different view of the next sequence or level must be considered in each case. Along with the different perspectives on PM, it is also worth considering the definition of PM, projects and project typology as those terms are seen in different ways by scholars and practitioners.

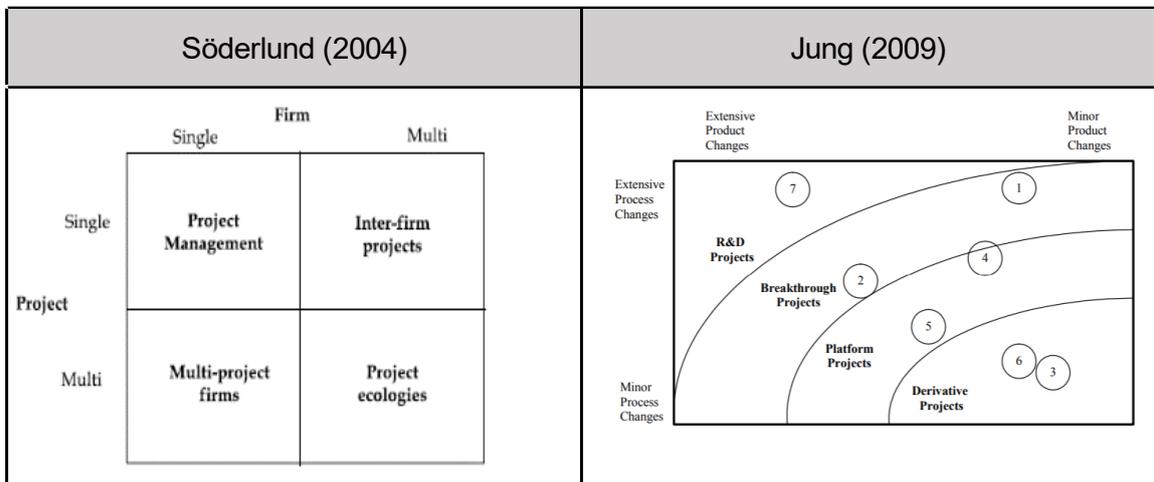
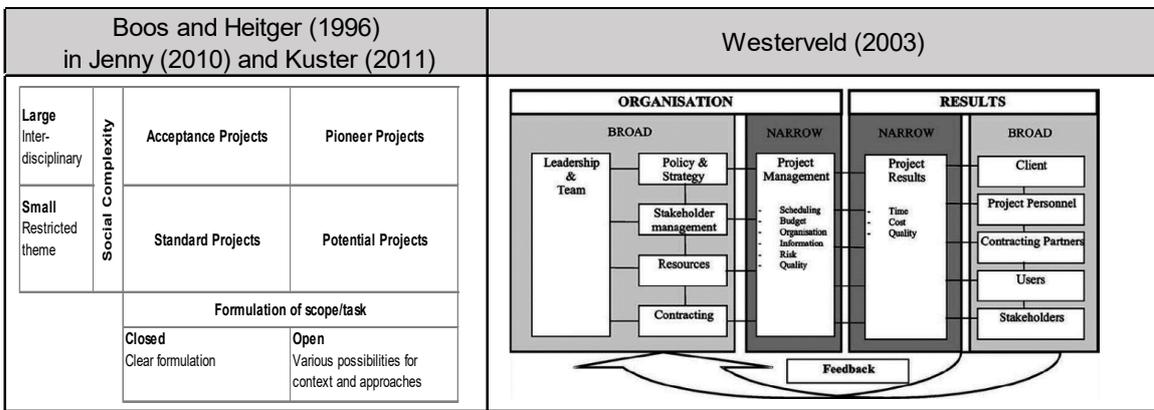
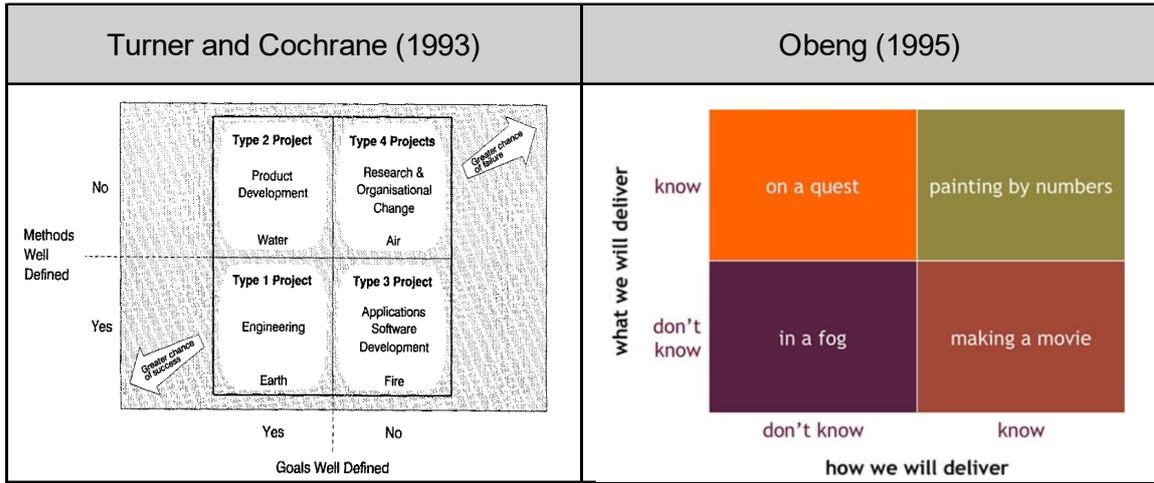
A Project Typology: Definitions and Terms

Numerous meanings are attributed to the term “project”, and researchers attempt to classify PM as a scientific discipline (Artto et al, 2017). The result is a multifaceted description of norms, principles, standards and methods on how PM can be defined and successfully implemented in practice. Table 2 below illustrates the variety of definitions using the example of four international associations.

Organisation	Importance	Project	Project Management
Project Management Institute (PMI) https://www.pmi.org/	World's largest professional association in terms of memberships	A project is a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service or result.	Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements.
International Project Management Association (IPMA) https://www.ipma.world/	World's second largest professional association	A project is defined as a unique, temporary, multi-disciplinary and organised endeavour that is meant to realise agreed deliverables within predefined requirements and constraints.	Project management is concerned with the application of methods, tools, techniques and competences of a project to achieve goals.
European Commission PM2 Project Management Methodology https://pm2.europa.eu/index_en	European Commission Standard for project management	A project is a temporary organisational structure which is set up to create a unique product or service (output) within certain constraints such as time, cost and quality.	Project management can be described as the activities of planning, organising, securing, monitoring and managing the necessary resources, and it work to deliver specific project goals and objectives in an effective and efficient way.
Axelos/Prince2 https://www.axelos.com/ https://www.prince2.com/uk	UK Government standard for project management	A project is a temporary venture that exists to produce a defined outcome. Each project will have agreed and unique objectives as well as its own project plan, budget, timescale, deliverables and tasks.	Project management can be defined as the discipline of applying specific processes and principles to initiate, plan, execute and manage the way that new initiatives or changes are implemented within an organisation.

Table 5: Various definitions proposed by international PM bodies (author's)

Against this background, “project” as a term is difficult to grasp, and the range of definitions reflects different ontological and epistemological perspectives which then lead to different research methods (Bredillet, 2008; Söderlund, 2011). In a similar manner, scholars provide a variety of classifications for projects, a selection of which is depicted in Table 3 below. The proposals differ from each other with their distinguished criteria/axes and reflect the different views of the criteria.



Shenhar and Dvir (2007)	Müller and Turner (2007)														
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Project attribute</td> <td>Project types by attribute</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Application area</td> <td>Engineering and construction Information systems Organization and business</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Complexity</td> <td>High Medium Low</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Life-cycle stage</td> <td>Feasibility Design Execution Close-out Commissioning</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strategic importance</td> <td>Mandatory Repositioning Renewal</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Culture</td> <td>Host Expatriate</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contract type</td> <td>Fixed price Remeasurement Alliance</td> </tr> </table>	Project attribute	Project types by attribute	Application area	Engineering and construction Information systems Organization and business	Complexity	High Medium Low	Life-cycle stage	Feasibility Design Execution Close-out Commissioning	Strategic importance	Mandatory Repositioning Renewal	Culture	Host Expatriate	Contract type	Fixed price Remeasurement Alliance
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Arto, Martinsuo, Dietrich, and Kujala (2008)	Cooke-Davies et al. (2009)

Table 6: Selection of project typology in literature (author's)

In this regard, the question emerges of what is or is not a project. One useful way to answer this question is through the determination of project characteristics as shown in Table 4 below. Compiled by Maylor and Turner (2022), these characteristics express either the nature of the task (aspects of uniqueness, the focus of the mission, the involvement of change, emergence and uncertainty) or how the task is delivered (through a temporary organisation, which is a social construction involving integration).

Characters	Explanations
Aspects of uniqueness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Exact project has not previously been done – Many aspects of the project have not previously been done
Mission focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Delivers benefits
Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Impacts people delivering – Impacts people and organisations being delivered to
Emergence and uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Details requirements may not be known in advance – Project manager must deal with uncertainty
Temporary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Team finishes when project finishes – Funding goes with project
Social construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Does not behave like a machine – Involves people and organisations
Integrating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Requires interlinking of activities – Requires knowledge and resources to be brought together in a process

Table 7: Project characteristics compiled by Maylor and Turner (2022, p. 7)

Project managers utilise systems of activities, people and organisations to deliver the project; the system of delivery is called the “process” (Maylor and Turner, 2022, p. 8). The project worker analyses this system, also considering how activities in the project are identified, planned and executed, and how issues such as change, and uncertainty can be managed. Classification of the process can be given by volume (quantity of throughput for that process) and variety (number of possible variations of the process). This point of view is rooted back to the discipline of operations management, which originally distinguishes process types based on volume and variety (Slack, 1983). For instance, a “first-timers” project is associated with higher complexity and therefore higher risk and uncertainty; this also requires the adequate PM competencies from the project manager. In contrast to this project type, “painting by numbers”, process and outcome are better known to decrease variety and increase volume. The project worker normally completes the task of following the path to the required outcome, which is evident in some research projects (Maylor and Turner, 2022, p. 9), for example. This mapping clarifies how organisations can classify their activities, either as repetitive operations or as projects. The lower the variety and higher the volume, the more automatic standardisation and replication are executed.

Considering the above-mentioned project types, project characteristics and parameter value of variety-volume, Shenhar et al. (2001) emphasise that “one size does not fit all” based on the understanding that not all projects have the same

attributes. Although every project is initiated, planned, executed, controlled and closed, in order to succeed (Dvir et al., 2006) organisations need to identify the project type, find a suitable project manager and choose the proper procedures and appropriate management style accordingly. In practice, however, the question arises as to whether an official project typology is recognisable within the organisation and how the volume and variety of these projects are viewed by the employees. The project characteristics stated above can help to identify these different project types, which is important because employees are not always aware of whether their projects directly or indirectly serve the organisational strategic direction. From an HEI perspective, Sulkowski et al. (2018) identifies four types of projects for implementation: the quality of the principles of teaching (system and industry accreditations, certifications); the research (publications); the design of new products and services based on scientific activities; and the organisational processes (efficiency, effectiveness and quality improvement).

In this respect, scholars aim to find correlations between project types and PM practices depending on the industry sector (Lenfle, 2008; Besner and Hobby, 2012), which is often translated in the form of PM methodologies (Špundak et al., 2011).

Methodologies and Methods in Managing Projects

This section will examine some of the advantages and limitations of following a methodology in the discussion of the theory-practice gap; it will also consider the critique of PM standards and methods. PM is in nature process-driven by following a sequence of specific tasks and taking into account corresponding competencies to fulfil goals in an efficient and effective way. However, disadvantages such as the limitation of innovative strategy formulation must simultaneously be considered, as discussed below. A PM methodology is defined as a set of methods, techniques, procedures, rules, templates and best practices used on a project (Špundak, 2014). According to Špundak (2014), it is typically based on a specific PM approach that outlines a set of principles and guidelines which define the way a project is managed. Currently, nearly 8,500 PM methodologies are estimated to have been proposed (Teamwork, 2022).

Numerous advantages and benefits are attributed to the application of traditional methodologies. For instance, the PM bodies APM, IPMA and PMI offer suitable procedures for larger complex projects (such as an overhaul or manufacturing) and

agile methodologies/principles for IT projects such as scrum (Drob and Zichil, 2013; Jovanovic and Beric, 2018; McGrath and Whitty, 2020). In particular, the two PM associations IPMA and PMI view themselves as practice-oriented providers of project implementation methods, yet they differ in their definition what PM design entails. With its PMBOK, PMI (2022) follows a process-oriented approach which determines a precise procedure for the implementation of a project (Ruess and Voelpel, 2012; Abramov et al., 2015). These PM processes can be divided into five groups, namely initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and closing, in addition to the ten knowledge areas.

The IPMA (2022) has no process methodology, on the other hand, and instead directs PM towards building project managers' competencies in order to bring a project to completion with efficiency (Jovanovic and Beric, 2018). The IPMA ICB defines 29 competence elements (CEs), which are organised into three competence areas: (1) "Perspective", in which the CEs define the contextual competences that must be navigated within and across the broader environment; (2) "Practice", which consists of the CEs defining the technical aspects of PPP; and (3) "People", in which the CEs define the personal and interpersonal competences required to succeed in PPP (IPMA Standards, 2022).

Eberle et al. (2011) note that the two views of PMI and IPMA are compatible and can be integrated as they are not antagonists. This is an important insight for organisations that want to further develop their PM practices. However, opinions in the literature differ on the usefulness of PM methods, and scholars point out several shortcomings such as the methodologies being too abstract and high-level; ignoring the industry standards and best practices; lacking real integration into the business; and not considering the bureaucracy issues (Charvat, 2003, p. 5; Dallasega et al., 2021). Similarly, Mir and Pinnington (2014) state that, despite the advancements in PM processes and tools, project success rates have not significantly improved. Furthermore, Pace (2019) concludes that PM methodology has a weak correlation with project success and this correlation is moderated by neither industry nor project manager experience. In contrast, Joslin and Müller (2015) found in their study that the application of a PM methodology accounts for 22.3% of variation in project success. On the whole, PM researchers as well as the PM associations attempt to mirror the rapidly evolving subjects in PM practice in their science contributions and

proposed standard methodologies. Thus, the different methodologies can have an influence on the design of a company's PM architecture, but only a few are publicly available. For instance, the PM manuals of NASA (2014) or the World Meteorological Organization (WMO, 2016) can be accessed and reveal elements such as rule-based procedures, similar to PMBOK. In Switzerland, for instance, the most important PM methodology for the government and the tendering of state contracts is HERMES (2022). The uniform application of the HERMES method aims to create a common understanding of the project among all project participants, which can lead to a reduction of failures (SITMAP, 2023).

As Charvat states (2003, p. 6), project methodologies are only useful to companies when the tasks are appropriate and applicable. But despite the diverse PM methodologies discussed in the literature and offered by various PM associations, HEIs still seem reluctant to adopt them for projects. The discussion of a practical methodology in HEIs or even the development of a unified industry PM practice, as shown in the example of HERMES, is still modestly discussed by academics and professionals. The reason for this may be that the link between methodologies and success is not yet apparent to HEIs, which is in turn related to organisations' view on PM. Some scholars refer the projects-as-practice to the practice-based perspectives (Young, 2015; Song et al., 2022). This "practice-based examination" investigates the human actors, their actions and their behaviour. In contrast, the traditional "system-research examination" is mostly related to processes that can be mostly found in guidelines and handbooks. This is important because enterprises also have a different view and mindset of project deliverables, which is then reflected in their internal PM norms, standards and policies.

For this thesis, the "practice-based examination" is considered. Moreover, the classification of methodologies into five levels provided by Chin and Spowage (2010) is adjuvant for the representation of the different levels, although the authors give few examples of the levels. The first level is described as best practices, standards and guidelines such as PMBOK neglecting the organisational or sector-specific characteristics. It provides valuable sources of information for the development of a new PM methodology in an organisation. Level two refers to the sector of specific methodology as different industries require distinct variations in PM knowledge. Building on level one, sector-specific rules, regulations and best

practices are added. In level three, the sector-specific methodology is adapted to meet the strategy, structure, nature of projects and needs of a specific organisation. An example of this is the Microsoft Solution Framework, a well-integrated methodology successfully designed and deployed by Microsoft. At level four, the methodology should be scalable to cope with the nature and various project sizes within an organisation. Chin and Spowage (2010) stress that the key is to develop a methodology that is specifically made for the organisation and type of project, but is also dynamic, flexible and adaptive to facilitate easy tailoring to a given project. Lastly, level five describes the individualised methodology of a project, for instance stakeholder- or specific deliverables. Although a sharp separation of the five levels in practical application is not further elaborated by the literature, it is helpful as a conceptual understanding for an organisation when introducing a self-developed methodology. The insights of the author's contribution will therefore be considered in the case study. As the literature does not address whether a methodology can positively influence project success, the term "success" needs further clarification in the context of this study.

Success: An Elusive PM Concept

Project success has been widely exposed by many scholars (Mir and Pinnington, 2014), and academics agree that there is still no common definition for the term (Davis, 2014; Albrecht et al., 2017; Kim and Kang, 2017). The literature on success in PM, originally introduced by De Wit (1988), often differentiates between the **view** of project success, which is measured against the overall objective of the project, and the view of project management success, which is measured against cost, time and quality. Based on this, Cooke-Davies (2002) distinguishes between critical success factors (CSFs), which support the project in achieving success or (KPIs), and success criteria, which establish whether a project has been delivered successfully. Meanwhile, many scholars outline differently how project success should be conceptualised (Abylova and Salykova, 2019), such as through the measurement of PM performance (Bryde, 2003) or the maturity of PM reporting (Lauras et al., 2010). Furthermore, the view on such concepts has been discussed by various scholars and comprises: the characteristics of the way of perspective on success (Ika and Lytvynov, 2009); the individual's perception and judgment (Müller and Turner, 2007); the stakeholders' views (Bartis and Mitev, 2008); and the social, environmental or sustainability impact (Tinoco et al., 2016). Scholars have also

sought other criteria to evaluate project success as a project can fail even if time, cost and quality (together referred to as the iron triangle) are achieved (Alzahrani, 2013). For instance, Görög (2016) distinguishes the three types of success criteria as: the traditional project triangle, which measures the efficiency of implementing projects; client satisfaction, which measures the extent to which the completed project result may contribute to achieving its underlying strategic objective; and stakeholder satisfaction, which measures both efficiency and effectiveness, although mainly in an indirect manner.

With regard to the HEI sector (Hladchenko, 2015), measurement criteria are needed to support the overall strategic management system. Scholars agree that implementing strategic performance indicators for project portfolios is critical in order to achieve strategic goals (Huang et al., 2009; Sanchez and Robert, 2010). Representing a set of measurable data, KPIs are used to evaluate and measure performance in the execution phase (Kerzner, 2013, p. 118). In this respect, the framework proposal of project success analysis put forth by Todorović et al. (2015) is appropriate for HEIs' strategic projects and comprises four steps to identify KPIs: first, defining the project's CSFs; second, defining the specific project's KPSs; third, measuring project success according to defined KPIs; and fourth, documenting results of success measurements. These steps are then followed by the evaluation of project success. For the conceptualisation of CSFs, a variety of literature can also be found, often oriented towards topics relevant to industries such as IT (Fan, 2010), construction (Gunduz and Almuajebh, 2020), petroleum (Tsigas et al., 2017) or industry 4.0 (Vrchota et al., 2020). Considering those PM aspects, the alignment between PM and business strategy has been recognised to achieve strategic objectives and improve performance (Gomes, 2016); the integration aspect of strategic PM into the organisation will be described in more detail.

2.5 Strategising Level of Organisational Foundation for Strategic Project Management

Way of Implementing Project Management

PM can be developed and integrated into an organisation in different ways. In particular, the forms of Portfolio Project Management (PPM) (Martinsuo, 2013), Project Management Maturity (PMM) (Görög, 2016) and PMOs (Aubry et al., 2008) have gained importance in practice and academia. Various proposals are offered by scholars whose goal is to maintain stringent alignment between corporate strategy and project execution, some of which are depicted in Table 5 below.

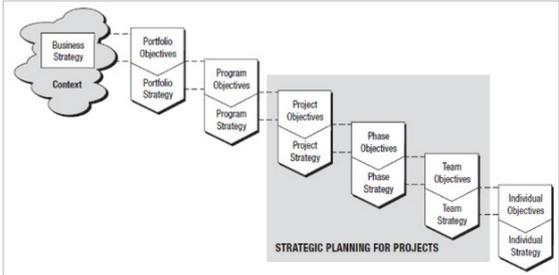
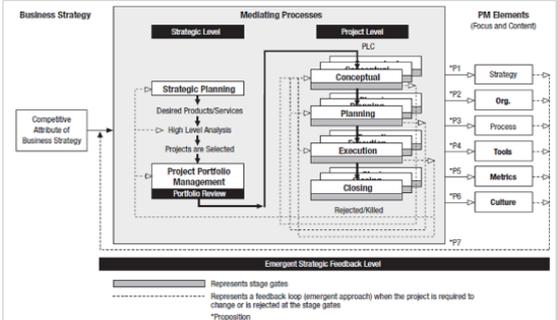
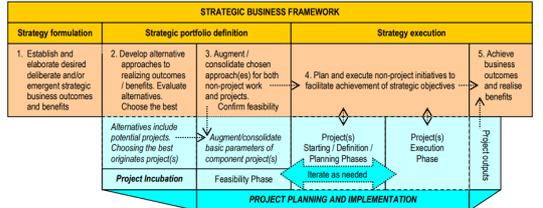
<p>Morris and Jamieson (2005)</p> <p><i>Strategic Planning for Projects</i></p>  <p>The diagram illustrates a top-down strategic planning process. It starts with 'Business Strategy' in a cloud labeled 'Context'. This leads to 'Portfolio Objectives' and 'Portfolio Strategy', then to 'Program Objectives' and 'Program Strategy', followed by 'Project Objectives' and 'Project Strategy', then 'Phase Objectives' and 'Phase Strategy', then 'Team Objectives' and 'Team Strategy', and finally 'Individual Objectives' and 'Individual Strategy'. The entire process is labeled 'STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR PROJECTS'.</p>	<p>Srivannaboon (2006)</p> <p><i>Theoretical Framework for Aligning Project Management with Business Strategy</i></p>  <p>This diagram shows the alignment of business strategy with project management. On the left, 'Business Strategy' (Competitive Attribute) leads to 'Strategic Planning' at the 'Strategic Level', which includes 'Desired Products/Services', 'High Level Analysis', and 'Projects are Selected'. This leads to 'Project Portfolio Management' and 'Portfolio Review'. On the right, 'PM Elements (Focus and Content)' include Strategy, Org, Process, Tools, Metrics, and Culture. The 'Project Level' involves 'Mediating Processes' like 'Conceptual', 'Planning', 'Execution', and 'Closing', with a 'Rejected/Killed' path. A 'PLC' (Product Life Cycle) is also indicated. An 'Emergent Strategic Feedback Level' at the bottom shows feedback loops from 'Rejected/Killed' back to 'Strategic Planning'.</p>
<p>Stretton (2018)</p> <p><i>Organisational Strategic Business Framework</i></p>  <p>The framework is divided into three main stages: 'Strategy formulation', 'Strategic portfolio definition', and 'Strategy execution'. 'Strategy formulation' involves establishing desired outcomes and benefits. 'Strategic portfolio definition' involves developing alternatives and choosing the best. 'Strategy execution' involves planning and executing non-project initiatives. Below these, 'Project Incubation' (Feasibility Phase) leads to 'Project Planning and Implementation' (Starting/Definition/Planning Phases and Execution Phase), which includes 'Project(s) Starting/Definition/Planning Phases' and 'Project(s) Execution Phase'.</p>	<p>Maylor and Turner (2022)</p> <p><i>Organisational Strategy Process</i></p>  <p>This diagram shows the flow of strategy from top to bottom. At the top is 'Chief Executive Officer' with 'Vision'. This leads to 'Senior management' with 'Organisational strategy' and 'Competitive analysis'. 'Organisational strategy' leads to 'Portfolio management' with 'Portfolios' and 'Competitive analysis'. 'Portfolios' leads to 'Programme management' with 'Programmes' and 'Benefit required'. 'Programmes' leads to 'Project managers' with 'Project strategy' and 'Project requirements'. 'Project strategy' leads to 'Project team' with 'Project tasks'. The process is supported by 'Reports and opportunities' and 'Progress'.</p>

Table 8: Overview of the link between project organisation and strategy (author's)

The figures reflect different structures and individual components. In this regard, it should be noted that the intensity of the individual components and their mutual influences is not apparent. In all cases, the proposal is considered as overall guidance for the alignment, a thinking process or an orientation map. In view of this, the development of PPM generates a high-level view of all ongoing projects and allows for alignment with the overall business strategy, which is considered

extremely important for most modern organisations (Munir et al., 2017). As a result, the value of individual projects and their needed resources must be considered while allocating them to the portfolio (Engwall and Jerbrant, 2003; Vacík et al., 2018).

Yet the portfolio needs to be examined more from a corporate perspective and less from an individual project basis (Shenhar, 2004) to avoid the quest for local “optimums” or for individual interests that could harm the whole organisation (De Souza et al., 2015). In this context, the lack of a project strategy can result in misalignment of the business strategy to PM according to Aronson et al. (2013), and there are only a few references with empirical evidence (Srivannaboon, 2006; Steinþórsson, 2014).

Furthermore, the embodiment of an organisational PMM has been presented over the past three decades to determine the maturity level of PM in an organisation. PMM found its origin in the Humphrey’s Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) (1988). Around the millennium, PMM also found its way into corporate strategy as a measurement of mapping PM (Jugdev and Thomas, 2002) and is still further researched to date (Kerzner, 2019). Yet the sufficient return on investments of such models is doubted in practice despite positive responses from professionals (Grant and Pennypacker, 2003; Görög, 2016; Albrecht and Spang, 2014). Scholars have in response attempted to concentrate on PM maturity factors and then to evaluate the maturity level of the organisation (Pasian, 2014; Anantatmula and Rad, 2018). But according to Görög (2016), the critique from the research community still focuses on certain aspects: the narrow process-based view and the mechanistic approach implied in the models; failure to consider organisational level determinants and other contextual factors which also shape PM maturity; and the overcomplexity of the models which requires an extent of information to complete the assessment of maturity.

Overall, these discussions indicate that the importance of understanding PM in the context of an organisation are important (Nenni et al., 2014). Simultaneously, researchers agree that the success of PM implementation applications depends on the commitment of executives. Accordingly, the role and influence of top management on project performance has been repeatedly highlighted (Hermano and Martin-Cruz, 2016). A study presented by Güngör and Gözlü (2016) reveals that strategic top management support enables more effective operational support that

in turn increases project performance. But there is obviously limited progress in the majority of organisations (Wagner, 2018). Besner and Hobbs (2013) state that executives often perceive PM as an operational issue and delegate to lower management levels without delay. This view that projects are perceived by business leaders more as a tactical construct or comprising a tactical role and less as a functional strategy is supported by other scholars (Jugdev and Müller, 2005; Artto et al, 2008). In light of this, OPM has emerged as its own holistic way to acknowledge PM within an organisational context including PPM, PMM and PMOs. OPM will be considered in this study to better explore and approach the depths of SPs.

Concept of Organisational Project Management

Müller et al. (2019) propose a new OPM model which is a useful aid to viewing and assessing PM organisational elements and PM practices. The author's theory serves as a valuable step for crafting a holistic framework for HEIs' SPs.

The layers will be further discussed here in the context of PM integration within an HEI organisation. OPM is defined as a set of formal principles, structures and processes for the undertaking and management of projects (Aubry et al., 2007), and it conceptualises the integration of all PM-related activities throughout the organisational hierarchy or network (Drouin et al., 2017). Scholars have attempted to develop numerous theories to describe an organisation from different perspectives such as Taylorism or Human Relations (Manske, 1987). These theories attempt to elucidate the emergence, functioning and purpose of an organisation, but each relates to different aspects. In this context. Therefore, the function of OPM within the organisation should be understood (Aubry et al., 2012; Volden and Andersen, 2018). OPM recognises that structures are changing, and the important element is that they are linked together in a dynamic strategising and structuring process (Aubry et al., 2007). The perspective of OPM seeks to clarify how the PM function relates to other organisational functions such as human resources (Pinto and Winch, 2016). Drouin et al. (2017) state after reviewing the existing literature that the field of OPM portrays a scattered and dispersed field of various subject areas, insufficiently integrated over organisational levels or networks. In an attempt to better understand the mutual contingencies and implementation patterns in organisations, Müller et al. (2019) present a seven-

layered model that organises OPM elements, ranging from the corporate level to the management of individual projects based on extensive journal reviews as presented in Figure 3 below.

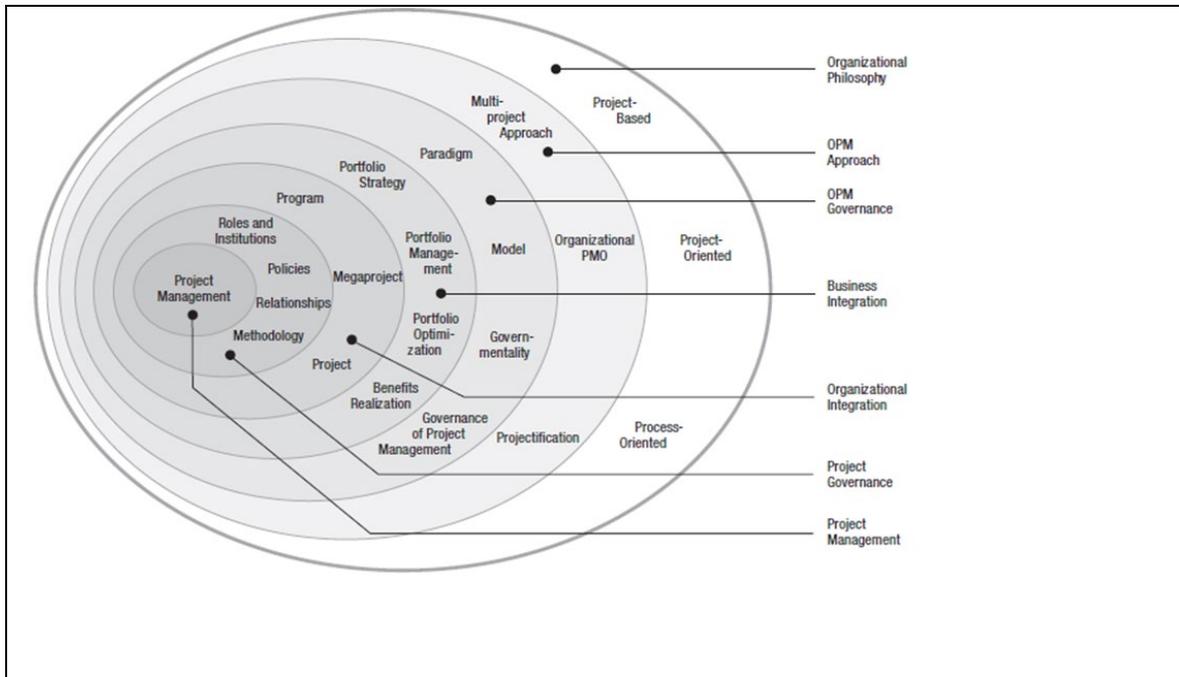


Table 9: The onion model of OPM (Müller et al., 2019)

Organisational Philosophy: The outer layer of the onion model reflects the organisation's appearance to the stakeholders and the interface with the market. It is seen as the boundary of its parent organisation and defines the basic foundations of OPM practices (Drouin et al., 2017). The literature distinguishes between the process-oriented (ProcOO), project-oriented (POO) and project-based organisation (PBO). For the ProcOO, the form of organisation is structured in functional lines, and work is conducted in a permanent organisational entity in order to pursue production processes (Kohlbacher and Gruenwald, 2011). As such, only a few projects are carried out to optimise production. In contrast, a PBO (bottom-up) refers to work based on projects, while a POO (top down) chooses PM to run the business through projects and is a way to implement strategic decisions (Turner, 2018).

HEIs, in particular business schools, are highly formalised POO organisations with rigid, top-down structures to implement strategic decisions and to run the business through projects. In this context, the profession of a project manager with full-time employment and often a PM certificate is not given for HEIs. HEIs have not defined full-time project manager profiles for the academic workforce.

OPM Approach: This layer is influenced by the project mindedness in the philosophical layer and shapes the usage of OPM within the organisation. It includes the three elements of a multiproject approach, an organisation-wide PMO and projectification explaining the governance for OPM.

Using multi-projects encompasses all types of projects categorised into four types of strategies as proposed by Blomquist and Müller (2006); the strategies are multiproject, programme, portfolio and hybrid. As outlined above, PMOs are seen as entities which provide PM methodologies, policies, standards and practices for project managers and the enterprise system (Salameh, 2014), but they are also perceived as instrumental in implementing strategy through portfolios of projects (Bredillet et al., 2018).

Projectification is a matter of organisational restructuring initiatives toward organising by projects according to Jacobsson and Jalocha (2021). Furthermore, by conceptualising work and time through the lens of projects, work is divided by its aims and potential outcomes (Dollinger, 2020). Thus, projectification is seen as task-specific and time-limited (Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014). In the context of HEIs, Dollinger (2020) states that projectification is the corresponding time lens of managerialism as it encourages the definition and attainment of financial- or other performance-desired targets. Consequently, the academic and professional workforce is monitored for its specific and time-limited tasks by senior managers, which leads to auditing mechanisms within the HEI.

OPM Governance: Four types of governance are distinguished in this context: the governance paradigm, the governance model, governmentality and the governance of PM. Governance paradigms are related to mental patterns of project groups in organisations. Müller and Leconte (2014) propose four different paradigms shown in Table 6 below, which are aligned according to the shareholder or stakeholder governance orientation and their organisational control structures being merely behaviour- or outcome oriented.

		Governance orientation	
		Shareholder orientation	Stakeholder orientation
Control focus	Outcome	Flexible economist	Versatile artist
	Behaviour	Conformist	Agile pragmatist

Table 10: Four governance paradigms proposed by Müller and Lecoeuvre (2014)

Guidelines and standards, which are connected to these paradigms, are applied for the governance of groups of projects. They are related to governance models reflecting the design of Principles of Project Management (PPM) within an organisation. PPM (lat. “principium” = basis) attempt to keep a standard practice of PM in line with its different project types. Meanwhile, a manifold application possibility can be observed in various industries such as IT (Nicholas and Hidding, 2010) or medicine (Gojanovic et al., 2016). Yet generalisation and standardisation are not free from criticism. For instance, PM standards were examined in various countries by Crawford et al. (2007) with the result that the focus on PM is different in all cases. Furthermore, in terms of knowledge standardisation, international PM associations play a major role in the design of PPM terms, for example through the publication of Bodies of Knowledge. In this regard, PPM creators often combine their own training courses in license to achieve a certificate. Hällgren et al. (2012) note here a danger of losing the essentials in PM, viewing the overvaluation of the increasing number of certificates with scepticism. Other scholars agree that PM certificates provide only very few added values to the organisation (Nazeer and Marnewick, 2018; Ng and Lee, 2020). Nonetheless, PM requires standardisations and uniform principles in an organisation such as an HEI to execute projects in an efficient and effective way (Nino, 2013). Scholars assert that the understanding of the organisation to PM is important (Vuori et al., 2013) and PPM should be aligned with the organisation (Walker and Lloyd-Walker, 2016).

Business Integration: This level affects how organisations create the benefits; it encompasses the traditional elements of portfolio strategy, project portfolio management, portfolio optimisation and benefits realisation, all of which directly influence the combination of (strategic) projects and programmes to execute. Portfolio strategy links project selection with the strategic objectives of the organisation (Jugdev, 2017). Thus, prioritising projects and allocating them effectively to the corresponding resources contribute to the metrics of the strategic

goals achievement (Müller et al., 2019). Hence, value maximisation, balancing and strategic alignment are elements of the portfolio optimisation.

The last element of the business integration is benefits realisation, which is strongly linked with the project portfolio and portfolio optimisation. Benefits are linked to strategic objectives; this ensures further business development with a short- and long-term perspective (Shi, 2011). In addition, benefits are critical in the process of transforming project output into utilisation in the parent organisation after project closing (Bjorvatn, 2022). Zwikael and Smyrk (2012) recommend using a project target benefit formulation as projects are evaluated less by their benefits and more by their performance. For effective project execution, Serra and Kunc (2015) portend a Benefits Realisation Management (BRM) process to identify the project's value and individual strategic contribution. Project success in turn refers to project deliverables.

Organisational Integration: This layer with elements of programme, megaprojects and projects describes the embedment of the form of project-related work and its governance. The organisational support for the PM integration and process contributes positively to the project-level and firm-level performance according to the survey findings by Mathur et al. (2014). Müller et al. (2019) raise here the question of whether the organisation treats projects as sovereign, autonomous entities with idiosyncratic governance structures or as integrative parts of a programme that are therefore governed independently of other projects in the programme. As stated by Midler (1995), organisational dynamics should allow temporary structures with clear dynamic roles and responsibility assignments.

Project Governance: As mentioned above, PMOs vary in their size, structure and responsibility, and for the last decade a wide variety of functions, from operational and tactical to strategic, have been attributed to it (Oliveira et al., 2017). According to Müller et al. (2019), project governance describes the interactions between project participants. Thereby, project governance institutions are predominantly seen as steering groups and tactical PMOs (Müller et al., 2019). The latter typically take on the role of multi-project coordination and auditing, and they support project managers with advice (Pemsel et al., 2016). At the project level, the steering of groups helps to define as guidance the role, responsibilities, process and milestones in projects based on policies and principles (Lechler and Cohen, 2009).

Project Management: The last layer represents the core of the onion model and reflects the individual management of the projects within an organisation. Against this background, selected aspects of PM in relation to this thesis were outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

Reflection on Organisational Project Management in HEIs

As academia is a distinctive industry with different organisational archetypes, a specific type of strategy needs to be considered in each case (Stensaker et al., 2014). Parakhina et al. (2017) conclude that in contrast to the strategic management of business structures, there is a fragmentary view of nature, technology and procedures with regard to making and implementing strategic decisions in higher education. Therefore, the regular re-adoption of current university strategies through a project-oriented organisation is proposed (Babaiev et al., 2017). Shannon and Hartshorne (2013) state that HEIs are not viewed as being project driven, and the establishment of PM is hardly an issue in HEIs. According to the authors, one of the main reasons lies in the limited use of PM by professors. In addition, Bryde and Leighton (2009) reveal in their study that PM maturity in HEIs is low, particularly in the areas of leadership and project support structures. The study brings to light that PM would address the demands for greater efficiency and would produce more income through contract research and consulting while reducing dependency on public funding. Additionally, some scholars, emphasise the necessity and value of PM in education institutes if executed systematically and methodically (Burgher and Snyder, 2012; Austin et al., 2013). One example is given by Fowler et al. (2015) concerning the Uppsala University (Sweden); according to the authors, the application of PM in the Swedish academia related to controlling government-sponsored research activities increases when the added value of PM tools and techniques is recognised, and researchers become familiar with it. Other scholars also describe the implementation of a PMO at universities. Monteiro et al. (2016), for example, assert that a PMO is an organisational structure designed for the purpose of promoting and improving PM practice by adopting appropriate methodologies to achieve high levels of efficiency and effectiveness. In the context of HEIs, Austin et al. (2013) state that only about 10% of all universities in the US have some form of a PMO. In addition, Mendes de Oliveira et al. (2017) note that almost no PMOs exist in Brazilian universities, and the few that are in place only

have a technical role. In order to optimise administrative structures at strategic and operational levels, the authors call for further efforts in building a PMO within HEIs.

Yet some academics identify the observed tensions which might occur between the organisation and the OPM (Aubry et al., 2009; Van der Linde and Steyn, 2016). HEIs generally incorporate a different organisational construct compared to enterprises (Vasyakin et al., 2016; Efeoğlu and Ulum, 2017). Furthermore, Macheridis (2015) observes a strong standardisation and formalisation which can be seen in the decision-making or policy document process at public universities and non-private business schools. Moreover, tension between the authoritarian institutional role of a university and the autonomous tradition of its individuals is noted (Macheridis, 2015; Mendes de Oliveira, 2017). This observation is supported by Klaus-Rosińska and Zabłocka-Kluczka (2014), who see the causes in unsuitable rigid organisational structures; a lack of formal authority for projects and their managers; inadequately designed mechanisms of project quality management; and the lack of qualified project personnel. In this context, other scholars observe an absent link of academic-specific principles to academic PM competencies and therefore a lack of project-oriented professors (Bryde and Leighton, 2009; Shannon and Hartshorne, 2013).

Using the example of Drexel University, the difficult application of PM is observed by Austin et al. (2013). They observe resistance among faculty due to governance, limitations of resources and minimal efficiency awareness. Naturally, fear emerges when moving away from their original mandates of research and teaching. The authors conclude that PM is conducted on an individual project basis rather than at a strategic level.

Researchers agree that the design of the OPM is influenced by the organisation's characteristics (Aubry et al., 2012; Volden and Andersen, 2018). Overall, it can be assumed that most universities have a POO even though their organisation is typically highly formalised and structured (Maassen et al., 2017). As new research contributions reveal (Sun et al., 2018), efficiency advantages no longer lead from standardised procedures and work breaks to the success of a project-oriented organisation. It is rather by flexibility and autonomy to adapt to the increasingly complex and dynamic environment (Sun et al., 2018). Babeiev et al. (2017) state that some Ukrainian universities have a POO to adapt their strategy to exogenous

changes by using balanced scorecards. In the same context, the question has emerged by scholars whether agile PM methods are better for HEIs than the application of traditional PM.

To conclude, Cooke-Davies (2002) states that there is little guidance on how to manage a full set of projects as an integrated whole. Furthermore, Löwstedt et al. (2018) argue that project organisation provides a specific context and challenge for organisational strategising. Likewise, in reference to the frequently overlooked gap between strategic intent from the top of organisations and the actual, implemented plan, Bonchek (2017) argues that “Execution is where good strategies go to die”. In light of this, there is hope in using the OPM typology established by Müller et al. (2019) to investigate the components required for better strategic integration, particularly of non-certified academics/project workers. Consequently, the function, current work situation and competencies of the responsible project manager should be considered when setting project objectives for the corresponding execution (Gällstedt, 2003; Turner and Miterev, 2019; Lutas, 2020). In the context of HEIs, academic managers play a crucial role in strategy implementation as their perspectives and experiences of project implementation provide important insights for project strategy work (Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Kallenberg, 2020).

2.6 Academic Manager as Strategic Project Worker

As a project is a series of actions limited in time and space that is also inserted in and in interaction with a politico-socio-economic environment, the human factor of participation must be considered in strategic project work. The academic workforce with their actions and behaviours are, when seen through the practice-based lens, human actors and HEIs' most precious resource (Chen, 2017). Researchers have looked into the strategy development and implementation by various key actors in higher education especially deans and department heads (De Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009; Davies et al., 2016; Stensaker and Fumasoli, 2017; Degn, 2018; Hladchenko and Benninghoff, 2020).

Seeber et al. (2015, p. 1452), conclude that middle managers and the individual faculty are still the primary decision-maker on most academic matters, especially regarding research activity in mature HEI systems. The authors point out that in some European countries, there is still a strong foundation for collegial governance, and hierarchical power necessitates a great deal of persuasion, negotiation, and

motivation. In this regard, attention is given in this study to academic managers as project workers, in particular, academic unit heads who play an important role in strategic implementation initiatives.

Managerialism in HEIs

While in the past the focus was on the authority, agency and autonomy (self-regulation) of academics as knowledge explorers (with intellectual curiosity) and experts, today a different development is emerging (Watermeyer and Tomlinson, 2022). It is described as a shift from intellectual capacity to a capacity which is to be favourably measured due to intensive managerialism, bureaucratisation, fiscal rationalisation and audit such as in commercial business. Similarly, Dollinger (2020) critically notes that productivity and efficiency through increased oversight and bureaucracy is a consequence of a growing reliance on managerialism and correspondingly adds no value to. Likewise, Shams (2019) states that the managerial regime suggests a bureaucratic structure of direction and control that contrasts with the normative values associated with originally academic professionalism. The increase in the managerial requirements of university employees such as autocratic control and outcome-oriented evaluation is considered problematic for managing academic identity. In the wake of raising the standards of performance measurement in HEIs, Chahar and Hatwal (2018) call for a redefinition of and adaptation to the current needs and standards of the institutions. Organisational and individual performance measurement affects project work as well. This applies to the heightened responsibility of strategic and organisational project work by academic managers. In connection with this, the role of a project manager is seen as an important change actor within an organisation (Sundqvist, 2019).

The Changing Duties of Academic Managers

HEI performance management, which ensures effective management on an institutional and individual level, is essential to react to challenges (Chahar and Hatwal, 2018). Specific core competencies for academia personnel must therefore be considered (Nongna et al., 2021). Besides their daily teaching and research activities, academic managers are increasingly required to perform project-based tasks similar to those undertaken by trained project practitioners.

But the literature is diffident in explaining how academic managers as non-professional managers can be helped in a comprehensive manner when dealing with projects. While the academic manager can be placed in a separate professional category, terminology is vague. One reason is that the growing body of literature on this professional genre lacks a common consensus regarding the job title and classifications of hierarchy. Two terms often used are “mid-level academic manager” or “middle manager”. These managers are seen as individuals who decide how to implement the organisation’s strategic change objectives (Balogun, 2003; Kallenberg, 2007). Dopson et al. (1992) describe such managers as being “below the small group of top strategic managers and above first-level supervision”. In other contributions, however, lower hierarchical levels are also considered, such as academic offices or research centres (Meek et al., 2010). It is also noted that mid-level academic managers are assigned a general role (Floyd, 2012). More specifically, middle managers are responsible for the coordination of courses, people management, budgets and income generation (Gleeson and Shain, 1999). Their role is described as a corporate agent, implementer, staff manager, liaison and leader (Briggs, 2004). In this regard, academics hold management roles which are important for the future managerialism within HEIs (Deem and Brehony, 2005).

Eighty percent of the administrative decisions in colleges and universities in the US are executed by middle managers (Wolverton et al., 2005). Taking this into account, middle managers are multiple actors who share their leadership roles in cooperative settings as leadership is distributable to different hierarchical levels (Turnbull, 2012). Generally, academic managers face several challenges, and, like the institutions for which they work, they must meet the demands of various stakeholders under constantly changing conditions such as public service funding cuts; regulatory structures; the steady increase in accountability; and the evolution of knowledge cultures in the face of globalisation and technological change (Zukas and Malcolm, 2019). With this in consideration, their legitimacy to take over leadership is still mainly derived from their academic reputation (Hancock and Hellowell, 2003).

However, a special major challenge is expressed with the word “middle” in “middle manager” as it cultivates a sandwich layer position within the organisation. Scholars do consider this to be a key role not only in interpreting institutional policies, conditions and structures, but also in influencing and negotiating them (Whitchurch

and Gordon, 2013). Moreover, senior executives depend on middle managers when implementing strategic objectives (King, 2012), which reinforces the managers' strategic role (Floyd and Dimmock, 2011) and their role as agents of innovation and change in response to external changes (Clegg and McAuley, 2005). In addition, middle managers are also expected to submit proposals for emerging institutional issues and bottom-up initiatives in the sense of fostering a grassroots orientation for strategic-relevant processes (Davies et al., 2016). Thus, they are seen as a node within the organisational structures (Ball, 2008). This results in the dual requirement of having academic excellence and simultaneously possessing management capabilities (De Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009). Scholars consequently observe a hybridisation of the academic role (Whitchurch, 2008) where middle-level academic leadership encompasses an increasing responsibility for teaching; research; consultancy; operational management, including support services and resource allocation; project and daily personnel work; and the handling of internal and external stakeholder relationships (Gordon and Whitchurch, 2007).

The topic of leadership for academic managers in particular has moved into the spotlight of research contributions in recent years, with such managers being studied as both leaders and employees led. Sušanj (2020) describes academics as human resources who are “unmanageable” and not “ordinary” due to the demanding nature of leading them. The reason lies in their unique professional knowledge and their abilities to acquire specific competencies and complex skills, which are then applied in various work fields. Academic managers must manage their own responsibilities under time constraints. Concurrently, as stated above, they must take on numerous managerial responsibilities when acting in an interactive, agentic and mediating role between the rank-and-file faculty (Pepper, 1987) and the executive management. Sušanj (2020) deduces that a specific support system is necessary to help, motivate and develop academics to achieve their institutional goals. This support is corroborated by other contributions (Boud and Brew, 2013).

Competence Development for Academic Managers

The development of today's academic work is viewed critically. For example, techniques for evaluation and measurement have become dominant in maximising performance. This is not always considered advantageous as a deteriorating influence on the identity and quality of academic work is questioned (Siekkinen,

2019). This is also related to the criticism of missing support for mid-level managers. The lack of leadership education is viewed as a major weakness of universities (Knight et al., 2007); likewise, the definition and learnability of leadership within mid-level manager roles is scarcely explored (Inman, 2011). Accordingly, new leadership development programmes for middle-level academics are required (Butler, 2020). As a result, the HRM in HEIs and its academic developers are challenged to provide adequate space for university employees to broaden their knowledge of university employees (Roxå and Mårtensson, 2017). With the rise of managerialism in HEIs, which is viewed as a response to the competition for resources, competencies and capabilities, a need for performative culture is inevitable for the development of their own managerial models (Camilleri and Camilleri, 2018). Cardoso et al. (2016) postulate that HRM should ensure adequate performance evaluations and staff development procedures to meet the university's demands of quality assurance requirements. In this regard, literature has dealt in depth with the topic of performance appraisal and evaluation systems in the public sector as well as in HEIs in recent years (Ojokuku, 2013; Lin and Kellough, 2019). Understanding the environment in which academic managers function is crucial because as project workers, they have many responsibilities and roles to fulfil and must make important decisions to enhance strategic capabilities (Munir et al., 2017). According to Doorasamy (2015), a manager's capability to choose the best projects that align with strategy and to ensure the proper allocation of resources is critical to an organisation's success.

In light of this and as stated in the PMI talent report (2017), the GDP contributions from project-oriented industries is forecast at USD 20.2 trillion for 2027. In addition, employers will need 87.7 million individuals working in PM-oriented roles by this time, and demand for project managers will continue to grow more rapidly over the next ten years than demand for workers in other occupations. The report observes a widening gap between employers' needs for skilled PM workers and the availability of professionals to fill those roles. According to the PM Global Outlook Report (KPGM, 2019), project managers will be more strategic than tactical with an increased focus on working with business leaders to quickly and incrementally deploy benefits to support the overall business strategy. The importance of increasing project work can also be implied for the education sector. Therefore, the

PM competencies of the project manager are seen as a crucial success factor (Chipulu et al., 2013; Blaskovics, 2016).

The effectiveness of projects depends on the project manager (Maghareh and Mohammadzadeh, 2013) and also counts for the implementation of strategies through projects (Gomes et al., 2008; Alsudiri, 2013). Therefore, the shortage of qualified individuals is viewed as the greatest project risk (Zack, 2007) and should be considered accordingly in the hiring process for skilled personnel (Zahra et al., 2014). This issue is confirmed by other scholars (Shannon and Hartshorne, 2013; Klaus-Rosińska and Zabłocka-Kluczka, 2014; Abou-Warda, 2014; Lyken, 2018), all of whom emphasise the serious problem of the lack of qualified staff in PM at their universities.

2.7 Competencies in Delivering Strategic Projects

The human factor in HEIs in the context of strategic project delivery is a central element for this thesis. Addressing manifold issues of the academic personnel, the literature covers a full range of topics in this regard such as academic identity (Watermeyer and Tomlinson, 2022), performance management and appraisal in HEIs (Camilleri and Camilleri, 2018) or academic career development (Kraimer et al., 2019). However, the field of PM competencies for academic personnel is not clearly delineated in the literature; this will be outlined below.

Clarification of Terms – Competencies, Skills and Behaviours

Researchers commonly agree that the term “competence” is interpreted and understood in many ways. It is considered one of the most controversial, and confusing, terms in management literature (Robotham and Jubb, 1996); has different meanings to different professionals in various scientific fields (Alvarenga, 2020; Salman et al., 2020); and is plagued with long-standing controversies through its practices (Jamil, 2015). Furthermore, the concept, definition and measurement have been broad, elusive and diffuse for decades (Starkweather and Stevenson, 2011; Alvarenga et al., 2020) as disciplines including psychology, human resources, education and politics have shaped the term (Hoffmann, 1999). Consequently, a uniform definition has not yet been agreed upon, and its conception is heterogeneous according to its use (Moradi, 2019).

The term “competence” is often understood as a synonym for “competency” (Teodorescu, 2006), and its utilisation varies (Le Deist and Winterton, 2005), making it even more difficult to understand this multi-purpose term. In principle, it is agreed that “competence” is outcome-based and refers to function with a focus on job action, performance and assessment (Jamil, 2015). In contrast, “competency” can be rooted back to McClelland, who in 1973 was the first author to differentiate the word from skills, abilities and knowledge. To date, “competency” refers to a mandatory set of individuals’ behaviours, levels of motivation and personal traits as an attribute-based approach (Kurz and Batram, 2002, p. 231). Researchers attempt to classify “competence” and “competency”. There are also assignments provided that are based on the industry, such as the defence industry (De Rezende et al., 2021), as well as classifications per region such as Africa (Ofori and Deffor, 2014), Asia (Li et al., 2020) or South Asia (Khattak and Mustafa, 2019). Additionally, the literature interchangeably uses the terms “skill” and “competencies” in various cases. Scholars refer skills to the “WHAT” and describe the abilities a person needs to perform in a specific role or activity; this critical question focuses on the specific learned activities. The “HOW” is attributed to behaviour and the transformation of the acquired skills into the job behaviour, such as how successfully a project manager conducts a project (Müller and Turner, 2010; Nijhuis, 2017).

PM Competency Research

A large number of definitions, models and frameworks are presented in the competency literature as well as in practice. For instance, the IPMA association (2022) places the competence package of a project manager at the centre of its association mission, which is known as the “Individual Competence Baseline” (ICB 3.0). The impact of the ICB on PM success was researched by Nahod and Radujković (2013) in a study of 478 project managers. Their results revealed that project success depends on the perception of competence. Regarded as the crucial competencies were behavioural competencies, followed by technical and contextual. Furthermore, project workers with large time overruns do not consider ethics, documentation, health or security as important, while project managers with large cost overruns neglect assertiveness, start-up and closing. This may lead to the conclusion that the competencies listed by the IPMA are to be found in practice but seem to have different priorities and significance depending on the project situation. In contrast to IPMA, PMI (2007) presents its own framework, the “Project

management competency development framework”, which not only is based on the dimension’s knowledge, personnel and performance, but also considers six components of competencies.

Academic PM competence research takes a different route. The number of competencies mentioned in 25 publications after 2000 was analysed by Nijhuis et al. (2015), who observed that of the 353 competencies noted, only 12% were referenced more than once. In addition, and based on previous findings by Tett et al. (2000), Nijhuis et al. (2015) developed a taxonomy for PM competencies with 53 individual competencies divided into nine domains. Shrivastava (2008) in turn refers to the open systems taxonomy, which is based on the interaction of competence input and output and represents 14 competencies in three clusters. Furthermore, Nijhuis et al. (2015) call for further taxonomies to capture new or forgotten competencies. But as a broad spectrum of generalised and standardised PM skills and competencies is presented in the existing literature (Chipulu et al., 2013; Ahsan et al., 2013), critical comments arise with regard to “shopping lists”, or interchangeable competencies (Loufrani-Fedida and Missonier, 2015; Noble, 2020). Biedenbach and Müller (2011) note the missing philosophical underpinning of PM in research studies and question the generalisability of the results. Alvarenga et al. (2020) anticipate the arrival of “obscuring project managers’ core competencies”, and this shows how discordant, but also how versatile, PM competency research is.

The large number of competencies presented makes it difficult to establish a certain categorisation and comparability. Particularly in the PM association proposals, there is no clear division based on industry or job function. In addition, seniority and the professional experiences of project managers seem to not be considered, apart from in the assessment levels. There has been an insufficient number of contributions to identify which PM skills and competencies can be considered general and which can be specifically assigned by sector. De Rezende (2021) states that the PM competency literature is often focused on only some dimensions of PM competencies, such as emotional intelligence, leadership, and PM knowledge. Furthermore, Davies and Brady (2016) observe that the exploration of competencies in the general management field is wide and diverse. In their opinion, however, the discussion tends to be limited to capabilities at the organisational level rather than competencies at the individual level.

In connection with the diversity of the listing of PM competencies, criticism is also expressed about how the complex nature of managerial roles is over-simplified. Due to the intensive search for the “ideal” model of effective managerial behaviour, it is implied that managerial roles are universal and standardised. The general competencies have yielded conformity and unfocused leadership constructs, but have not yielded sufficient subtleties, complexities or contextualities necessary for effective leadership in organisations (Bolden and Gosling, 2006). Antonopoulos and Fitzgerald (1996) have already noted that it is an insult to managerial communities because of how competency aims are used to capture all the mysteries of managerial work into sets of “to do” and “to have” lists. In the context of the British Management Charter Initiative (Barker, 1993), the criticism is made that English managers only become competent through their accreditation process (Jamil, 2015). It is thereby noted that competencies and effective performance are direct, observable, and testable relationships. The pure focus on output obscures the fact that intangible and hard-to-measure elements are also responsible for effective managerial performance (Burgoyne, 1989). Despite these different views, the question is what additional competencies are needed in novel projects, especially those of a complex nature, to successfully execute projects in the business school context. If one considers the multitude of proposed competency suggestions, a further fine splitting seems to impose itself.

McClelland and Boyatzis (1982), two frequently cited authors in this field, view competency as a composition of knowledge, skills and attributes. The educational, professional and personal formation of an individual are determined by these three elements (Le Boterf, 1998; Marinho-Araujo and Almeida, 2017). McClelland (1973) also mentions that the elements determine the high performance based on an individual’s personality and intelligence. Competencies are considered resources for the individual, which are applied in specific situations but are limited by their position and organisational context. Building on this, Le Boterf (1998) and Marinho-Araujo and Almeida (2017) describe competencies as elements of the educational-, professional- and personal formation of an individual that foster responsible actions in various life situations. In addition, competency development is both an individual responsibility and a process of learning with and from others, which implies knowing how to mobilise, integrate and transfer knowledge, resources and skills in specific contexts (Ni et al., 2018). Additionally, Boyatzis (2008, p. 6) defines competency as

an ability and “a set of related but different sets of behaviour organised around an underlying construct, which we call the intent”. De Rezende (2021) concludes from this that these competencies are always contextualised and can be described as: knowing how to act; mobilising resources; integrating knowledge; learning to learn; and engaging in and assuming responsibilities.

Development of PM Competencies

The lack of a consensus in PM competence research also impacts how competencies should be systematically developed. Standardised PM training methods and certifications do not withstand today’s challenges and are criticised for their standardised composite and methodologies provided by professional PM associations (Scott, 2008; Larson and Drexler, 2010; Ashleigh et al., 2012). In this regard, Hällgren et al. (2012) use the term “Proliferation of Standards”. The criticism made relates to a lack of consideration of project managers’ personalities, their different environments or various training techniques (Winter et al., 2006; Lee-Kelley and Blackman, 2012). In this context, Kraimer et al. (2019) emphasise the role and responsibility of employees as well as the required performance mandates in the changing environment. This view is supported by Kozak-Holland and Procter (2019, p. 22), who neglect the political, social, ethical and economic environment dimensions in the proposed process and techniques of the Professional Bodies of Knowledge. As these methods disregard the long-term change, Kozak-Holland and Procter (2019) observe a lack of equipment for managers to effectively lead disruptive or transformational projects, an observation that can be transferred to the HEI field. The systematic development of PM competencies among university staff, especially academic managers, is scarcely evident. Dopson et al. (2019) assert that leadership and managerial developmental programmes in higher education settings have generally not been well managed and that more is needed (Branson et al., 2016, Mojar, 2020). Thus, it is questioned whether a PM competence development concept can be part of the professional development programmes of academic personnel supported by HRM. Following Sušanj’s (2020) three-level system to analysing HRM at HEIs, awareness of the importance of project work can first be seen at an international or a national level. There is apparently a lack of genuine acceptance for this topic. This lack of recognition is also evident in the Eurydice Report of the European Commission for the modernisation of Higher Education in Europe for academic staff (2017).

In sum, the term “competence” is widely interpreted by scholars. Discussions on terminology and usage in reference to project work are mainly expounded in the areas of management competence, academic management competence, academic leadership competence and PM competencies, and its classification is further detailed below. Overall, the number of proposed competencies of (PM) management by academics, PM associations and practitioners is large. Yet its efficient form of practical acquisition and acquirement is scarcely presented. Furthermore, project work is task-specific and time-limited with a unique character, but the corresponding core competencies in these respective project situations still need further research.

2.8 Literature Reflection by Mapping

Various methods and developments for effective literature review are proposed (Gentles et al., 2016; Paul et al., 2021). The literature review process for this study was conducted based on an integrative review approach (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). As the topic of strategic project delivery in HEIs can be seen as an emerging field, the purpose of this study was to assess, critique and synthesise the literature in order to combine perspectives, create initial conceptualisation and provide advancement of knowledge for a new theoretical framework (Torraco, 2005). Furthermore, during the literature search for adequate sources for this project, Svejvig’s (2021) meta-theoretical framework for fostering theory building in PM was considered. Svejvig (2021) identified four ideal types of theories in PM (p. 852):

- (1) the prescriptive theory refers to generic ideal models for the planning and controlling of projects in the sense of how to do something;
- (2) the descriptive theory views projects as social system and temporary organisation which also encompasses classifications, taxonomies and typologies of individuals, groups and project events;
- (3) the predictive theory includes an/the explanatory theory and action-, design research, and it goes beyond description to the prediction of precise relationships between two or more concepts, or predictive statements, such as hypotheses with empirical indicators;
- (4) the practice theory is concerned with defining the procedure by identifying locally situated acts. Regarding praxis, practices and practitioners, it pertains to the situated theory and reflective practice. As not all theories can be assigned to an

ideal type, a hybrid version indicates a possible combination of two or more theory types and may even be the best theories (DiMaggio, 1995).

Svejvig (2021) emphasises that theory building in PM has a clear potential for cross-fertilisation with other research disciplines. Thus, the literature review for this study went beyond the discipline of PM and was not conducted systematically. Instead, it was a consequence of an iterative research process (back and forth) as described by Van de Ven engaged scholarship diamond model (2007, p. 10) that is further discussed in the final chapter below. Within the iterative research process, sense-making is an important component to be acknowledged as it is an action people take to comprehend the situation in which they find themselves (Coetzee and Wilkinson, 2020). It also enables the research to articulate the unknown and to make sense of “streams of input by putting labels on what we experience” in order to reduce confusion (Coetzee and Wilkinson, 2020). Against this background mapping the research field is a sense-making process. According to Gough et al. (2013, in Soaita et al., 2020), three reasons for mapping the research field can be identified: (1) as a research *project in itself*, it can reveal research gaps and conceptual assumptions; (2) as a *stage to synthesis*, it can improve the research questions of the review by selecting subgroups of studies; (3) as *direct input* in the synthesis, it can provide useful contextual information.

Therefore, structuring and visualising the literature journey of this thesis through a sense-making lens is proposed by a synthesising-, thematic-, and contribution mapping as shown below.

Synthesising Mapping: Different disciplines and theories can be used to study a phenomenon. According to Hasanefendic and Donina (2023), higher education organisations operate in highly institutionalised fields where field actors set the rules, regulations, norms and standards of behaviour. These field actors are regulatory groups governmental quality assurance and funding agencies; professional and trade associations; special interest groups; and/or the general public. Likewise, the authors note that many higher education studies addressed policy changes at macro-level and field conditions in which higher education organisations operate and strategise. It is therefore reasonable to use organisational theories to study a phenomenon in HEI. Because higher education organisations interact with their field, Benneworth et al. (2016) conclude that higher education

strategies should not be solely explained by relying on field conditions (as affecting organisational behaviour), nor should they be solely studied by observing internal organisational dynamics. Micelotta et al. (2017) confirm that the interactions between external field dynamics and internal organisational dynamics lead to the emergence of strategising and that organisational member practices must be revealed since they have a significant impact on the outcomes of strategising.

For this reason, an anchored organisational theory such as the (Neo-)Institutional Theory was not adopted as this would result in a limited initial condition for the phenomenon to be investigated. The previously discussed level of strategic management, strategic project management and OPM refer to the context of the construct of an organisation, whereas academic managers as project workers and their competencies are seen as the human shapers of organisational development. Therefore, the two dimensions of “Organisational Design” and “Human Influence on shaping the organisational development” were considered while synthesising the literature as depicted in Figure 4. The presented grid encompasses the literature so far in order understand the case phenomenon of strategic project delivery in HEIs.

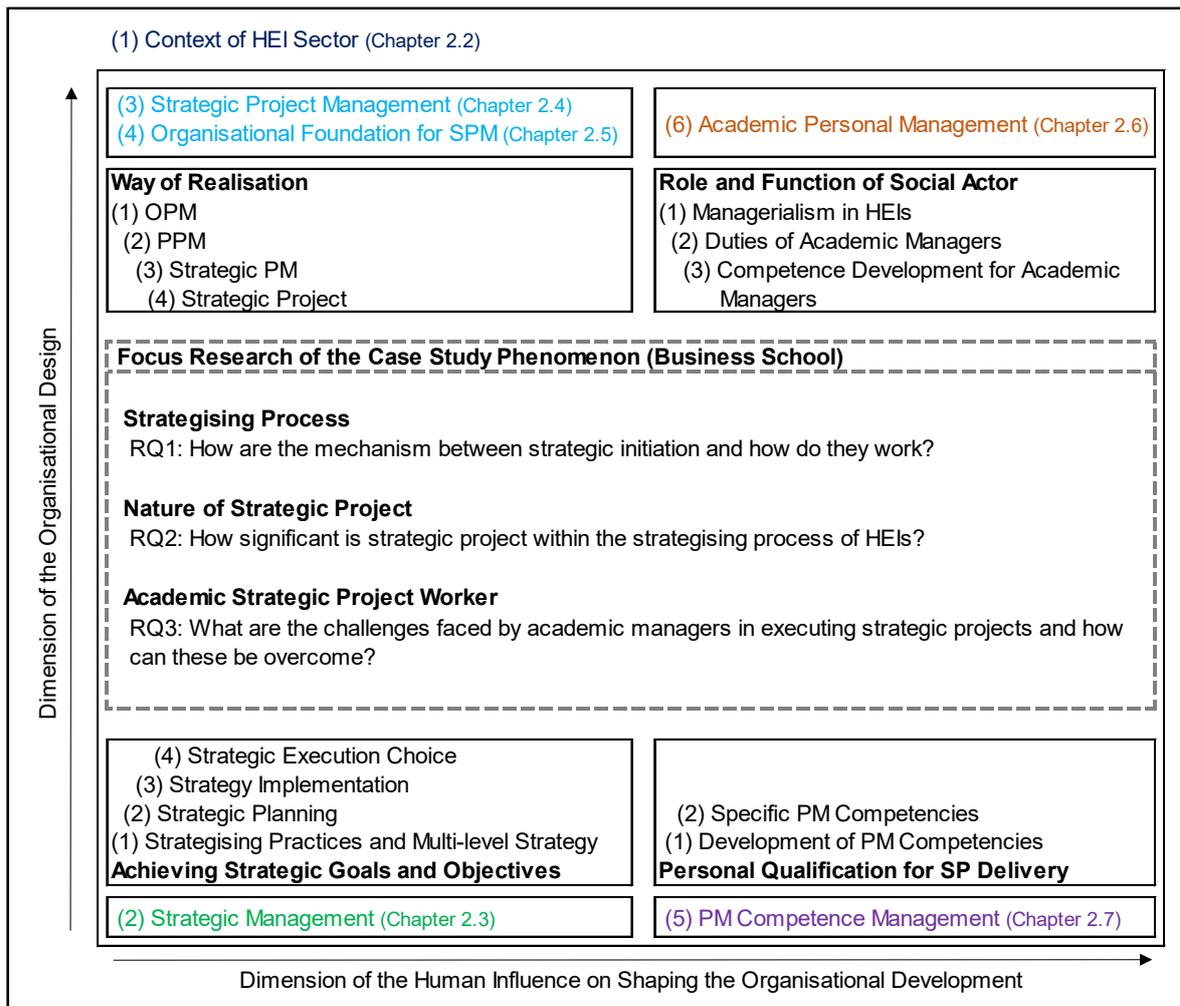


Table 11: Literature Synthesising Grid (author's)

The grid reflects the integrative literature research in which the specific research fields support the exploration of the research questions. Each of these fields can be divided into sub-topics. The proposed scale within the quadrants and in the context of the institution should help to better approximate the research questions. Other research disciplines are deliberately omitted due to risk of complexity increase. The y-axis "Organisational Design" reflects the organisational setting in which the strategic project delivery takes place. Its success depends on the employee depicted as the X-axis "Human Influence on Shaping the Organisational Development" and therefore the main driver for project execution. The employee (or academic manager) is a complex entity in itself. In the following method chapter, the human aspect within an organisational setting is therefore considered by taking an ontological view of constructionism and interpretivism.

Thematic Mapping: The key sources used for literature processing, shown in Figure 6 below, presents the state of knowledge in the discussed fields and should provide a rationale for the choice of problem to be investigated and the methodology selected (Ridley, 2012, p. 3).

Derived from the literature synthesising research grid above, the literature sources used are assigned to the corresponding fields as listed in the tables below.

(1) Context of HEI Sector

Higher Education Institutions	
Significance and Role of HEIs	Naidoo, 2003; Lane 2012; Cantoni and Yuchtman, 2014; Kantor and Whalley, 2014; Toivanen and Väänänen, 2014; Pinheiro and Pillay, 2016; Snellman, 2016; Szyszko, 2016; Mendes de Oliveira et al., 2017; Camilleri and Camilleri, 2018; Stensaker, 2018; Sunder and Antony, 2018; Shames, 2019; Wakkee et al., 2019; Dollinger, 2020; Miotto et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2021; Parker and Martin-Sardesai, 2021; Kempton et al., 2022; Schmelkes, 2022
Organisation, Structure and Performance of HEIs	Terry, 1998; Townley, 2002; Ojokuku, 2013; Klaus-Rosińska and Zablocka-Klucza, 2014; Macheridis, 2015; Vasyakin et al., 2016; Efeoglu and Ulum, 2017; Maassen et al., 2017; Chahar and Hatwal, 2018; Lin and Kellough, 2019; Watermeyer and Tomlinson, 2022
HEIs Strategic Agenda	Benneworth et al., 2016; Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016; Guillotin and Mangematin, 2018; Usli, 2018; Cassell, 2019; Ramisio et al., 2019; Miotto, 2020; Mathies and Ferland, 2023
Challenges of HEIs	Sam and Van der Sijde, 2014; Dameron and Duran, 2018; Posselt et al., 2019; Callender et al., 2020; Pelletier et al., 2022; Bourika, 2023
Institutional Strategy and Performance	Wildavsky, 2010; Deiacio et al., 2012; Shah and Nair, 2014; Ehrenstorfer, 2015; Baxter, 2019; Devinney and Dowling, 2020; Moshtari and Safarpour, 2023
Impact Strategy on Work	Casell, 2019; Ekstedt, 2019; Kozak-Holand and Procter, 2019; Badewi, 2022

Business Schools	
Significance and Role of Business Schools	Amara et al., 2016; Zhao and Ferran, 2016; Hay, 2018; Kaplan, 2018; Ojala, 2018; Teixeira and Maccari, 2018
Challenges	Alajoutsjärvi et al., 2015; Dyllick, 2015; Texeira and Maccari, 2018; Borden et al., 2019; Casell, 2019; Steffen, 2021
Critic Business Schools	Schlegelmilch and Thomas, 2011; Murillo and Vallentin, 2014; Currie et al., 2016; Starkey, 2015

(2) Strategic Management

Strategic Management	
Strategy	Mintzberg et al. 1998; Hambrick and Fredrickson, 2005; Mišanková and Kočišová, 2014; Lundin and Hällgren, 2014; Oyewobi et al., 2015; Hyväri, 2016; Micelotta et al., 2017; Kabui, 2020; Mishra and Mohanty, 2020; Whittington et al., 2020; Tawse and Tabesh, 2021; Bjorvatn, 2022
Strategic Planning	Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Floyd, 2000; Bryson, 2018; Ferrer Romeo, 2018; Powers and Schloss, 2023
Strategy Execution/Implementation	Waterman et al., 1980; Hambrick and Cannella Jr. 1989; Sashittal and Jassawalla, 2001; Bossidy and Charan, 2002; Okumus, 2003; Brenes et al., 2008; Crittenden and Crittenden, 2008; Galbraith, 2011; Kohtamäki et al., 2012; Boyd, 2015; Bonchek, 2017; Srivastava and Sushil, 2017; Olivier and Schwella, 2018; Amoo et al., 2019; Tawse and Tabesh, 2023

Strategic Management in HEIs	
Strategic Management	Talib and Steele, 2000; Boezerooij et al., 2007; Litwin, 2009; Newton, 2010; Ahmed et al., 2015; Hladchenko, 2016; Milian, 2016; Kristensen and Karlsen, 2018; Seeber et al., 2019; Soliman et al., 2019; Arias-Coello et al., 2020; James and Derrick, 2020; Bebbington, 2021; Miller, 2021; Hashim et al., 2022; Bulut-Sahin et al., 2023
National level and countries	Shah and Nair, 2011; Gazizova, 2012; Davis et al. 2016; Milian, 2016; Vuori, 2016; Barbato et al., 2019; Mourato et al., 2019; Hladchenko and Benninghoff, 2020
Type of HEI	Couper and Stoaker 2010; Milian, 2016; Vuori, 2016
Strategising	Ahmed et al., 2015; Fumasoli et al., 2015; Sternberg, 2015; Guillotin and Mangematin, 2016; Immordino et al., 2016; Stensaker and Fumasoli, 2016; Thompson, 2017; Angiola et al., 2019; Stensaker et al., 2019; Bolland, 2020; Kabui, 2020; Miller, 2021; Hashim et al., 2022; Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023; Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023
Strategic Planning	Akyel and Arslankay 2012; Chen et al., 2017; Leal Filho et al., 2018; Morphew et al., 2018; Stensaker et al., 2019; James and Derrick, 2020; Mathew, 2020; Williams, 2021; Mathies and Ferland, 2023
Strategic Implementation	Lenfle, 2008; Huang et al., 2009; Sanchez and Robert, 2010; Besner and Hobby, 2012; Kerzner, 2013; De Haan, 2014; Hladchenko, 2015; Sulkowski, 2018

(3) Strategic Project Management

Project Management	
PM as Science and Research discipline	Bredillet, 2008; Pettigrew, 2011; Söderlund, 2011; Bredillet, 2014; Young, 2015; Padalkar and Gopinath, 2016; Geraldi and Söderlund, 2018; Keegan et al., 2018; Martinsuo and Høverält, 2018; Shenhar et al., 2018; Sabini et al., 2019; Drouin et al., 2021; Brunet, 2022; Ding et al., 2022; Pemsel, 2022; Song et al., 2022; Locatelli, 2023
Historical Development	Packendorff, 1995; Fernandez and Fernandez, 2008; Morris, 2011; Sergi, 2012; Gareil, 2013; Klein, 2016; San Cristóbal, 2017; Kabeyi, 2019; Heumann and Martinsuo, 2021; Turner, 2022
Projectification	Midler, 1995; Lundin et al., 2015; Jensen, 2016; Scranton, 2015; Schoper et al., 2018; Schoper, 2019; Schoper and Ingason, 2019; Jacobsson and Jalocha, 2021
Contested Assumptions in Project Management Research	Engwall, 2003; Kwak and Anbari, 2009; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011; Morris, 2012; Gustavsson et al., 2014; Grabher and Thiel, 2015; Maylor and Söderlund, 2015; Pasian, 2016; Padalkar and Gopinath, 2016; Arto et al., 2017; Siriam, 2017; Dwivedula et al., 2018; Denicol, 2022
Project Type and Forms	Slack, 1983; Turner and Cochrane, 1993; Obeng, 1995; Shenhar et al., 2001; Westerveld, 2003; Söderlund, 2004; Blomquist and Müller, 2006; Dvir et al., 2006; Shenhar and Dvir, 2007; Müller and Turner, 2007; Arto et al., 2008; Cooke-Davies et al., 2009; Jung, 2009; Jenny, 2010; Kuster, 2011; Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014; Dollinger, 2020; Maylor and Turner, 2022
PMO	Aubry et al., 2008; Aubry et al., 2009; Lechler and Cohen, 2009; Bredillet et al., 2018; Salameh, 2014; Pemsel et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2017
Governance	Bekker and Steyn, 2009; Müller and Lecoeuvre, 2014
Principles, Standards and Methodologies	Winter et al., 2006; Crawford et al., 2007; Scott, 2008; Larson and Drexler, 2010; Nicholas and Hidding, 2010; Ashleigh et al., 2012; Lee-Kelley and Blackman, 2012; Hällgren et al., 2012; Nino, 2013; Gojanovic et al., 2016; Nazeer and Marnewick, 2018; Ng and Lee, 2020
Portfolio Management	Shenhar, 2004; Al-Arabi and Al-Sadeq, 2008; Meskendahl, 2010; Al-Tmeemy et al., 2011; Bull et al., 2012; Beringer et al., 2013; Martinsuo, 2013; Hyväri, 2014; De Souza et al., 2015; Tabrizi et al., 2015; Judgev, 2017; Alves and Gonçalves, 2018; Clegg et al., 2018; Orlandi et al., 2020; Saiz, 2022
Project Maturity Models	Judgev and Thomas, 2002; Grant and Pennypacker, 2003; Albrecht and Spang, 2014; Brooks et al., 2014; Pasian, 2014; Anantmula and Rad, 2018; Kerzner, 2019
Benefit	Shi, 2011; Zwikael and Smyrk, 2012; Zwikael et al., 2018; Bjorvatn, 2022
Success	De Wit, 1988; Cook-Davies, 2002; Bryde, 2003; Cooper et al., 2004; Müller and Turner, 2007; Bartis and Mitev, 2008; Ika and Lytyynov, 2009; Fan, 2010; Luras et al., 2010; Patanakul and Shenhar, 2012; Alzahran, 2013; Maghareh and Mohammadzadeh, 2013; Davis, 2014; Mir and Pinnington, 2014; Todorović et al., 2015; Görög, 2016; Tinoco et al., 2016; Sharifi and Safari, 2016; Albert et al., 2017; Kim and Kang, 2017; Tsiga et al., 2017; Abylova and Salykova, 2019; Gunduz and Almujaebh, 2020; Vrchota et al., 2020
Stakeholder	Fernandes et al., 2020
Capability Management	De Melo et al., 2020
Methodologies and Methods	Jason Charvat, 2003; Chin and Spowage, 2010; Eberle, 2011; Špundak et al., 2011; Ruess and Voelpel, 2012; Drob and Zichil, 2013; Mir and Pinnington, 2014; Abramov et al., 2015; Joslin and Müller, 2015; Jovanovic and Beric, 2018; Pace, 2019; McGrath and Whitty, 2020; Dallasega et al., 2021
Project-oriented or Project based Organisations	Lundin and Söderholm, 1995; Nigam and Caswell, 2003; Godenhjelm et al., 2015; Henning and Wald, 2019

(4) Organisational Foundation for SPM

Organisational Foundation for Strategic Project Management	
Implementing Organisational Project Management	Turner, 1999 (cited in Morris and Jamieson, 2005); Maylor and Turner, 2002; Engwall and Jerbrant, 2003; Shenhar, 2004; Srivannaboon, 2006; Aubry et al., 2007; Kohlbacher and Gruenwald, 2011; Aubry et al., 2012; De Souza et al., 2015; Pinto and Winch, 2016; Stretton, 2018; Drouin et al., 2017; Munir et al., 2017; Turner, 2018; Vack et al., 2018; Volden and Andersen, 2018; Müller et al., 2019
PM and Projects in Organisational Context	Gällstedt, 2003; Besner and Hobbs, 2013; Vuori et al., 2013; Nenni et al., 2014; Gungör and Gözlü, 2016; Hermano and Martin-Cruz, 2016; Walker and Lloyd-Walker, 2016; Löwenstedt, 2018; Sun et al., 2018; Wagner, 2018; Turner and Mitev, 2019; Lutas, 2020
OPM in HEIs	Bryde and Leighton, 2009; Burgher and Snyder, 2012; Austin et al., 2013; Shannon and Hartshorne, 2013; Fowler, 2015; Monteiro et al., 2016; Van der Linde and Steyn, 2016; Babaiev et al., 2017; Mendes de Oliveira et al., 2017; Parakhina et al., 2017

Strategic Project Management	
Projects as Driver for Changes	Aubry et al., 2007; Cerne and Jansson, 2019; Huemann, 2022
Projects for Strategic Executions and Implementation	Cleland, 1990; Nicholas, 1990; Shenhar, 2001; Andersen and Jessen, 2003; Morris and Jamieson, 2005; Heerkens, 2007 (cited in Ferrer Romeo, 2018); Kolltveit et al., 2007; Arto et al., 2008; Brown, 2008; Gomes et al., 2008; Young and Jordan, 2008; Cooke-Davies et al., 2009; Patankul and Shenhar, 2012; Anantmula, 2015; Cândido and Santos, 2015; Fernandes, 2015; Sabourin, 2015; Görög, 2016; Carucci, 2017; Holzmann et al., 2017; Kopmann et al., 2017; Pajares et al., 2017; Bjorvatn, 2022; Clegg, 2018; Olivier and Schwella, 2018
Strategic Projects	Aronson et al., 2013; Bora et al., 2017; Fuertes et al., 2020; Martinsuo et al., 2020
Strategic Project Alignment	Young et al., 2012; Voss, 2012; Alsudiri et al., 2013; Aronson et al., 2013; Hoeger, 2013; Martinsuo, 2013; Vuori et al., 2013; Bekker, 2014; Montes-Guerra et al., 2014; Mulla, 2014; Steinþórsson, 2014; Kaier et al., 2015; Steyn and Schnetter, 2015; Gomes, 2016; Samsset and Volden, 2016; Parker et al., 2017; Van der Hoorn and Whitty, 2017; Baptestone and Rabechini, 2018; Marnewick, 2018
Internal Projects	McElroy, 1996
PM System	Cleland and Gareis, 2006; Cooke-Davies et al., 2009

(5) PM Competence Management

Competencies in Delivering Projects	
Skilled Staff in Organisation	Hill and Jones, 2014; Bartłomiej and Przemyslaw, 2016; Walter and Zimmermann, 2016
Skilled Staff for Project Implementation	Zack, 2007; Gomes et al., 2008; Alsudiri et al., 2013; Abou-Warda, 2014; Zahra et al., 2014; Lyken 2018
PM Competencies	Turner and Müller, 2005; Geoghegan and Dulewicz, 2008; Shrivastava, 2008; Biedenbach and Müller, 2011; Ashan et al., 2013; Chipulu et al., 2013; Nahod and Radujković, 2013; Maghareh and Mohammadzadeh, 2013; Loufrani-Fedida and Missonnier, 2015; Blaskovics, 2016; Nijhuis, 2017; Alvarenga, 2020; Noble, 2020; Bolzan, 2021
Competence Research	McClelland and Boyatzis, 1982; Burgoyne, 1989; Hoffmann, 1999; Fitzgerald, 1996; Robotham and Jubb, 1996; Le Boterf, 1998; Kurz and Batram, 2002; Le Deist and Winterton, 2005; Bolden and Gosling, 2006; Teodorescu, 2006; Boyatzis, 2008; Starkweather and Stevenson, 2010; Ofori and Deffor, 2014; Jamil, 2015; Davies and Brady, 2016; Marinho-Araujo and Almeida, 2017; Ni et al., 2018; Moradi, 2019; Khattak and Mustafa, 2019; Li et al., 2020; Salman et al., 2020; De Rezende et al., 2021

(6) Academic Personal Management

Academic Personal Management	
Dean and Department Heads	De Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009; Davies et al., 2016; Stansaker and Fumasoli, 2017; Degn, 2018; Hladchenko and Benninghoff, 2020
Academic Managers	Pepper, 1987; Hancock and Hellawell, 2003; Wolverton et al., 2005; Whitchurch, 2008; Meek et al., 2010; Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Floyd, 2012; Boud and Brew, 2013; Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013; de Haan, 2014; Kallenberg, 2015; Rudhumbu, 2015; Cheng, 2017; Buick et al., 2018; Angiola et al., 2019; Falqueto et al., 2019; Zukas and Malcolm, 2019; Sušan, 2020; Nongna et al., 2021
Project Managers	Kerzener, 2014; Ballesteros-Sánchez et al., 2019; Sundqvist, 2019
Managers / Executives	Dopson et al., 1992; Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Balogun, 2003; Briggs, 2004; Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Deem and Brehony, 2005; Gordon and Whitchurch, 2007; Kallenberg, 2007; Morgan et al., 2007; Naaranoja et al., 2007; Ball, 2008; Mantere, 2008; De Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009; Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Turnbull, 2012; Whitchurch and Gordon, 2013; Doorasamy 2015; Van der Merwe and Nienaber, 2015; Davies et al., 2016
Competence Development Academic Managers	Inman, 2009; Knight et al., 2007; Cardoso et al., 2016; Roxá and Mårtensson, 2017; Camilleri and Camilleri, 2018; Böckelmann et al., 2019; Dopson et al., 2019; Kraimer et al., 2019; Siekkinen, 2019; Butler, 2020; Moyer, 2020

Table 12: Key sources used for literature processing (author's)

Wherever possible, multiple sources for a statement or description have been deliberately sought to ensure a certain validity over time. Many of the sources are from peer-reviewed PM journals that attempt to link PM with other organisational topics. But those sources are not always sufficient to answer the research questions of the thesis. Accordingly, additional peer-reviewed journals and some books from other disciplines were consulted. In addition, the table below shows the literature sources used to better understand the research journey as proposed above.

Theoretical Foundation	
Literature Review Process	Garfield, 1998; Whitemore and Knafli, 2005; Nicolaisen, 2007; Ridley, 2012; Gentles et al., 2016; Paul et al., 2021
Theory Building and Contribution	DiMaggio, 1995; Svevig, 2021; Gough et al., 2013 (cited in Soaita et al., 2020); Makadok et al., 2018; Tsang, 2022; Kesting, 2023
Bridging Theory and Practice	Whetten, 1989; Kondrat, 1992; Rousseau, 2006; Van de Ven, 2007; Makadok et al., 2018
Organisational Theory	Manske, 1987; Sutton and Staw's, 1995; Booth and Rowlinson, 2013; Oliver, 2019; Coetzee and Wilkinson, 2020
Methodological Design of the Study	Burawoy, 1998; Eisenhardt, 1989; Byrne, 2004; Seawright and Gerring, 2008; Stake, 2005; Silverman, 2014; Ridder, 2016; Yin, 2018; Piekkari and Welch, 2019
Research Impact	Buxton and Hanney, 1996; Zahra and Newey, 2009; Greenhalgh et al., 2016; Penfield et al., 2014; REF21, 2023; SIAMPI, 2011

Table 13: Key sources used for theoretical foundation (author's)

The question arises to what extent the sources employed can be merged into a holistic contribution. The overview of the literature used is as below.

Contribution mapping	
Modes of Theorising	Argyris and Schon, 1974; Patterson, 1980 (cited in Love, 2012); Healy, 2005; Beckett, 2006; Evans and Guido, 2012; Love, 2012; Mathis and Ferland, 2023
Levels of Analysis	Falqueto et al., 2020
Phenomena	Brookes, 2006
Causal Mechanisms	Cohen and March's, 1974; Bartunek and Seo, 2002; Teffer, 2014; Makadok, 2018; San Cristóbal et al., 2018; Aristarchova and Fakhruddinov, 2019
Constructs/Variab	Bartunek and Seo, 2002; Aspers and Corte, 2019; Calder et al., 2020
Boundary	Bacharach, 1989; Whetten, 1989; Busse et al., 2017; Makadok et al., 2018

Table 14: Key sources used for contribution mapping (author's)

This merging is proposed with the help of a contribution mapping and presented later following the findings in Chapter 5 (Proposed Framework and Recommendations). Research Sequence

2.9 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter sought to critically analyse the literature on how strategic implementation through projects in HEIs is organised. It further aimed to explore how academic work in the form of projects aligns with strategic initiatives. The background to these questions is based on the author's observation that, although the literature deals specifically with projects as a strategic implementation practice, to date it has only referred to certain sectors and particular sorts of organisations. The Manifesto for PM Research (Locatelli, 2023) justifies the increasing importance of projects with the terms "project society" (Lundin et al., 2016) and "projectification" (Midler, 1995). These express that projects shape people, organisations and society, as well as the sustainable transformation of the business world in terms of innovation, change and operation as outlined in Chapter 2.4. While the influence of projectification in commercial organisations has been widely studied (e.g., Schoper and Ingason, 2018), this is not clear for HEIs. Whether projectification is a driver or a limitation, and how it guides the further organisational development of HEIs, remains unclear.

Consequently, the reason for assessing the literature is to examine the example case and to explore to what extent the business school is pursuing a strategic execution practice. With the help of existing research contributions, an approach should be identified that determines whether the success of HEIs can be attributed to the successful execution of strategic projects. While operational tasks can be seen as a visible and measurable business artifact leading to successful performance results (Nigam and Caswell, 2003), the reason for being of clearly identifiable strategic endeavours can be blurred in the one's own organisation. It might be that the organisation is flourishing but without a structured PM environment. Or conversely, only a structured PM environment works for executing successful strategic projects. Thus, it is the intention to contribute to the literature and practice by proposing ways to enhance how strategic projects are managed, delivered and reviewed in the future in HEIs. Adjusting strategic projects' organisational settings to ensure the maximum benefits will be explored.

In order to find such ways, a sequence of specific topics was proposed to identify gaps in the literature and to then pose research questions accordingly. A literature

mapping, reflecting the current state of contributions in the literature, as well as an overview of components for the data collection build-up forms the conclusion.

Context of the HEI Sector: The education sector is a growing industry. HEIs are crucial to the prosperous development of nations as they generate and distribute knowledge, thereby promoting innovation and fighting poverty. In particular, business schools create value in the forms of academic, personal and public; or social value. Yet business schools have been widely criticised for decades and face equally significant challenges. Accordingly, the design of their strategic agenda and the corresponding successful implementation is crucial for the continued survival of HEIs. The implementation of strategies requires efficient and effective resource management; its goal is to ensure as much benefit as possible for the organisation, all stakeholders and all beneficiaries. Particularly in the case of business schools standing in the light of public service mandates, the careful use of resources is expected by business schools' stakeholders, taxpayers and governments (SERI, 2022). PM provides valuable support in carefully managing resources such as cost tracking, and projects are a proven form of successful strategy execution in various sectors.

Nonetheless, management education is led by business schools, and in this environment, PM does not have a high status in terms of prestige or recognition compared to other traditional disciplines such as strategy or marketing (Shenhar et al., 2018). But the literature shows sufficient evidence that the establishment of a PM in HEIs can result in added value. Using the example of a successfully business school the process of project stratification will be demonstrated. Following the PMI concept of Portfolio Management (PMI, 2013, p. 8), a multi-level approach is proposed. This technique reflects a linear top-down path to better identify the individual implementation steps of the projects, therefore offering the possibility to highlight the individual processes and challenges at each stage. The process steps are identified with the help of the project managers involved.

Strategic Management: To cope with their multiple challenges, HEIs need established and functional strategic management, which is differentiated into strategic planning, implementation and control. The literature identifies a number of factors that need to be considered in an effective strategy process. On the one hand, organisational determinants such as structures, processes and hierarchy (hard

factors) play a role. On the other hand, the organisational culture, mainly influenced by the top management, also determines the way of communication and the motivation of the employees (soft factors). The strategising process can be either top-down or bottom-up, taking into account the power, legitimacy and urgency of employees as influenced stakeholders and thus creating a common understanding of the strategy. In this respect, the mindset of academics and their ability to think strategically must be considered within the strategy process (de Haan, 2014).

Strategic Project Management: The assumption regarding strategy implementation is bipolar as it is carried out either through process-oriented tasks (the aspect of operational repeatability) or through projects (the aspect of uniqueness). A mixed form is scarcely described in the literature and seldom evident in practice.

Alignment to the HEI Strategy: The literature provides various examples of linking and aligning business strategy and project executions, which can be done either through individual projects or by means of an established PM within the organisation. Considering the suitable research method, academics propose different forms of how PM is perceived in the literature. In this context, the business- and strategic-oriented view of Shenhar and Dvir (2007) is adopted here, which interprets projects as having a strategic role in organisations. In light of this, the first research question emerges regarding what role is assigned to a strategic project within the strategising process of HEIs. In addition, how such projects contribute to the overall strategy will be explored.

Organisational Foundation for SPM: In the last 20 years, proposals such as PPM and PMM have been established in various forms to execute projects in a progressive way and to increase organisational capability. In this regard, the successful organisational implementation of PM has gained in importance. The proposed model by Müller et al. (2019) considers the integration of all project management-related activities throughout the organisational hierarchy or network. For this thesis, this model will be used as an appropriate systemic way to assess OPM in HEIs. It aims to explore the necessary conditions for fostering a PM in an organisational environment which foster strategic projects.

The Academic Manager as a Strategic Project Worker: The role of academics in HEIs has changed over the last few years. In addition to traditional teaching and

research, they are increasingly becoming professional managers with corresponding performance measurements. The literature assigns academic managers an important responsibility in the successful implementation of strategic initiatives and the related organisational changes. The growing focus on task-specific and time-limited tasks of academics with the resulting pressure to perform is recognised because of projectification. Consequently, academic managers are becoming project workers.

A large number of PM methodologies, tools, techniques, guidelines and best practices are provided by scholars and PM associations. For the application of these proposals, the overall context must be understood. Dwivedula et al. (2018) stress the importance of having a deeper understanding of how the project interacts with its environment and the many project-related components. In relation to HEIs, projects are considered a “practopoietic system” which consists of elements within the system. These elements are constantly interacting with a dynamic environment to develop processes based on categorisation, decision and comprehension of stimulus. Against this background, the third research question pertains to what PM practices academic managers adopt to handle challenges in strategic project work. This inquiry aims to understand the challenges that academic managers deal with and how to methodically overcome them.

Competencies in Delivering Strategic Projects: Competence research shares a wealth of suggestions on which competencies are appropriate for project work. Some researchers attempt to assign PM competencies to the corresponding project types and sectors. In addition, they agree that the success of a project depends on the corresponding competencies of the project manager. But competence research is not very focused on the individual acquisition process of the proposed PM competencies and the further corresponding development. Hence, the research question seeks to identify the most utilised PM competencies in successful strategic project delivery for an academic manager. The most appropriate way of acquiring these competencies will be investigated as well.

Lastly, scholars agree that projects can initiate a wide variety of changes in organisations. Thus, the findings of the research questions will also explain how managing project work is changing in HEIs’ strategy target fulfilment.

Components for Data Collection Build-up

The discussed strategising sequence above forms the basis for the methodological research process described in the next chapter. In search of answering the research questions, the proposed way of inquiry is aligned to the outlined levels of the PMI concept and draws from the presented literature mapping as depicted in Figure 5 below.

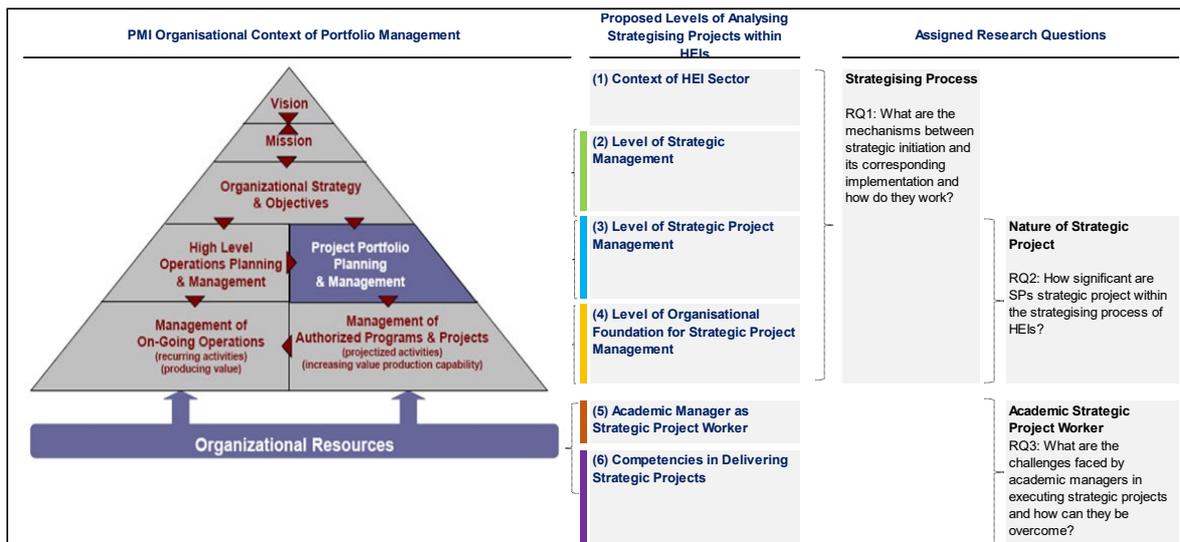


Table 15: Assigned Research Questions to the Strategising Levels (author's)

Each level is to be explored by using the impact case in the attempt to achieve a holistic understanding of how the construct of SPs is embedded within the organisation. Learning from the experiences of the academic project workers and selected involved staff units through interviewing shall result in usable data to delve even deeper into the presented thematic levels and gain a deeper understanding of their interconnectedness and its impact on the execution of SP. Qualitative interviews are especially helpful as a research method for gaining access to people's attitudes and values, which cannot always be observed or accommodated in a conventional questionnaire, as Byrne (2018, pp. 220) explains. Based on these findings, a framework with a generic claim for HEIs will be presented in Chapter 5, which introduces an organisational analysis perspective for the implementation of SP and also recommends specific interventions for the impact case.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1 Methodological Design of the Study

The aforementioned sequence for strategising projects was proposed to understand the view and the handling of strategic projects in the context of practice at HEIs. An internationally oriented business school was chosen as a case study to evaluate the answers to the research questions. A research approach must consider the methodology which is defined as “a collection or system of procedures, concepts, and norms for controlling a certain field, as in the arts or sciences” (Dictionary, 2020). Textbooks differ in methodological categorisation and prioritisation as evidenced in work by Saunders et al. (2012); Easterby-Smith (2013); and Bryman and Bell (2015). A research sequence was therefore created as a guide based on the research textbooks above (Appendix 2) to create uniformity in the methodological procedure and, likewise, in the consideration of all important thematic elements to achieve the research objectives of this thesis. The structure of this chapter, which is based on the research sequence in the appendix, is shown in Figure (6) below.

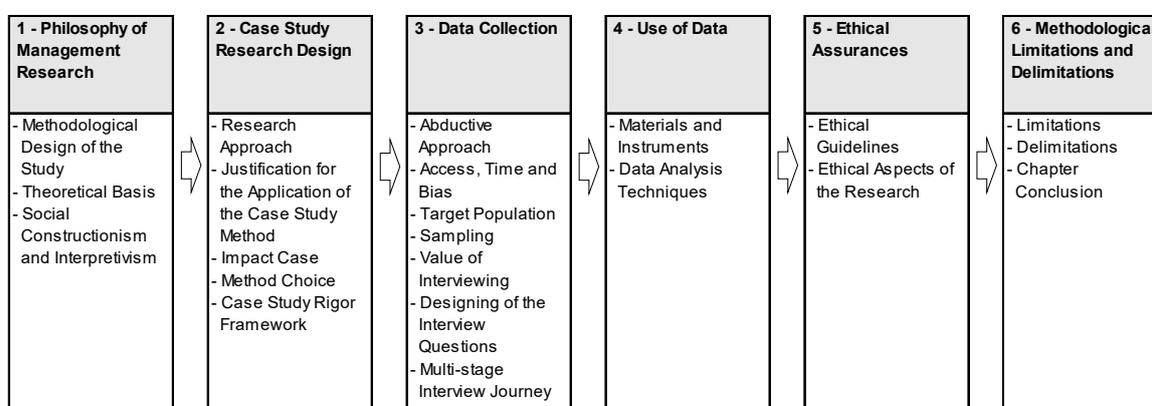


Table 16: Structure of Chapter 3 “Research Methods” (author’s)

The first stage includes the aspects of ontology and epistemology for this thesis as well as the nature of the research design. In the second stage, the choice and justification of case study research are described, and the chosen case is presented. The third stage deals with the data collection and techniques of this case. This is followed by a description of the applied instruments and presentation of the analysed data in the fourth stage. The fifth stage then comprises the outline of the ethical assurances, which leads to the consideration of limitations and delimitations with the chapter conclusion in the sixth stage.

Theoretical Basis

Business research in management is typically viewed in the framework of social sciences such as sociology and economics (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 5). In this context, research is typically a non-linear process. Weicks' (2002) idea of "disciplined imagination", in which the researcher engages in "mental experiments" or trials, provides a fairly formalised manner to conceptualise research (Cornelissen, 2006). Consequently, the knowledge transfer issue, which is defined as the limited application of research knowledge for science and practice, is addressed by organisation and management studies (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 3). Knowledge within these studies should be regarded as practical knowledge which is recognised as one's own mode (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 3); tailored to a professional area and community; and tied to a particular scenario (Aram and Salipante, 2003). This view takes into account a method of knowledge production established by Gibbons et al. (1994, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 8), which pursues a transdisciplinary research process involving academics, policymakers and practitioners, and is not motivated by an academic objective. Furthermore, Kidd (1959, p. 5) emphasises the kind of practical research where "the man working at the applied science end of the spectrum pursues a subject because it has a link to a particular practical purpose". Greek antiquity's most renowned minds, including Socrates and Aristotle, have had a significant influence on management research philosophy. These philosophers sought the truth and purpose of life, and their worldviews are still acknowledged as fundamentally accurate for research even today. Thus, the philosophical study of existence and the nature of reality are topics that fall under the umbrella of ontology (Saunders, 2012, p. 130; Easterby-Smith, 2013, p. 25). In turn, the issue of what is deemed appropriate knowledge in a subject of study is addressed by epistemology (Saunders, 2012, p. 130; Easterby-Smith, 2013, p. 25).

Social Constructionism and Interpretivism

The case study organisation takes an ontological position within subjectivism, or "social constructionism", which holds that social phenomena are produced by the perceptions and ensuing acts of social actors. The data collection will be done by the academic managers who act as social actors in the strategising process. From an ontological standpoint, this procedure concerns the interpretivism paradigm in relation to Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms (1979, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 35). With simultaneous shaping conceptions of causality and a

multifaceted, holistic and contextual understanding of reality, interpretivism maintains that knowledge is socially constructed, emergent and almost objectively decided (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Black, 2006). According to Yanow (2015), interpretivism is a phrase that encompasses numerous schools of thought, such as phenomenology, hermeneutics and ethnomethodology. Sandberg (2005) concludes that all these different schools of thought have a shared phenomenological foundation which maintains that people and the world are intimately linked through lived experience. As interpretive research seeks to make sense of occurrences by using the meanings that people give to them (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991), its qualitative research strategy is typically associated with the induction or abduction of, which is described later. The interpretive study is value-bound because the researcher remains subjective, participatory and without a privileged point of observation (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Saunders et al., 2012). In addition, the aim is to understand the meanings behind human behaviour as well as a component of what is being investigated. Van de Ven (2007, p. 27) categorises this type of study as collaborative research, wherein insiders and outsiders work together to produce the research process. The axiology of interpretivism is similar to Bourdieu's notion of habitus in that interpretivism sees it as a stage from which individual interactions are mediated by the environment (Anderson et al., 2010). This perspective is characterised by the development of theories with untested hypotheses in situations where a small data sample enables the comprehension of a phenomenon and the development of a framework (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 144; Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 23). This type of study, which aims to examine and learn about a phenomenon by raising questions, also functions as an exploratory study for the impact case (Yin, 2018, p. 10). This thesis employs primary research in which information is gathered through interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 12) with a focus on managers with responsibilities. According to Rowley (2012), interviews may be preferred to questionnaires not just because they offer more information and insights such as experiences, attitudes or processes, but also because key informants are more receptive to an interview than other data gathering methods. The focus of interpretive social science, which is connected to qualitative research, is on social actors' understanding of social situations and their sensible interpretations (Gephardt, 2018).

3.2 Case Study Research Design

Research Approach

Case studies, which are defined as “a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings” (Eisenhardt 1989, pp. 534), have become a popular research strategy in social sciences (Vizcarguenaga-Aguirre and López-Robles, 2020). A case study should be chosen for being “epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience” and from which the human studies can be learned favourably (Stake, 1978). This is consistent with Silverman’s (2014, p. 60) recommendation to use purposive sampling when evaluating a case by carefully analysing the population’s interaction units and parameters. Likewise, Yin (2018, p. 15) suggests that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are unclear. Rashid et al. (2019) state that describing real-life phenomena rather than developing normative statements is characteristic for case studies and allows the researcher to focus on individuals’ behaviours, attributes, actions and interactions.

Case study research has the advantage of enabling researchers to examine issues and causal connections in circumstances when controlled experiments cannot be carried out (Brookes et al., 2016). Brookes et al. (2016) contend that because different features are intricately interrelated, the context and entirety of complex events may not lend themselves the destruction of their component pieces. Therefore, in order to comprehend the situation, the whole view must be seen. On the contrary, criticisms of and debates about case studies are long-standing, as Tight (2010) notes that case studies should be denigrated as having insufficient precision (quantification), objectivity and rigor. In addition, case study theories and results can often not be generalised as there are too many factors at play (Brookes et al., 2016). Against this background, Yin (2018) argues that a case study is only one of several ways to conduct social science research, and it is adjacent with experiments, surveys, histories and the analysis of archival information. According to Gibbert et al. (2010) and in the context of Figure 1, the strategic management area has benefited greatly from the use of case studies as instruments to develop and test theory.

Justification for the Application of the Case Study Method

The use of a case study is justified to answer the research questions of what the mechanism between strategic initiation and its corresponding implementation work (the strategising process) does; what signification is assigned to a strategic project within the strategising process of HEIs (the nature of a strategic project); and how strategic projects are executed by academic managers (strategic project workers). First, the fulfilment of strategic objectives through projects can trigger different changes in an organisation and thus influence the behaviour of the employees. In this respect, this mechanism can be classified as an area of social science. Furthermore, strategic PM can be regarded as a contemporary phenomenon. The use of a case study under these aspects is therefore appropriate, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and no other method seems better (Tight, 2010).

The 21st century presents several challenges for HEIs due to the rapid change in the technology, economy, environment, demographics, politics, labour market as well as in health issues (Hamzah, 2020). Because business schools must cope with such challenges, taking a business school as a representative organisation for the HEI sector is justified (Collinson, 2022; Shinn, 2022). Furthermore, business schools play an important role in the economic development of society as business educators train the future workforce in the field of management. These (future) managers take on responsible tasks in organisations and influence economic activities with their newly learned knowledge. In this regard, business educators often teach topics such as strategy and PM, along with the aspects of efficiency, effectiveness, benefit and sustainability. A case study can be used to determine how consciously business schools deal with these issues in their own organisations. In particular, the purpose of strategy and strategic projects is to grow and sustain an organisation like a business school.

Many scholars, including Eisenhardt, 1989, Flyvbjerg, 2006, and Yin, 2018, advocate the application of case studies to develop and test theories. Nevertheless, case studies as a research method are often criticised for their inherent inability to meet standard scientific criteria. A single case is a valid technique to acquire knowledge as long as internal validity, construct validity, external validity and reliability are considered (Gibbert et al., 2008). The impact case positions itself as a

critical single case design, holistic as a single unit of analysis. Its “critical” label signifies that the case determines the theoretical propositions by confirming them or seeking an alternative set of explanations (Yin, 2018, p. 49). However, this typologisation is condemned as too narrow because it neglects the wide variety of studies conducted in practice (Lee et al., 2007), especially the generalisation from a single instance. It contrasts the view of using multiple cases for excellent theory-building from case studies (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2018). The question of whether social phenomena should be examined using the same techniques as those in natural science has been a topic of long-standing debate in literature. In view of the issue of generalisation in case studies brought up by natural scientists, Stake contends that not all research work should aim for generalisation (2000, p. 245). The reason is that the researcher may become preoccupied with other factors that are important for comprehending the case itself as a result of this narrow focus. Stake (2000) also emphasises that the case study’s goal is to portray the example, not to represent the world. A single case typically provides more accurate knowledge of the circumstances under which the phenomenon occurred and is therefore more dependable than a comparison of two cases, for instance. Addressing the criticism of insufficient generalisability, Mariotto (2014) refers to various scientists’ arguments which pertain to transferability. Transferability should not be interpreted as reproducing a single case’s results under identical circumstances in earlier investigations in order to reproduce the results (as in statistical generalisation); it is more likely the ability to generalise findings from the case study to similar situations while taking into account the unique characteristics of new contexts.

In this view, a number of proponents favour case study research, especially in single instances. For example, Kennedy (1979) emphasises that it is important not to underestimate the value of single cases when generating non-statistical inferences, predominantly when new paths emerge for which the inference rules have not yet been established. Likewise, in their seminal work about the in-depth study of single cases, Dyer and Wilkins (1991) defend the rich contextual understanding that they achieved from their in-depth experience of a single setting. Similarly, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that concrete case knowledge is more useful than the pursuit of prediction theories and universals. In particular, a single case is beneficial for generating and testing a hypothesis and is no more biased than any other mode of

inquiry toward the validation of the researcher's prior views (Flyvbjerg 2006). This is also supported by Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), who assert that a single case can better allow for the development of more complex theories than several cases because a single case researcher can tailor their theory to the many details of a specific situation. Conversely, the relationships that are reproduced across most or all of the examples are the only ones that multiple-case researchers keep according to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007). Mariotto (2014) draws the conclusion that a single case can have a useful role in theory development if it is especially revelatory, is exemplary or provides opportunities for unique research access. Therefore, the cases should be chosen because they are predominantly appropriate for the investigation of a certain theme, permitting links between constructs that will lead to theoretical breakthroughs, rather than because they are representative of a population (Mariotto, 2014).

The Impact Case

Strategy implementation plays a particularly important role in the case of growing business educator organisations (Kirinić and Kozina, 2016; Kabui, 2020). Therefore, the unit of study is a successful growing business school chosen as a single case. A series of international quality standards accompanies the school on its way to becoming a well-recognised international knowledge institution. Based on the legislative requirements of the government, the accreditation bodies and the international ranking policies, the school must fulfil various performance mandates such as teaching, conducting research projects and submitting publications (Cadez et al., 2017; Boric et al., 2024). Thus, the academic departments of the case are responsible for appropriately implementing the mandates simultaneously. The organisation of the school itself can be described as highly formalised with rigid structures where academic managers play the key actors for fulfilling the strategic objectives. Academic managers are professors and senior lecturers with multifaceted responsibilities. Whereas until approximately seven to eight years ago management positions were also given to people with industry- and extensive management experience, the focus is now on the leadership of units in the academic departments by professors only with a long publication record in international renowned journals. Years of socialisation in or through academia have become a prerequisite for performing the newly appointed management functions. This is related to the school's efforts to foster a distinguished international reputation, in

particular through the visibility of research and publication activities, and has therefore become a strategic imperative.

The business school's organisation is divided into academic and a department for operational support services. Every unit of the academic departments can offer its specific services and products as it is most familiar with the market conditions. Most of the programmes are assessed with credit points according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). During their studies, the majority of students have part- or full-time employment in SMEs or international organisations. Over the last 30 years, the institution has gradually achieved a position from a small local HE entity to one that is part of the international league of respected business schools. In addition, within the last few years, revenue shares have risen to double figures in numerous areas, including: research funding; the number of employees; the number of continuing education participants; the number of Master students; and the further development of aligned partnerships with other business schools worldwide (official brochures 2016-2023). This upward trend is not typical for other HEIs, although they also need to compete in the changing, more competition-driven market. In this respect, this institution serves as a suitable and representative single case for the growth of a business school in the context of a challenging environment within the HEI industry.

Based on the previously listed arguments and advantages of a single case study, the choice of using a single setting for data collection is appropriate. The choice of methods is discussed in more detail below, taking into consideration the aspects of reliability and validity.

Method Choice

In this impact case, a mono method was applied. With reference to Yin's (2018, p. 102) classification of unit of analysis, data collection took place from an individual perspective about the organisation (design), in particular academic managers as the primary unit of measurement (data collection source). Furthermore, the delivery of strategic projects in a business school takes place in a social construct (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 132). Consequently, the focus of the proposed research strategy is on extracting the wealth of information from social actors, including their tacit knowledge. This data should first be fully analysed within

the scope of this thesis and not initially be put into quantifiable form with the risk of distortion through researchers' biases (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Compositional structure: This thesis applies a linear-analytic course of action which starts by collecting all data and then analysing it. This contrasts with the iterative approach in which researchers follow an interplay between data collection and data analysis. The rigour for a case study can be increased through the criteria of internal validity, construct validity, external validity, communicative validity, pragmatic validity and reliability (Tsoukas, 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Gibbert et al., 2008; Gibbert and Ruigrok, 2010; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 192; Mariotto, 2014; Avenier and Thomas, 2015). They are described as follows:

Internal validity: The researcher needs to develop an argument with a consistent causal construction for the case study to have internal validity. To accomplish this, a concise study framework must be developed which is derived from the literature and focuses on the connections between variables and results. As internal validity refers to the data analysis, three measures must be considered. First, a distinct research framework as depicted in Figure 1 should reflect the logical connection between variables (individual subtopics) and the outcome. Second, one should use a pattern matching approach to compare empirically observed patterns; pattern matching for this case is outlined in the section on data analysis below. Third, using data triangulation helps a researcher to validate findings by using other viewpoints. The findings were presented to experts, who then gave professional feedback which is explained in Chapter 4 (Results and Discussion) below.

Construct validity: For the reader to understand how the researcher progressed from the original research questions and arrived at the final conclusions, it is essential to develop a clear chain of evidence. The case study can be aligned with normal-science research streams due to the careful development of conceptions, metrics and testable theoretical assumptions. Regarding the impact case, the research objectives and questions are aligned with the contemporary research stream of strategic management, PM and competence research in the context of HEIs. Furthermore, two pilot interviews were conducted before the data gathering process in order to calibrate the logical line between the research framework, interview questions and expected outcome of the answers.

External validity: This criterion refers to the generalisability of the findings. The application of the criteria for the generalisability of results, such as in scientific or positivist field studies, is controversial for case study research, as discussed above. Regarding the impact case, the external validity is seen in the context of transferability. Scholars state that it is the researcher's role to present adequate contextual information to allow the reader to decide whether the traits and conclusions of a single case may be applied to other contexts or cases. A single case study should be illustrated so that its unique characteristics can be captured by the reader. Furthermore, Stake (1995, cited in Brymann, p. 68) asserts that the chance to learn should be the primary consideration in the selection of cases. In particular for this case, the generalisability refers to the experiential learning approach as proposed by Donmoyer (1990, cited in Mariotto, 2014), who views single case studies as vicarious experiences. This kind of experience involves the transfer of knowledge from one situation or case to another; it also involves processes of assimilation, accommodation, integration and differentiation. Thus, vicarious experiences aim to expand the range of interpretations available to the reader. Moreover, reading from the researcher's perspective allows the reader to see details that they might have otherwise overlooked. Personal barriers to the assimilation of the phenomenon are also reduced when individuals share others' experiences, making the reader's learning process easier. The aspects of a vicarious experience in the impact case will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

Communicative validity: This focuses on meaning coherence, which requires that interpretations are consistent with the collected and studied empirical data. The concept of coherence is based on the hermeneutic circle and calls for the implementation of an iterative process in which conflicting interpretations can be assessed in terms of how coherent they are with the actual data. Such an iterative process is applied in this case in the search for divergent interpretations.

Pragmatic validity: The problem of the potential difference between what people claim they do and what they actually do is addressed through pragmatic validity. Building pragmatic validity entails the identification of potential disparity through participant observation or follow-up questions that repeatedly embed the assertions

in real-world contexts. A follow-up query is considered in the interview procedure as explained in the proposed overview for interview questions below.

Transgressive validity: This alerts the researcher to possible conceivably unresolvable conflicts and inconsistencies that could otherwise go unnoticed in the pursuit of communicative and pragmatic validity. For the impact case, a systematic process is undertaken to identify differences and contradictions.

Reliability: This criterion refers to the repeatability of the results of the study. If other researchers use the same methodological procedure, they should be able to reach the same insights and conclusions as the original researcher. Therefore, the transparency of the research journey is crucial. For the impact case, the research process with the corresponding rationale is presented in detail in the following text sections below and should be replicable in other business schools with similar organisational settings as indicated above.

Scandura and Williams (2000, p. 1263) state that “without rigour, relevance in management research cannot be claimed”. As case study rigour is widely seen as a seriously problematic field in management research (Gibbert et al., 2008; Avenier and Thomas, 2015), this thesis attempts to address this concern in Figure 7 in the next text section. An overview is given for the above-mentioned validities to ensure the rigour in the presented case study.

Case Study Rigour Framework

As stated above, case study research has often been criticised in literature for: its inappropriate method in fulfilling research objectives; the opacity at drawing conclusions from data; the inadequate consideration of validity and reliability; and the correct interpretation of the findings (Goffin et al., 2019). Therefore, transparency is crucial; nevertheless, Pratt et al. (2019) argue that rigour should not be used as a “one-size-fits-all qualitative template”, but instead be weighed against paradigmatic coherence and pluralism. Against this background, the research rigour of the impact case will be reflected in the framework below (Figure 7) in order to give full transparency. The figure provides an overview of the discussed validity types and reliability in literature and is applied to the case. The criteria are subdivided into four parts: Literature; Research Objectives and Questions; Data Collection and Analysis; and Feedback and Conclusions.

Criteria	Internal Validity	Construct Validity	Communicative Validity	Pragmatic Validity	Transgressive Validity	External Validity	Reliability
Underlying theory (Tsoukas, 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Gibbert et al., 2008; Ruigrok, 2010; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 192; Mariotto, 2014; Avenier and Thomas, 2015)	Development of an argument with a consistent causal construction for the case study.	Clear chain of evidence: understanding the progress of the researcher from the original research questions to the final conclusions.	Focuses on meaning coherence, which requires that interpretations be consistent with the collected and studied empirical data.	The problem of potential difference between what people claim they do and what they actually do.	Possible conceivably unresolvable conflicts and inconsistencies that could otherwise go unnoticed in the pursuit of communicative and pragmatic validity.	Theories must be demonstrated to explain occurrences not only in the environment in which they are examined but also in other environments.	The consistency with which occurrences are classified as belonging to the same category by various observers or circumstances.
1 - Literature							
Recommended by theory	A concise study framework, derived from literature, that focuses on the connections between variables and results.	Case study is aligned with normal-science research streams due to the careful development of conceptions, metrics and testable theoretical assumptions.				Differentiation between statistical generalisation and analytical generalisation.	
Applied to the Impact Case	Chapter 2.1 Research Framework: Levels of Strategising Projects within HEIs as shown in the literature chapter.	Chapter 2.8 Derived from various research streams and disciplines, coherence is given in the presented literature map.				Chapter 7.2 External validity is seen in the context of transferability.	
2 - Research Objectives and Questions							
Recommended by theory		The research objectives and research questions are aligned with the contemporary research stream of strategic management, OPM and competence research in the context of HEIs.				The chance to learn should be the primary consideration in the selection of the case.	
Applied to the Impact Case		Chapter 1.3 Five research objectives and three research questions are derived and aligned with the proposed literature map.				Chapter 7.1 The proposed ROs and ROs mirror the purpose of learning from the impact case setting.	
3 - Data Collection and Analysis							
Recommended by theory	Using a pattern matching approach in order to compare empirically observed patterns.	Maintain a clear chain of evidence.	The concept of coherence is based on the hermeneutic circle and calls for the implementation of an iterative process in which conflicting interpretations can be assessed in terms of how coherent they are with the actual data.	A potential disparity through participant observation or follow-up questions that repeatedly embed the assertions in real-world contexts.	Sensitivity to possible differences in interpretations among participants.	As neither single nor multiple case studies allow for statistical generalisation, inferring conclusions about a population are proposed through analytical generalisation.	Detailed data presentations that make minimal inferences are always preferable to researchers' presentations of their own (high-inference) summaries of their data.
Applied to the Impact Case	Chapter 3.4 Pattern matching with Excel	Chapter 4.3 Two pilot interviews were conducted before the data gathering process in order to calibrate the logical line between research framework, interview questions and the expected outcome of the answers.	Chapter 3.3 Iterative process is applied in the search for divergent interpretations.	Chapter 4.3 Follow-up queries are conducted during the interview meetings.	Chapter 4.3 Systematical process is undertaken to identify differences and contradictions.	Chapter 4.2 / 5.1 / 5.2 Presenting adequate contextual information to allow the reader to decide whether the traits and conclusions of a single case may be applied to other contexts or cases.	Chapter 4.3 The following steps are considered: - Tape recording for interviews - Careful transcription of these recordings - The use of many fixed-choice answers and/or interrater reliability checks on the coding of answers to open-ended questions - The presentation of clear extracts of data in the research report.
4 - Feedback and Conclusion							
Recommended by theory	Using data triangulation helps a researcher to validate findings by using other viewpoints.	Maintain a clear chain of evidence.				Considering the experiential learning approach in a single case setting.	The reader must rely on the researcher's account of what happened.
Applied to the Impact Case	Chapter 4.3 (Phase 4) The findings were presented to experts to receive professional feedback.	Chapter 7.1 and 7.2 Findings are compared with research objectives and questions in order to draw conclusions.				Chapter 7.2 Vicarious experience: Transfer of knowledge from one situation or case to another; it also involves processes of assimilation, accommodation, integration and differentiation.	Chapter 3.4 / 3.5 Transparency is given through careful documentation and clarification of the research procedures with reference to a/the case study database in which data such as interview transcripts, preliminary conclusions and the narratives collected during the study are organised to facilitate retrieval for future investigators.

Table 17: Case Study Rigour Framework (author's)

The corresponding chapter sections in which the rigour criteria were presented are indicated in the figure above.

3.3 Data Collection

Abductive Approach

Abduction, according to Järvensivu and Törnroos (2010), is an associated strategy of contemporary constructionism whose aim is to explore and understand a social phenomenon through the lens of social actors. Concerning the present case study, data collection is used to explore a phenomenon; identify themes and patterns; and locate these in a conceptual framework (Saunders, 2012, p. 144). An abductive approach is taken regarding the connection between the applied theory for the research and the data collection. According to Thomas (2010), abduction generates ideas and preliminary theories that act as hypothetical notions; it also accepts existing theories which could strengthen the case analysis' theoretical foundation. Additionally, the author observes a framework as an outcome of the abductive research that offers a tentative idea of what theories might entail.

Access

To ensure appropriate access to people, technical resources and available features are essential in a research endeavour. There are two types and three levels of access, according to Saunders and al. (2012, p. 211). The two types are: traditional access, which involves direct human contact (such as face-to-face communication or telephone use); and internet- / intranet-mediated access, which guarantees the virtual administration of the research. Hybrid access combines both approaches. But getting access to an organisation or to a gatekeeper (or decision-maker) can be a prerequisite to undertaking the research. In terms of the levels, physical access is the initial step which consists of the entry to a computer system and to the internet. The second level of access is the continuous, iterative or incremental process rather than a single event in the research journey. The third level refers to the relationship between the intended participants who provide the useful data that reveal the reality; this is described as cognitive access. In the impact case, the hybrid type as well as the three levels of access are considered. In particular, access to the gatekeeper (or decision-maker) is crucial and is further explained in the sampling strategy below (section Sampling).

Time Horizons

Data collected at one point in time refers to a cross-sectional design, and the advantage of this is seen in the economy of time and cost. Despite the short time

frame of this thesis compared to studies lasting several months or years, the collected data is sufficient to prove robustness and the generalisation of the findings. The disadvantage of a cross-sectional study is the incapacity to measure sequential development patterns or change over time. Against this background, data gathering took place between April 2023 and August 2024.

Bias Domains

The author of this thesis acknowledges his inherent bias formed by his own beliefs, values and personal experiences in the context of the research process. After approximately 15 years of experience from international companies and SMEs in different positions and functions, he has gained a substantial insider view of the HEI sector. As Avenier and Thomas (2015) state, researchers must demonstrate how they managed their subjectivity throughout the study process by controlling and double-checking their interpretations. They also point out that recognising subjectivity does not entail endorsing “biased subjectivity”, which appears in instances such as when one primarily notes statements that support their ideas or understands words only to the extent necessary to support their conclusions and prefers to dismiss contrary evidence. Thus, Asselin (2003) emphasises that the researcher role as well as the perceptions and expectations of the participants must be continually clear to avoid any confusion. The researcher’s activities are guided by their values, and they are subject to bias in human judgment. In addition, research ethics include avoiding prejudice, and the literature advises researchers to pay careful attention to their cognitive biases by permitting alternate interpretations of the issue, the study process and the findings (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 90). Knowing the existing connections, the author was more self-aware of when to distance himself and how to best maintain neutrality for the purpose of the work. Following Koch and Harrington advice (1998), regular self-critique and self-appraisal were accordingly part of the research.

Target Population

The strategic projects of academic institutions can take place at all levels. Equally, administrative and technical personnel can also carry out strategic activities and thus face a challenge in identifying the responsible units and individuals for strategic endeavours. In this impact case, academic managers with leadership and budget responsibilities are primarily accountable for further organisational development. As

Musselin (2007, p. 68) emphasises, academic leaders are asked to become managers with new competencies. However, in their role as change agent and strategic project worker, they are not full-time project managers and typically have little to no PM training. Often, they are accompanied in the execution of strategic tasks by staff members at the directorate and faculty level. To date, there has been very little recognition in the literature about this type of actor with strategic responsibilities. Therefore, and further outlined below, qualitative interviews are a reasonable way of exploring the voices and experiences of ignored, misrepresented or suppressed individuals according to Byrne (2018, p. 221).

There are a number of criteria that designate the function of an academic manager at the case example (Directive Human Resources internal, 2022):

Academic and professional background: Whereas a few years ago the requirement for was at least a 90 ECTS- or equivalent education coupled with practical management experience, nowadays at least a PhD with a proven publication track record in major journals is required. A few years of professional experience is also a prerequisite, but without further specific requirements.

Management responsibility: The HR regulations define the different function levels, taking into account the degree of management and budget.

Performance mandates: Academic managers must fulfil the state's basic obligation with a focus on teaching and research.

Additional duties: Depending on the management directive, involvement in tasks related to organisational development such as specific operational activities or conducting projects is necessary.

As of March 2023, 65 academic managers out of a total of 640 employees were identified as being assigned to the management level based on the aforementioned criteria and are eligible for having strategic project responsibilities. The identification is based on two lists. The first, provided by the HR department, lists the name, function, unit and management level (Internal HR list, 2022). The second list, which is downloadable from the intranet and freely accessible to all employees, contains the name, function, unit and office location (Internal Organisational Directory, 2023). The management level is associated with the function designation. For both lists, no further personal or sensitive data is visible; the lists are also updated monthly due to natural fluctuation.

Sampling

Sampling in qualitative research can be defined as “the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives”, according to Gentles et al. (2015, p. 1775). Thus, the following aspects for this case study within sampling are considered as follows:

Organisational Structure: Many HEIs have been shifting toward a more centralised, hierarchical organisational structure in recent years, with less departmental local autonomy and top-down planning (Martin, 2016). In the same way, a distinct hierarchical structure is also found in the impact case with five levels of authority:

1. Executive Board Level: The Executive Board sets the strategic objectives and is responsible for the strategic implementation through the academic departments and its sub-units.
2. Faculty (Department) Level: A faculty is the highest organisational unit and consists of several institutes and sub-units.
3. Institute Level: Institutes fulfil different performance mandates; they are made up of various sub-units (centres and special offices).
4. Centre Level: Centres are the core units of the faculties (departments) and thus form the smallest unit of the organisation. In addition to fulfilling the entire performance mandate, they can set thematic priorities.
5. Specialist Units Level: Specialist units are organisational units that cannot achieve the status of a centre in terms of their size or market position, but make an important contribution to the school in individual service areas.

Procedure overview:

At the time of the methodological preparation of this thesis, there were no clear indications or documentary evidence regarding what is understood as a strategic project at the case example, nor was it clear in which form or by which employees these strategic initiatives were carried out. Similarly, there was no official definition of a (strategic) project or PM practice from the impact case’s point of view, but there was a PM guide available on the intranet which was reduced to essential terms and internal process recommendations, in addition to a few templates. Against this

background, a sampling using multiple purposive techniques (Gray, 2022, p. 239) were used. Consequently, an overview will first be provided which includes the steps, which are further outlined in detail in subsequent text section, and selection of participants. As shown in Figure 8 below, the procedure is divided into four phases, in which a total of 23 people categorised into eight groups were consulted. Phase 1 will test the interview design through the perspective of experts, who comprise Group I. Phase 2 provides an initial understanding of the strategising process with Group II (executive board members), Group III (pilot interviews with academic managers) and Group IV (specialists of the staff unit), followed by the observation and field notes in the context of strategic activities. The first interim conclusion leads to new questions for Phase 3 (in-depth understanding), in which specific subject areas are analysed in greater depth with Group V (academic managers) and Group VI (department staff units), together with the final conclusion. Finally in Phase 4, a framework for strategic projects for HEIs is derived based on the wealth of data obtained in the previous groups. The individual elements for deriving the framework are presented in this phase to Groups VII (academic managers) and VIII (staff members) for critical reflections.

Phases	Step	Groups	Description	Academic Managers	Type of Questioning	Participants
Phase 1 Test Interview Design	1	Group I <i>Experts</i>	Perspective of the Experts - Testing Semi-Interview Design	Academic Managers	Discussion & Reflection / Semi-structured interview questions - draft version	2
Phase 2 Initial Under- standing	2	Group II <i>Executive Board Members</i>	Perspective of the Executive Board Members	Academic Managers	Discussion & Reflection	2
	3	Group III <i>Academic Managers</i>	Perspective of selected Academic Managers - Pilot Interviews	Academic Managers	Interviewing Semi-structured interview questions - Version 1	6
	4	Group IV <i>Staff Members</i>	Perspective of the Superordinated Staff Unit		Discussion & Reflection Expert interview questions	3
	5	Author	Perspective of Personal Observation during Strategic Activities		Field notes Specific period of time between step 1 to 4	
	6	Interim Conclusion			Reflections & Further Questionings	
	Phase 3 In-depth Under- standing	7	Group V <i>Academic Managers</i>	Perspective of the Academic Managers	Academic Managers	Interviewing Semi-structured interview questions - Version 2
	8	Group VI <i>Staff Members</i>	Perspective of the Department Staff Units		Interviewing Semi-structured interview questions - Version 2	2
Phase 4 Development of a new Strategic Project Framework for HEIs	9	Group VII <i>Academic Managers</i>	Perspective of the Academic Managers	Academic Managers	Discussion & Reflection Critical review of the proposed framework	4
	10	Group VIII <i>Staff Members</i>	Perspective of the Department Staff Units		Discussion & Reflection Critical review of the proposed framework	2
	11	Conclusion			Final Reflections	
Total						23

Table 18: Sampling Procedure Case Study (author's)

The individuals were selected in consideration of the five hierarchy levels mentioned above. Figure 9 below visualises how the eight groups are distributed across the various hierarchical levels and organisational units. The colour code is congruent with Figure 8 above and is used for better orientation.

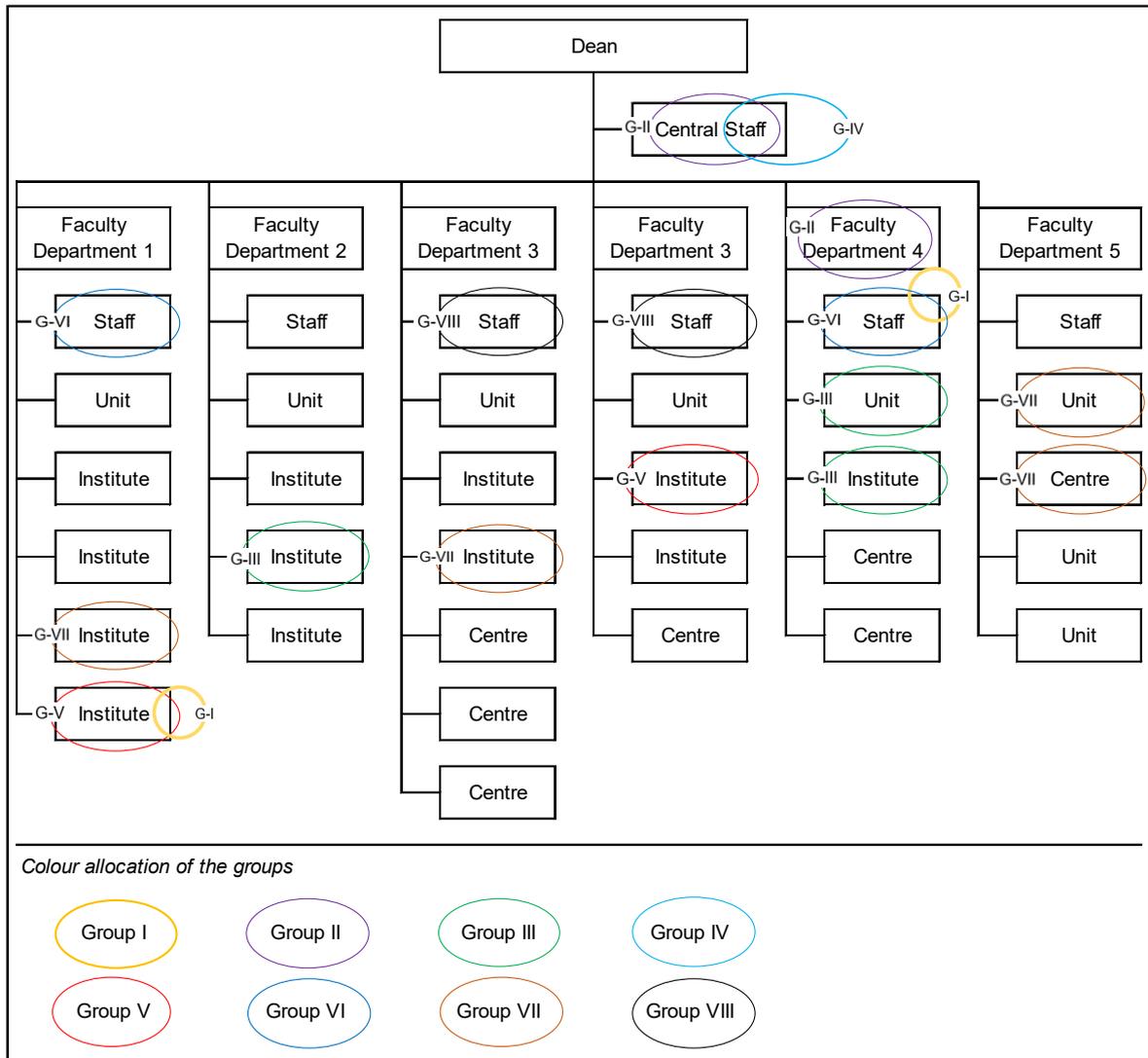


Table 19: Selection assigned to hierarchy levels (author's)

An equal distribution of representatives from all organisational units was therefore not possible, as participation was voluntary. It should also be noted that not all departments have the same number of employees, and the number of employees and sub-units is constantly changing, albeit to a small extent. Each group will provide a new perspective on the topic under investigation. The composition of the group members plays an important role, which is shown in the Table 10 below and applied for all groups. Divided into four subject areas with 13 specifications, the most important aspects for justifying the selection should be reflected. As already mentioned, the focus was on the voluntary nature of the interviewee, but also on providing the best possible perspective based on their function within the organisation. It should be noted that according to the NTU approved ethics form, the interviewee's personal data such as demographics, sex, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, nationality or terms of employment was not recorded. This is done to

ensure the anonymity and integrity of the participants. For this reason, any detailed information about the interviewees cannot be given, and therefore, there can only be speculations on their identities. Specific information on the individuals can only be given to a certain extent and is reproduced according to the structure in Table 10 below. This is intended to provide a better understanding of the participants.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Assigned Code	Academic Title	Location in Organisation	Role Assignment (official - contract)	Level of Authority	Years of Professional Experiences in Academia and other Industries	Professional Background	Certified PM Training	Description of Experienced Project Spectrum	Project Work Phases	Interview conducted	Onsite / Online	Language
				R1-Academic Executive (High level of decision-making authority) R2-Academic Manager (Medium decision-making authority) R3-Professional Services (Executor)	1- Senior (from 45 years) 2 - Mid-Senior (from 35-45 years) 3 - Junior (until 35 years)			High Volume - Low Variety -> Repetitive (R) Low Volume - High Variety -> First-Time (FT)	1 - Initialisation 2 - Planning 3 - Coordination 4 - Implementation 5 - Only participation			

Table 20: Perspective of the Respective Group (author's)

Classification of group members within the organisation (columns 1-5): This is based on (1) the person's assigned code to ensure anonymity, (2) their academic degree or title and (3) their organisational integration with (4) the corresponding official role. This information is intended to show how the interviewees are integrated within the organigram and how their authority is assigned, as indicated in (5) three levels.

Professional experience (columns 6-7): Column 6 indicates the number of years of employment in academia and in other sectors previously. As experience in professional life generally correlates with age, a three-stage grading of age is intended to reflect the seniority. It provides a basic understanding of where the person currently stands in their professional life. In this exemplary case, it is often possible to take on management responsibility from around the age of 35 and thus enter a new phase of professional development. The higher management positions are then filled in general from 45 years of age. The professional background (column 7) also plays an important role, as it expresses a certain mindset and attitude in the way of working.

Project work (columns 8-10): The next three columns reflect the respective project experience. Column 8 indicates whether someone has completed PM training. As it is assumed that very few respondents have a PM qualification, column 9 aims to categorise the participants' experiences with the above-described dimensions "Volume vs. Variety". Column 10 gives the author's estimate of the interviewees' current contributions to the school's strategic projects in five different levels. The estimates made in columns 9 and 10 are based on the conducted

interviews and the personal observations of the author in his regular collaboration with them. These are not precise either, but should also provide an indication of existing project management knowledge.

Realisation (columns 11-13): The last three columns show details of the interviews, namely (11) the date or timeframe, (12) the location and (13) the applied language. The interviews were conducted in three languages: English, the official language and a dialect version of the national language. The interviewees were free to choose depending on their individual language proficiency.

Distribution overview: Based on these characteristics, the distribution of the 23 people is shown in the following Tables 11-14. Of the 23 individuals, 16 were academic managers and 7 were in staff functions involved in strategic activities. Of the latter seven, four are Heads of Unit; this means they are the recipients of strategic planning from the superordinate staff unit, and they pass the planning on to their respective departments.

Classification within the organisation (columns 1-5):

(2) Academic Title			(3) Location in Organisation							(4) Role Assignmnet						(5) Level of Authority			
Prof	Dr	None	Dep No. 1	Dep No. 2	Dep No. 3	Dep No. 4	Dep No. 5	Dep No. 6	Staff	Head of Department	Head of Institute	Head of Centre	Head of Unit	Head of Staff	Senior Lecturer	Staff member	R1	R2	R3
10	3	10	3	1	3	2	6	2	6	1	1	9	4	1	4	3	2	13	8

Table 21: Overview of “Classification within the organisation” (author’s)

Ten professors who are seen as the key performers in this school were interviewed. All departments were represented, even if they were distributed differently. The number of represented institutes was five out of twelve, and the number of represented sub-units (centres) was seven out of 52. All six hierarchical levels were also considered, including the central staff as well as four out of six sub-staff units. It is also clear that middle management was the most prominent representatives in this enquiry.

Professional experience (columns 6-7):

(6) Experiences			(7) Professional Background	
Senior	Mid-Senior	Junior	Socialised mainly in private industry	Socialised mainly in academia
16	7	0	12	11

Table 22: Overview of “Professional experience” (author’s)

One third of the respondents are senior. Junior staff members (those younger than 35 years old) could not be identified as academic managers based on the information available. Around half of all interviewees first started professionally in the private sector, while the other half have mainly had a career in HEI.

Project work (columns 8-10):

(8) PM Training		(9) Experienced Projects		(10) Project Work Phases	
Certified	None	First-Time (FT) and Repetitive (R)	Only Repetitive	1-Initiation 2-Planning 3-Coordination 4-Implementation	5-Only Participation
2	21	15	8	16	7

Table 23: Overview of “Professional experience” (author’s)

Ninety percent of respondents had no PM training, although two thirds of them have been responsible for initial projects as well as all four project phases.

Realisation (columns 12-13):

(12) Location			(13) Language		
office	online	email	English	Official	Dialect
18	4	1	3	13	7

Table 24: Overview “Realisation” (author’s)

80% percent of the meetings were held physically, four online and one by e-mail for organisational reasons. Most of the meetings were held in the official language of

the country, seven in the dialect and 3 in English. Column 11 with the details of the meeting dates and time will be indicated later.

Appendix 3 details the distribution of the individual groups across the four phases.

3.4 Detailed Data Acquisition Phases

The four phases with eight groups of people for data gathering are detailed below. The descriptions of the respective interview questions for each group are explained in more detail in the text sections that follow.

Phase 1 - Test Interview Design

Group I: A priori purposive (nonprobability) sampling was first chosen. As argued by Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 202, cited in Silverman, 2014, p. 61), a purposive sampling method seeks out groups, settings and individuals where the processes being studied are most likely to occur. A priori means that the criteria for selecting participants are established at the outset of the research according to Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 431). Thus, two professionals were purposefully selected as test persons (Appendix 4). The aim of the test phase was to see whether the questions were comprehensible and whether the test participants could answer them independently without further explanation. The first version of interview questions was derived from literature review; this will be explained in more detail below.

Classification within the organisation: The first interviewee headed a centre in department 1 that has successfully offered various PM courses for many years. The centre is also experienced in PM consulting for SMEs and government organisations. The second interviewee is a lecturer in department 3, also embedded in a centre that is successfully active in research and consulting services nationwide.

Professional experience: The first interviewee completed a doctorate in PM, in addition to his many years of experience in various industries and at university. The second interviewee's experience stems mainly from academia abroad and specialised in strategic management. The combination of the experts' respective expertise in PM and strategic management as well as their embedding in the case organisation was considered suitable for an evaluation of the first version of the interview questions.

Project work: The first interviewee has extensive PM knowledge in practice and holds official PM certificates. The second interviewee had limited PM experience with the previous employer.

Conducting meetings: The first interview took place in a meeting room on campus in April 2023. The second interview was conducted via a collaboration platform in May 2023. The meetings were deliberately not recorded to avoid discouraging any personal opinions or criticisms and to give the interviewees a situation of trust. Furthermore, the draft interview questions in this group were intentionally not sent in advance. According to constructionism, dialogue partners are always actively engaged in constructing meaning (Silverman, 2024, p. 165). Therefore, it should be established that the questions are immediately understandable when the two testers read them; if they are not, the interviewees' immediate critical feedback is applied to improve them. The test phase is particularly important to identify any sensitivities in the topics addressed.

The discussions were valuable and led to the following findings:

(1) Understandability of the questions: The interviews revealed that some formulations were not self-explanatory at first and therefore required a more detailed description. The subsequent verbal elaborations were at times cumbersome, depending on the language in which the interview was held.

(2) Level: The four questions in the "Level Strategy" section could not be concretely answered; only guesses were possible. The two test persons were unable to make any connections between their daily work and the strategy questions. It became apparent during the interviews that this area primarily concerns the management.

(3) Language: During the interview, it became clear that language, in this case English and dialect, is expressed differently. Awareness of the need to pay particular attention to descriptions and queries was heightened.

(4) Location: Both meetings showed that face-to-face meetings in an office were more personal than online meeting as it was easier to build up a relationship of trust with the other person.

Based on these two meetings, the questions were adjusted with further explanations. In addition, certain questions were asked only to the management for the next step.

Phase 2 - Initial Understanding

Group II: A priori purposive (nonprobability) sampling was chosen for the selection of two Executive Board members (see Appendix 5) to gain an initial understanding of the strategic agenda and strategic planning of the business school. Based on the project typologies and their characteristics described in literature, the “Criteria for an HEI’s Strategic Project” was discussed. The interview questions (based on the Group I test interviews) were sent to the two board members by e-mail before the meeting with the request to focus on the first nine questions of the Level Strategy and the level of Strategic Project Management (see Table 15 below). In addition, they were shown the interview questions for the academic managers (implementation level), which were asked in the subsequent interviews. The questions referred to the implementation part of the organisational strategic projects. In addition, a set of slides explaining the thesis in the context of the organisation was added.

Classification within the organisation: Due to their management function and consequently high level of authority, the Executive Board members should have a broad overview of the organisational activities and a comprehensive understanding of the school’s strategic portfolio. The staff unit has an important function as it provides various crucial services for the organisation.

Professional experience: Both members have many years of professional experience in academia; they have spent most of their working life at universities.

Project work: Both members bring experience in managing strategic projects from set-up to full implementation in HEIs.

Conducting meetings: Both meetings took place in the respective offices of the members for around one hour in August and September 2023. These meetings were also not recorded so that sensitive topics could be discussed in an open and trusting manner.

The interviews went differently than planned. The intention had been to use explanatory slides to explain the context of the thesis and the significance of the findings for the organisation. Subsequently, the nine questions mentioned above were to be answered in a semi-structured interview style. However, in neither case was it possible to respond specifically to the questions due to the course of the

interview. Both interviewees steered the conversation in their own way. The discussion centred on whether the school genuinely needs an alignment for the multi-level strategy and where exactly the research focus of the thesis should be set for the strategic projects. In addition, the main topic was the decision-making mechanism for the type of implementation. Both members recommended contacting the staff's strategic planners, who would have more detailed and extensive knowledge than they did, who are described in Group IV.

Group III: As a next step, a pilot interview with six people was conducted. This type of sampling involves the selection of samples based on certain pre-established criteria (Gray, 2022, p. 236). Criterion sampling is widely accepted in implementation research, according to Palinkas (2015). In this context, the selection of the academic managers is based on criteria as outlined at target population above (see also Appendix 6). The participant selection phase is critical here as the study is conducted within the setting of their employer. Therefore, it was also necessary to rely on voluntary participation for the interviews. Likewise, no obligation was inferred on the basis of any preexisting relationship with the author.

Classification within the organisation: All interviewees can be described as academic managers who have an important responsibility within the organisation in the execution of performance mandates, including managing strategic projects. They are positioned in the middle management within the organisation and embedded in the pivot point of strategic project order formulation by the management (staff unit) and the actual implementation.

Professional experience: Of the six interviewees, five were categorised as "senior" and one as "mid-senior". Two of the interviewees were mainly socialised professionally in academia, while the other four had previously gained high-level professional experience in the industry or service sector.

Project work: None of the interviewees had any PM training or certification. Four out of six have extensive experience in dealing with different organisational projects, while the other two have little project experience. As the analysis below depicts, the interviewees were unable to make a clear distinction between strategic and general projects.

Conducting meetings: The time frame for answering the question was between December 2023 and January 2024. Four of the interviews were conducted in the meeting offices before the end of the year 2023; for one person, the interview was conducted via a collaboration platform and the final person e-mailed their answers to the questions as no appointment could be found before winter holiday period. The interviews were conducted in three languages: English, the official language and a dialect version of the national language. The language was selected depending on the nationality and language proficiency of the interviewees. All interviewees received the questions in advance by e-mail, along with explanations of the individual topics and the figure, so that they could prepare their thoughts in advance.

Group IV: The meetings were held with three experts of the superordinate staff unit, who are responsible for conducting the strategic planning of the business school as well as for strategic projects (Appendix 7).

Classification within the organisation: The position and role of one project manager involves setting up and implementing some of the school's strategic projects. The other two staff members are specialised as strategic planners.

Professional experience: All three have extensive knowledge in business development, originally within the private industry but within the current school system as well. While they have a high level of education, they have no academic titles.

Project work: The two strategic planners have extensive knowledge in their field in accordance with the school's strategy framework structure. The third staff member, who is mainly responsible for other projects, also has extensive PM knowledge within the manufacturing and trade industry, although no PM certificate has been completed.

Conducting meetings: The meetings with both strategic planners took place in the conference room of the Executive Board members in February 2024. The conversation with the other project manager took place in a meeting room in March 2024; this discussion came about very quickly and by chance after another strategic project had been discussed at length in an official meeting. In this sense, the conversation with this project manager was not planned long beforehand. None of the interviewees were sent interview questions in advance. The focus was on using

a discussion guide (see text section below) to gain a deeper understanding of how the strategising process works from their perspective.

The discussions showed that the tasks and responsibilities of the three interviewees were clear and understandable when described in an interview, but not for other employees, as described in more detail in the next chapter (Finding). Therefore, in the next step, based on the statements of the representatives of the strategic level, interviews took place with the academic managers as recipients of the instructions for strategic projects as well as the staff units on department levels as supporters.

Author's position: Silverman (1993) stated that “[u]nfortunately, we have all become a little reluctant to use our eyes as well as our ears during observational work” (p. 42). Mulhall (2003) argues that a given social situation is greatly influenced by the way individuals behave, move, dress, interact and use space. Therefore, one of the primary means of gathering information regarding these issues is observation. Observation can: include insights into interactions between dyads and groups; portray the whole picture; capture context or process; and show the influence of the physical environment (Mulhall, 2003). Based on these arguments, the present living case will include the author’s own observations by using field notes to better capture the dynamics of the strategising process. In qualitative research, field notes are often encouraged to record pertinent contextual data (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018).

The field notes of the case study refer to the observations of two strategy development processes. In addition, other relevant strategic issues were observed (static snapshot) to obtain a more comprehensive picture. This results in four fields of observation. The field notes were entered into an Excel spreadsheet on an ongoing basis. In this case, an Excel form proved to be suitable for creating a structure for the systematic recording of the notes. The descriptive information was written down sequentially in one column and the reflective information (observation and interpretation) in the adjacent column. Furthermore, supporting material such as slides or minutes were taken into account and, when permitted, photos were also taken at meetings. There was a description of the physical setting, the social environment, how participants interacted within the setting and their role in the settings. The recording with the spreadsheet structure provided a profound

impression, supported the process of reflection and aided in the adjustment of the interview questions for the third phase.

Phase 3 - In-depth understanding

Group V: Meetings were planned with four academic managers, although two cancelled due to time constraints. The aim was to gain a broader understanding of the strategising process in the school with questions that had been adapted from Phase 2 (Appendix 8).

Classification within the organisation: Both interviewees have important responsibilities within the organisation in conducting the performance mandates and managing strategic projects. One professor was a former executive board member of the school; the other leads a successfully developing institute. Both are interwoven with the way that the management (staff unit) formulates orders for strategic projects and how those projects are implemented.

Professional experience: Both are seniors, one of whom has extensive experience in the private sector. The other gained his main professional experience in the field of academia.

Project work: Neither interviewee has had any PM training or certification, but both have extensive experience in dealing with different organisational projects.

Conducting meetings: The meetings took place in the campus offices in June 2024. The official written language was spoken. Like Group II, both interviewees received the questions and explanations by e-mail prior to the meetings.

Reflection: Both discussions proved to be valuable in consolidating the findings from the first two phases and gaining a deeper understanding of individual issues.

Group VI: Each department has its own staff unit. These units generally take care of coordination, personnel- and financial tasks, and can be seen as key assistants of the department heads. In their functions, they are involved in the administrative process of strategic activities and therefore work closely with the decision-makers. As they work closely with the managers, their perspective should be considered (Appendix 9).

Classification within the organisation: Both individuals have held the position of Head of Unit for at least five years.

Professional experience: One person previously worked in the private sector for many years. The other gained their professional experience in academia. Both have a high level of education, but no academic title.

Project work: Neither interviewee has managed any strategic projects themselves, but both have worked on them as required.

Conducting meetings: In June 2024, the discussions were held in the campus buildings. They were spoken in the official written language. Also, they received the questions and explanations in advance by e-mail.

Reflection: Capturing the perspective of the two individuals on the strategic activities of the responsible academic managers proved to be valuable and rich in insights.

Phase 4 – Development of the Framework

Group VII: The first draft of the HEI's Strategic Project Framework was discussed with four academic managers. The proposal was compiled from the different elements and findings from the literature and statements from previous discussions. The interviewees were first presented with the current findings, followed by the proposal, and then invited to make a critical statement. This allowed them to reflect on their own experiences working with SP. The aim of the discussion was to consolidate the framework (Appendix 10).

Classification within the organisation: Three people are currently Heads of Centre, while the fourth is in a change of management function as a former Head of Centre. Three of them are senior (Professor), while one is mid-senior without any academic title.

Professional experience: All four people have spent most of their professional years in academia.

Project work: While none of the individuals have any specific PM training, they do have experience in strategic projects.

Conducting meetings: The interviews were held in August 2024: three on campus and one via a collaborative platform. No questions or explanatory material were sent in advance; instead, the meetings focused on critical reflection of the proposed framework.

Reflection: The discussions proved to be important to make the necessary adjustments to the framework.

Group VIII: As with Group VI, the viewpoint of the Departmental Staff Unit should also be incorporated into the framework, as they provide administrative support to the academic managers in strategic activities (Appendix 11).

Classification within the organisation: Both people have held the position of Head of Unit for several years.

Professional experience: One individual has spent most of their working life in academia and holds an academic title. The other previously worked in the private industry for many years and has a high level of education, but no academic title.

Project work: While they worked on strategic projects as needed, neither interviewee supervised any themselves.

Conducting meetings: Both took place on campus in August 2024. As with Group VII, no questions or explanatory material were sent in advance.

Reflection: The perspective of this group has proven to be valuable in making appropriate adjustments to the framework.

Approach, Triangulation and Data Saturation

The data generation attributes of approach, triangulation and data saturation are described below.

Approach: Originally, the plan was to request an interview via mass e-mail to all 65 identified academic managers. However, this approach had to be changed at short notice. Firstly, an NTU e-mail would have ended up in the spam filter due to the then-current hacker attacks against the business school. In addition, as other similar requests sent by students to complete surveys have shown, such a number would be negatively acknowledged as a mass request. Finally, this thesis was written in the author's free time, but with the authorisation of the management, and the business school infrastructure had to be kept to a minimum. Of the 27 individuals contacted, three did not respond and one cancelled due to time constraints, so that ultimately, 23 respondents were available for an interview. The initial contact was therefore made verbally in various situations and at different events as the author knows most of the school's employees personally. If a positive readiness was

signalled, an e-mail for a meeting was sent afterwards. All interviewees spontaneously agreed immediately and expressed interest in the topic or the results. The confidentiality and voluntariness were explicitly emphasised upon enquiry and at the beginning of the meeting.

Triangulation: The method used considers triangulation as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter et al., 2014). Firstly, method triangulation includes interviews, observation and field notes (Polit and Beck, 2012). Secondly, data source triangulation involves the collection of different types of people to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data (Patton, 1999). As previously stated, both triangulation types were applied in this study.

Data saturation: The exhaustion of data pertains to the depth of the data, and it depends on the personal lens of the researcher when they hear and interpret the behaviour and reflections of others for data presentation (Fusch and Ness, 2015). According to Crouch and McKenzie (2006), the question of sample size has little influence on the project's validity because qualitative research is intended for an in-depth exploration study rather than an inferential or relational one. However, there is disagreement among scholars over the acceptable threshold for data saturation (Aguboshim, 2021). Various scholars arrive at data saturation between 14 and 17 interviewees (Hennink et al., 2017; Baker and Edwards, 2012; Alam, 2021). The number of participants in this study, namely 23, fell within the higher end of the range. Figure 9 shows the distribution of these volunteers across the different hierarchical levels within the organisation, thus capturing a broad perspective of those involved in SP. Additionally, a multi-stage interview series, as shown in Figure 8, is intended to consider data saturation. The respective data collection of an interview group takes into account the findings previously obtained in the group before. An example of this is provided with two screenshots in Appendix 12. Screenshot 1 shows the data obtained for the topic "Organisational Setting / Challenges" from Group III (Academic Managers) in the spreadsheet. These are then incorporated into the guiding questions for the interview with Group IV. With each additional interview group, it was possible to determine whether new, valuable information was added or not. Furthermore, one's own observation (see Figure 8, step 5) should be used to determine whether additional points that were not

mentioned in the interviews need to be considered. Appendix 13 provides an example of the author's own field notes with a screenshot. To recognise data saturation for the framework to be drafted, groups VII and VIII were presented with the findings and the draft framework. Table 17 below lists the additions made by the interviewees. The results indicate that feedback adds no significant new data or insights, but rather confirms the data analysis obtained so far. In this respect, further interviews would have provided marginal added value. Data saturation was therefore achieved to enable an in-depth understanding of the case study, as outlined by Crouch and McKenzie (2006).

The chosen sampling approach used a hierarchically downward method and considered institutional heterogeneity. An evaluation was made of whether there were institutional differences or similarities in the project characteristics and academic managers (see section findings).

Shortcomings: There are shortcomings with the chosen purposive sampling strategy. First, there is a risk of overlooking a unit that is intensively engaged in strategic implementation activities. Likewise, not all groups of people and their PM expediences are covered. Data collection also refers to completed organisational projects as ongoing projects may involve confidentiality. Ongoing projects can trigger emotions that do not reflect project assessment and involve different types of bias. Examples of these include "strategic misrepresentation" (the tendency to deliberately and systematically distort or misstate information for strategic purposes) and "optimism bias" (the tendency to be overly optimistic about the outcome of planned actions), according to Flyvbjerg (2021). Furthermore, and as explained later in Chapter 4, the interviewees understood their participation in SP at the school-, department- and/or institute level as well.

Value of Interviewing

According to Yin (2018, p. 114), six sources of evidence can be considered in case study research, namely archival records, direct observations, participant observation, physical artifacts, interviews and documents. For this thesis, the primary source of evidence is through interviews, supported by official documents (secondary data) on the organisational intranet or specific PM documents distributed by the interviewee. The other four sources of evidence are purposively not considered due to "inside research" (Asselin, 2003) in the nature of the study; direct

and participant observation (except step 5 in Figure 8) would also distort the results because of cognitive bias (Flyvbjerg, 2021). Regarding the conduct of interviews in this thesis, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 3) define the aim of such a method as follows: “The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations.” Additionally, in the context of constructionism, interviewers and interviewees are always actively engaged in constructing meaning where interviewees construct narratives of events and people, according to Silverman (2014, p. 173). Moreover, interviews are an efficient technique for reaching data saturation in a study (Fusch and Ness, 2015). In this regard, semi-structured interviews are beneficial for exploratory studies (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 377) and can also be classified as in-depth interviews (Brymann and Bell, 2015, p. 214). In this thesis, semi-structured interviews are used in which a list of themes with key questions is covered, and the order of the questions can vary depending on the flow of the conversation (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 374; Yin, 2018, p. 118). This is therefore seen as a guided open interview technique (Easterby-Smith, 2013, p. 131) and follows Schwandt’s (1997, p. 79) view of an interview: it is a form of discourse between two speakers in which the meanings of questions and responses are contextually grounded and jointly constructed by the interviewer and respondent. Furthermore, according to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 378), managers are more likely to agree to be interviewed rather than complete a questionnaire. As the topic is interesting and relevant for their work, an interview allows managers to reflect better on the questions asked without the need to complete a survey.

Despite the advantages of applying interview methods for qualitative research, shortcomings are to be considered as well. The bias of the interviewer and the response bias of the interviewee as they take part in an interview is an intrusive process (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 381). Therefore, several factors must be considered while conducting an interview, such as the appropriateness of the researcher’s appearance, the proper way of asking appropriate questions and respectful listening by the interviewer, as well as the choice of a suitable location (Saunders et al., 2012; Yin, 2018). By designing a proposed framework, there is a risk of putting the organisation in a bad light and drawing information out in a way that supports what the researcher wants to hear (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 90).

This research structure is intended to capture the voices from different perspectives as interviews are accepted as an opportunity to directly access and to examine what people do in real life, according to Silverman (2014, p. 169). That is, the value of interviewing is not only because it builds a holistic snapshot, analyses words and reports detailed views of informants, but also because it enables interviewees to “speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings” (Berg, cited, in Silverman, 2014, p. 170). Those interviews are therefore used to determine what the business school is attempting to deliver and to encourage interviewees to reflect where they stand within the strategic setting of the school.

Designing the Interview Questions

The interview questions were derived based on the research objectives and questions as well as from the theory discussed in the previous chapter. Figure 10 below reflects the suggested levels of strategising projects based on the PMI concept. The interview questions refer to the levels, which were divided into the sub-topics discussed in Chapter 2 (numbers 1 to 18 in the Table 15) and are colour-coded for readability.

In terms of the ethical aspects of the questions which aim to understand organisational processes, procedures, competencies, perspectives and experiences of strategic project implementation, as well as the role of a project worker. No questions were asked, nor was data generated regarding demographics, sex, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, nationality, terms of employment or other personality-related sensitive issues of the interviewee in accordance with the ethical guidelines outlined further below.

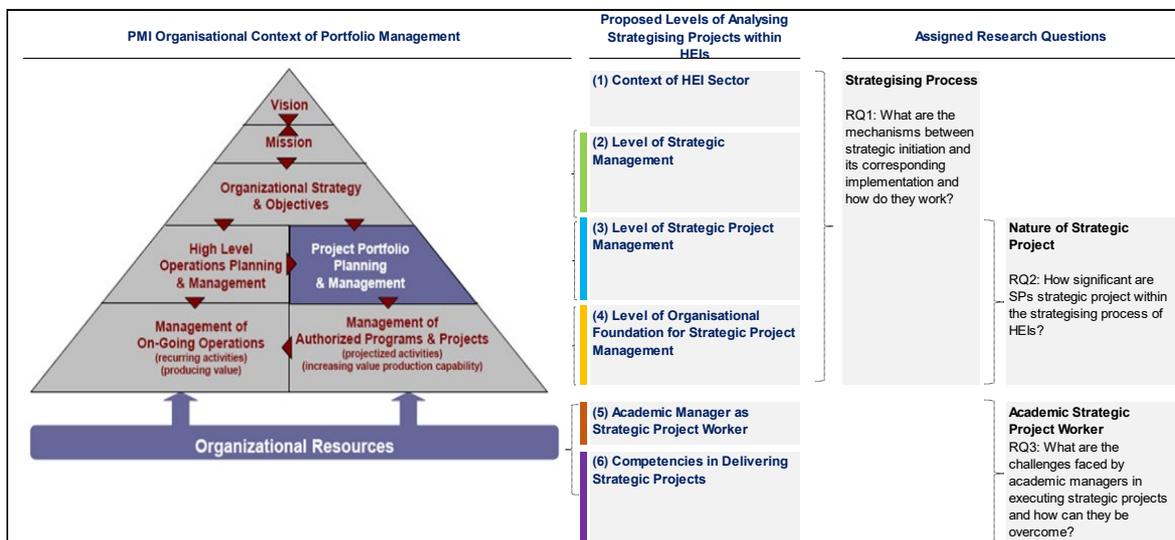


Table 25: Assigned Topics for Generating Interview Questions (author's)

In order to ensure the stringency of the described strategising process within the interview questions, a structure was created as shown in Table 15 below. In the columns below (a) *Initial Start from Literature*, the research questions form the overarching guideline according to which the interview questions must be orientated. The columns which comprise (b) *Levels and Sub-Topics* reflect the topics shown in Figure x above. The columns of (c) *First Draft Interview Questions* list the interview questions corresponding to the levels and sub-topics as well as the "Type of Question", "Corresponding Codes" and "Phenomenology Type".

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 160) distinguish nine main types of interview questions and highlight the wording of questions. One form of questioning throughout an interview can lead to a specific style of answer and therefore result in a predominant interview type (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 164). Therefore, seven types of questions, as proposed by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), are considered in Table 15:

- (1) Introductory question: opening question to frame the topic to be explored based on a personal experience.
- (2) Probing question: pursuit of the answer through the probing of interviewees' content, but without stating what dimensions are taken into account.
- (3) Specifying question: follow-up with a more specific question (such as operational).
- (4) Indirect question: an inquiry whose answer may refer to a specific attitude, an opinion or an indirect statement.
- (5) Structuring question: indication of a break and introduction to a new topic.
- (6) Direct question: direct introduction of topics and dimensions mainly at the end of the interview to potentially indicate another topic of the phenomena.
- (7) The two other types of interview questions, namely the follow-up question and interpreting question, were used during the conversation as second questions.

The next section of the text provides more details on the questions per group.

Preparation Phase										
(a) Initial Start from Literature			(b) Levels and Sub-Topics		(c) First Draft Interview Questions					
Research Questions			Level	Sub-Topics Steps	#	#	Interview Questions	Type of Question	Corresponding Codes (derived from literature)	Phenomenology Type
Strategising Process RQ1: What are the mechanisms between strategic initiation and its corresponding implementation and how do they work?	Strategic Management Process	Level Strategy	Initiation Strategy	1	1-1	Could you tell me who determines the school and subordinate unit strategies and how they are developed in order to shape the organisation's future?	Introductory question	Responsible person Developmental stages	Existential	
			Strategic Planning	2	1-2	Could you elaborate more on what kind of strategic initiatives are proven to generate strategic values and how the strategic governance framework looks?	Probing question	Strategic Initiatives (Types) Governance Framework	Existential	
			Strategy Implementation	3	1-3	What types of strategies are distinguished and how are they grouped?	Specifying question	Strategy types	Existential	
			Strategy Execution Types/Tools (SET)	4	1-4	Which strategic execution types are carried out?	Specifying question	Type of implementation	Existential	
	Nature of Strategic Project RQ2: How significant are SPs strategic project within the strategising process of HEIs?	Strategic Project Management	Level SPM	Strategic Project Choice	5	1-5	Could you say something about which strategies are executed as a project and which as an operational task and by whom?	Probing question	Operational tasks vs project	Existential
				Strategic Project Definition	6	1-6	How is a strategic project defined? See set of characteristics.	Direct question	Definition	Existential
				Strategic Project Portfolio	7	1-7	Could you say something about how the P3 (portfolio-programme-project) grouping looks and how it is monitored?	Probing question	Grouping	Existential
				Strategic Project Responsibilities	8	1-8	Who are the sponsor and the executor of the strategic project?	Direct question	Sponsor	Existential
				Strategic Project Alignment	9	1-9	How are strategic projects aligned to the business school's strategic agenda?	Probing question	Strategic alignment	Existential
	Academic Strategic Project Worker RQ3: What are the challenges faced by academic managers in executing strategic projects and how can they be overcome?	Academic Manager as Strategic Project Worker	Level OPM	OPM environment and conditions	10	2-1	In your view, how does the current organisational PM environment foster the execution of the strategic projects?	Indirect question	Embedment	Transcendental
					11	2-2	In your opinion, what conditions are needed to further develop project management at the school?	Indirect question	Conditions	Transcendental
				Success and benefits criteria of strategic projects	12	3-1	What criteria are important to you when determining the success and benefits of your projects?	Structuring question	Criteria	Transcendental
				Applied PM methodologies and principles	13	3-2	Could you elaborate more on which specific methodology, PM principles or best PM practice method you use to execute your projects?	Probing question	Methodology	Transcendental
				Challenges in SP	14	3-3	Could you say something about what the greatest challenges are when preparing and executing your strategic projects?	Probing question	Challenges	Transcendental
				Changes in SP work	15	3-4	From your perspective, to what extent has the management of strategic project work changed and in what direction is it developing?	Indirect question	Changes	Transcendental
				Utilised PM competencies	16	4-1	In your view, what are the most utilised PM competencies for an academic manager to execute strategic projects?	Structuring question	Competencies	Transcendental
				Acquiring competencies	17	4-2	What do you believe is the most appropriate way of acquiring these competencies?	Indirect question	Acquisition	Transcendental
				Self-learning process	18	4-3	How did you self-learn project management?	Direct question	Self-learning	Transcendental

Table 26: Overview of Structure for Interview Questions (author's)

Multi-stage Interview Journey

In the multi-stage questionnaire described above, the questions and reflection topics were adapted to the respective phases and sometimes groups in the sense of continuous development. The aim was to go into as much depth as possible in each subsequent stage of the enquiry and not to repeat certain questions unnecessarily. This multi-stage interview journey is described in more detail below. The overviews are shown in the Appendix from 12a-b.

Phase 1 - Test Interview Design

Group I assessed the questions in section (c) First Draft Interview Questions in Table 15 above. The respective individual feedback is listed in detail in Appendix 14 and forms the final interview questions for Groups II (executive board members) and III (pilot interviews with academic managers). In this regard a pilot test allows for corrections to be made in the way questions are asked (Doody and Doody, 2015) and the calibration process took place step by step. The reason two preliminary interviews were conducted for testing and sense-making was also to establish trust, credibility and acceptance of this thesis before proceeding with the interviews with the executive board members, as this group is seen as delicate and needs special attention; this is further explained below.

The following points were discussed and tested in Group I:

- (1) Objectives and context of the thesis: It was reviewed whether the participant was objectively and fully informed about this research and their important contribution to it through an interview, including ethical aspects (see further below).
- (2) Interview questions: The questions were discussed to ensure understandability and to make certain that the participant did not enter a zone of discomfort.
- (3) Verification of the organisational specifications: The information provided in the text about the organisation was checked for accuracy and confidentiality.
- (4) Additional aspects and data: It was discussed whether additional information was needed to understand the questionnaire.

Additional supporting documents were provided for the meetings. Before the interview, participants received a NTU "Participation Information Sheet", which explained the background of the thesis, the voluntary participation in the interview

and the anonymity of the statements made. In the NTU-Consent Form, the interviewees confirmed their voluntary participation in the interview. In addition, the names and contact details of the supervisors and data management officers as well as the line managers of the author were listed in case of any questions.

The interview questions adjusted by Group I for Groups II and III are as follows:

Strategic Management Level

- (1) Initiation Strategy: Could you tell me who determines the school strategy/ies and how they are developed in order to shape the organisation's future?
- (2) Strategic Planning: Could you elaborate more on how the strategic governance framework looks if there is something in place?
- (3) Strategy Implementation: Which different dimensions of strategies or strategy areas are present?
- (4) Strategy Execution Types/Tools: What kind of implementation practice is in place to ensure effective strategic implementation?

Strategic Project Management Level

- (5) Strategic Project Choice: Could you say something about which strategies are executed as a project and which as an operational task and by whom?
- (6) Strategic Project Definition: How is a strategic project defined at the school?
- (7) Strategic Project Portfolio: Could you say something about how the P3 (portfolio-programme-project) grouping looks and how it is monitored, either at the school or unit level?
- (8) Strategic Project Responsibles: How is success measured and how it is monitored?
- (9) Strategic Project Alignment: How are strategic projects aligned to the business school's strategic agenda?

Level of OPM

- (10) OPM environment and conditions: In your view, how does the current organisational PM environment foster the execution of the strategic projects?

- (11) OPM environment and conditions: In your opinion, what conditions are needed to further develop project management at the school?

Academic Manager as Strategic Project Worker

- (12) Success and benefits criteria of strategic projects: What criteria are important to you when determining the success and benefits of your projects?
- (13) Applied PM methodologies and principles: Could you elaborate more on which specific methodology, PM principles or best PM practice method you use to execute your projects?
- (14) Challenges in SP: Could you say something about what the greatest challenges are when preparing and executing your strategic projects?
- (15) Changes in SP work: From your perspective to what extent has the management of strategic project work changed in the last five years and in what direction is it developing?

Competencies in Delivering Strategies

- (16) Utilised PM competencies: In your view, what are the most utilised PM competencies for an academic manager to execute strategic projects?
- (17) Acquiring competencies: What do you believe is the most appropriate way of acquiring these competencies?
- (18) Self-learning process: How did you self-learn project management?

Phase 2 - Initial Understanding

Group II (executive board members): The literature indicates that special care should be taken when interviewing senior management and Board level staff members who have a high hierarchical and strong social status within organisations (Harvey, 2011, p. 5). This group, referred to as “elites”, is highly skilled, professionally competent and class-specific (McDowell, 1998, p. 2135). Conducting interviews with its members requires special effort in building trust and being transparent about the research (Harvey, 2011, p. 5). During the interview, the researcher must show that they are thoroughly informed because elites might consciously or sub-consciously challenge them on their subject and its relevance

(Zuckerman, 1972). Furthermore, elites dislike close-ended questions and prefer to be asked about their opinions and thoughts (Harvey, 2011, p. 7; Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, p. 171). These aspects were considered for the meetings with the two Executive Board members. A PowerPoint presentation was prepared to introduce the topic. It also contained a brief description of the objectives; the purpose of the thesis; explanations of the research questions and method; the compliance with ethical aspects; and details of the NTU DBA programme. The importance of the board members' contribution in this research was highlighted as well. This procedure was intended to describe the overall context as well as to build confidence in this research. It was essential to explain that all information would be kept confidential and that the study was not a criticism of the management. The benefit of the findings for the organisation was also outlined, as well as the criteria for determining a strategic project were discussed as presented in Chapter 2.4 above. As clarified in the Ethical Assurance section below, a crucial point of these interviews was to cultivate the support of the Executive Board members. Consequently, notes were taken by hand instead of being recorded. This was done because such a method establishes a zone of trust; to avoid discomfort in the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee; and to inhibit some responses (Harvey, 2011; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 396).

Group III (academic managers' pilot interviews): As stated above, not all questions of the test design (Group I) could be answered, in particular questions 1 to 9. Accordingly, only questions 10 - 18 were discussed with Group III. This had the advantage of identifying whether the academic managers were aware that they were carrying out strategic projects. Based on their answers, initial insights were gained and gaps in comprehension in the strategising process were uncovered, which were to be closed by Group IV.

Group IV (subordinated staff unit): A discussion guide was created for this group in order to understand some topics in greater depth.

The guiding questions are as follows:

Initiation Strategy

- (1) Who initiates or commissions the strategies?
- (2) Should the parent university strategy be considered?

(3) What does the business school strategy look like? How many types of strategies and sub-strategies are there?

(4) Are the strategy or sub-strategies fixed or evolving?

Strategic Planning

(1) What is the purpose of strategic planning?

(2) What roles are there (for example strategy makers and developers)?

(3) How do the strategic planners receive the initiation or orders for planning?

(4) Is strategic planning based on a framework or a specific model?

(5) Are feasibilities considered in strategic planning?

Strategy Implementation

(1) How exactly are the strategic plans handed over to the departments?

(2) Are the strategy planners also sparring partners for implementation?

(3) Are there learning loops or feedback processes?

Strategic Measures

(1) How and what exactly is measured?

(2) Why are certain targets or strategic projects not being implemented successfully?

Improvement of Strategising Process

(1) What could be improved? Where exactly does the shoe pinch?

Strategic Project

(1) Is SP an official part of strategy implementation? Which of the tasks in the OJP are strategic projects?

(2) Who defines strategic projects?

(3) What does the execution of SP depend on?

Based on the discussions in phases 1 and 2 with groups I - IV and the author's own observations, three superordinate topic areas (bulk themes), each with corresponding domains and sub-domains, emerged from the responses. The

adjusted categorisation is shown in Table 16 below. The categorisation (a) *Bulk Themes* has changed for further research; (b) *Domains* and (c) *Sub-Domain* remain largely the same as the original structure of the strategising process.

Phase III: In-depth Understanding		
Recategorisation of Topics		
(a) Bulk Themes	(b) Domain	(c) Sub-Domain
1-Comprehension of the Organisational Strategic Concept	1.1. - Clarity of the Strategy	1.1.1. - Strategic Awareness / Thinking
		1.1.2. - Understanding of the Strategy
		1.1.3. - Communication
	1.2. - Strategic Fit	1.2.1. - Design Procedure of a (Functional) Strategy
		1.2.2. - Strategic Alignment
	1.3. - Strategy Decision-Making Processes	1.3.1. - Transition Hinge Strategy Design to Strategy Implementation
1.3.2. - Strategy Implementation Concept		
2-Comprehension of the Organisational Strategic Project Concept	2.1. - Contribution of Strategic Project to the Strategy	2.1.1. - Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project
		2.1.2. - Strategic Project Choice
		2.1.3. - Strategic Project Portfolio
		2.1.4. - Strategic Project Alignment
	2.2. - Strategic Project Work	2.2.1. - Involvement / Contribution in SP Work
		2.2.2. - Changes in SP Work
3-Comprehension of the Underlying System Dealing with the System	3.1. - Organisational Aspects	3.1.1. - Environment
		3.1.2. - Organisational Setting / Challenges
		3.1.3. - PM Setting / Embedment
		3.1.4. - Project Work Process
	3.2. - Individual Aspects within the System	3.2.1. - Competencies
		3.2.2. - Acquisition

Table 27: Recategorisation of Topics (author's)

This structure serves as the starting point for phase 3 (In-depth Understanding) and for the analysis part in Chapter 4. Furthermore, it is an additional supporting step for the presented solution framework in Chapter 5 (Proposed Framework and Recommendations). The focus of the interview questions for groups V and VI was on further clarity, impact and reaction to the organisational issues mentioned.

Phase 3 - In-depth understanding

The interview questions for Group V (academic managers) and VI were modified as follows:

1.1.- Clarity of the Strategy

Strategic Awareness / Thinking

How strongly do you rate the current strategic awareness / thinking within the school?

What significance does the current school strategy have for the further development of the organisation? Is there any connection between the current strategy and future challenges?

Understanding of the Strategy

What is the school trying to deliver? What are the strategic driving forces of the school?

To what extent is the comprehensibility of the current school strategy important for the employees?

Communication of the Strategy

How should the school strategy better communicate internally and externally?

1.2.- Strategic Fit

Design Procedure of a (Functional) Strategy

What different types of school strategies can be distinguished and how are they grouped?

Strategic Alignment

Does the overarching school strategy need to be aligned at organisational levels?

Does a SP take place at all levels?

1.3.-Strategy Decision-Making Processes

Transition Hinge Strategy Design to Strategy Implementation

How does the transition from the finalised strategy to the executing units/responsible parties take place?

Strategy Implementation Procedure

To what extent are organisational structures and formalism an obstacle to strategy implementation?

Which strategic implementation types are carried out?

2.1.-Contribution of the Strategic Project to the Strategy

Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project

How are the value and importance of a SP perceived in the organisation? How are SPs defined in the organisation?

Strategic Project Choice

Where and how is it evident that a distinction is made between operational work and strategic project work?

Strategic Project Portfolio

What does the SP grouping look like? What are the current strategic projects?

Strategic Project Alignment

How well is the SP alignment structured in the respective department and units?

2.2.-Strategic Project Work

Involvement / contribution in SP Work

Does the quality of the implementation of SP depend on the field of any tension?

Is the SP work influenced by the accordance of contribution (teaching, consulting and research (dealing with the performance mandates vs divergence tentities by building on academic profile)?

Changes in SP Work

Is the school undergoing an organisational change or is it on the way to a transformation process?

What is the school strategy's current influence / impact of change on the SP work?

3.1.-Organisational Aspects

Environment

What are the main differences in managerialism between private industry and the school as an academic institution?

Organisational Setting / Challenges and PM Setting / Embedment

Can strategic projects be carried out without an established PM-setting?

Project Work Process (*no interview question here*)

3.2.-Individual Aspects within the System

Competencies

What exactly is so difficult about the university system with regard to organisational project work and dealing with the structure, process and people?

Acquisition

What elements need to be taken into account when increasing individual PM competencies?

Phase 4 – Development of the Framework

Based on the literature review and the findings from Groups I - VI, a draft for the Strategic Project Framework in the context of HEIs was created. This first version was then presented and discussed with Groups VII (academic managers) and VIII (department staff units).

3.5 Use of Data

Materials and Instruments

Recording devices: Each interview was recorded with a voice recorder with the exception of Groups I and II, and one person each of Group IV, Group VII and Group VIII. However, interviewees had the right to continue the interview without a voice recorder or to withdraw from the interview at any time and without justification, in which case the recorded data was deleted upon request. The conversation was also recorded with a voice recorder for online interviews. The data was recorded in accordance with the ethical assurances further outlined below. Furthermore, all statements made by the interviewees were anonymised to eliminate traceability. For

interviewees who expressed interest in the study, the overall results and the main findings were accessible after the official release of the thesis.

Qualitative data analysis: Microsoft Excel has become a viable substitute for the many data analysis programmes available as qualitative research seeks linkages in rich, complicated data sources (Meyer et al., 2009). Thus, Excel was used for the interview analysis of Groups 3, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Data Analysis Techniques

Underlying paradigm: Coding is an interpretive act which summarises, distils or condenses data and is therefore a research-generated interpretation that symbolises or “translates” data (Saldaña, 2021, pp. 6-7). The choice of coding method depends on the underlying epistemological, ontological and methodological attitudes that are in harmony with the nature of the research question (Trede and Higgs, 2009, p. 18). One crucial factor for the successful execution of strategies is the employee (Sull et al., 2015; Girma, 2022). Therefore, the ontological position of social constructionism was chosen for the data generation.

Constructionism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 33; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 132), in this case the academic managers. In terms of the epistemological stance, the perspective of interpretivism was selected as it advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans as social actors. Social actors play a part which they interpret in a particular way, and they act out their part in accordance with this interpretation (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 28; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 137). Interpretivism was formed by the main intellectual tradition phenomenology (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 137; Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 29). Phenomenology refers to the way individuals make sense of the world around them (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 30).

Phenomenological research: The phenomenologist attempts to understand things from an individual’s perspective to understand the meanings of their actions (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 30). Hence, gaining the subjective experience of the subject becomes an exploration of prevailing organisational understandings (Gray, 2022, p. 27). Experience, in the context of a phenomenological interview, is seen as an unfolding process that comprises loops of memory, reflection, description and

the questioning of the interview (Høffding and Martiny, 2016). In this context, the phenomenological paradigm states that the world is socially constructed and subjective; science is driven by human interests and the researcher should pay attention to meanings (Gray, 2022, p. 28). Therefore, phenomenological research focuses on individuals trying through interviews to explore the personal construction of their world or phenomena and what type of knowledge will be generated (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 677; Saldaña, 2021, p. 268). Against this background, the phenomenological interview serves not only to understand the experience of the interviewee, but more importantly to understand the invariant phenomenological structures of this experience (Høffding and Martiny, 2016).

Theming the data: Data is phenomenologically symbolised using two specific questions which lead to two type of themes and later to higher-level theoretical constructs: what something is (the manifest or the observable) and what something means (the latent or the conceptual) (Saldaña, 2021, p. 268). The focus is on meanings and identifying the essence or central theme of an experience as a way of furthering knowledge, as originally proposed by the father of modern phenomenology Edmund Husserl (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). Three kinds of phenomenology have surfaced in literature today: (1) transcendental, which focuses on the essential meanings of the individual; (2) existential, which focuses on the nature of the reality that holds the concept of phenomenon together; and (3) hermeneutic, which examines the structure and interpretation of texts and focuses on language and communication (Douglas and Moustakas, 1985; Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). The assignment of the phenomenology types to the interview questions was listed in Table 15 above.

Applied procedure: The data was analysed using a spreadsheet. The individual interviewees were listed in columns across the horizontal axis, while the questions posed to the interviewees were listed vertically. This created a matrix. Each participant's response was read carefully, and keywords or statements were marked as described above. For each question, participants' statements were summarised in a separate column based on the corresponding codes shown in Table 15 (penultimate column). Similarly, the responses were summarised and reproduced for each category as shown in Table 16. Statements made by interviewees that were deemed representative of a code were reproduced verbatim (see Chapter 4).

To illustrate the procedure for data analysis of the interviews, in Appendix 15 are three screenshots which depict an example of interview group II for code 2-1, Embedment (see Table 15).

- (1) Screenshot: The interviewee's response was copied into an Excel cell, with each statement being assigned a number. The main statements were aggregated in the adjacent cell.
- (2) Screenshot: This cell contains the aggregated main statements from all interviewees. In this example, 26 statements from six interviewees were collected and divided into four themes.
- (3) Screenshot: This cell shows the assignment of the code to the research question (overall context), as well as the summary of the findings from all 26 statements. This cell also contains the original quotes from the interviewees (for example, quote 4), which are subsequently listed in the main text.

This example illustrates that a chosen code can yield multilayer conclusions. This also highlights that a case study with interviews is appropriate for gaining a deeper insight into an organisation, as mentioned in Chapter 2. The data analysis steps were carried out according to the recommendations of scholars (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011; Cypress, 2018; Saldaña, 2021, p. 271):

- (1) Reading transcripts and taking exploratory notes. Linguistic and behavioural aspects such as voice, pause, exclamations or volume were not considered, only the spoken word. However, notes helped to record personal observations, initial findings or special occurrences.
- (2) Identifying / allocating thematic prompts within the transcript in “is” and “means”.
- (3) Grouping all statements into the categories of “is” and “means” (themes are repeated throughout the analysis).
- (4) Identifying overlaps and reducing data where appropriate.
- (5) Analytic memo reflecting on the first impression of the two clusters. The focus was on how various themes were similar or different and what kinds of relationships might exist between them.
- (6) Categorising listed themes according to commonality and clustering them in a superordinate outline format to reflect aspects including their frequency, possible groupings, relationships and storyline.

- (7) Reconfiguring themes in different clusters to create a more evocative, researcher-generated theoretical construct.
- (8) Constructing a high-level explanation of the pre-given “essences” and structures of lived experience from the data which answers the research question.

In addition to frequency, the topics that were subsequently developed and chosen for analysis were those that resonate with disciplinary or personal issues. The themes developed thus far can be references as interviews continued to assess their validity until saturation occurs. The interpretation seek to reveal unexpected information, dominant interpretations, and alternate notions.

3.6 Ethical Assurances

Ethical Guidelines

Researchers have the responsibility to prevent cases of abuse in their journey of study and to consider ethical principles, often provided by their universities (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 228). This research respects the highest ethical standards currently available and conforms to the following:

- Annual Statement on Research Integrity (2017) provided by the Nottingham Trent University Research Committee
- Nottingham Trent University Research Data Management Policy (2020)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (2020)

There were no conflicts between the national legislation, English legislation and NTU guidelines regarding data protection and repository. The key principles in research ethics, listed in Appendix 16, were also compiled from research textbooks by Grey (2004), Saunders et al. (2012) and Easterby-Smith (2013).

Research Ethics Committee

The Committee of the NTU School of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics approved this research as per the NTU Worktribe Research Ethics Module Full Question Set, the NTU PGR Data Management Plan, the Participation Information Sheet and the Consent Form. Prior to submission, three online meetings were held with the NTU Research Data Management Officer for the NTU Data with the aim to discuss compliance with all regulations and to check the correct completion of the documents. In particular, value was placed on two areas: firstly, it

had to be demonstrated that the participant's personality was always protected; secondly, the anonymity of the involved people and participants as well as the protection of the data was to be considered.

Ethical Aspects of the Research

The following critical ethical aspects are mentioned for this research.

Misconceived criticism: Special attention was paid to ensure that the research was not seen as a criticism of the school or management and that its valuable impact for the organisation was evident.

Interview to interviewee relation: The protection of the interviewees during and after the study were considered. The following aspects were taken into account in addition to the distribution of the Participation Sheet and Consent Form: (1) the particular emphasis on voluntary participation prior to the interview, anonymity, the right to terminate at any time and the line manager's indication of discomfort due to the interview; and (2) the choice of whether the interview was conducted online or in a public office during official office hours (not in the evenings or at weekends), which was left to the participant's discretion.

De-identification processes: Each interviewee was given a number to which they are referred for both data and publications. The pseudonym key was only accessible to the author and was destroyed at the end of the project to anonymise the research data. Any identifying features within the interview transcripts such as direct references to specific projects or individuals and attention to indirect identifiers such as experience, length of service or job roles were aggregated using guidance supplied by the Information Commissioner Office (2023). The transcripts were also checked to determine whether the identification of any individual or organisational unit was possible. Transcriptions were sent to the interviewee when desired with a request for approval to ensure a two eyes principle to guarantee appropriate de-identification.

3.7 Methodological Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Limitations are theoretical and methodological imperfections of a study that do not question the validity of the respective findings substantially according to Busse et al. (2017, p. 581). As limitations also reflect the shortcomings of this study, the subsequent constraints are mentioned:

Working environment: Conducting research within a familiar organisation inevitably implies taking into account the hierarchy. Therefore, asking critical questions to higher management can be delicate, and it can endanger and jeopardize the credibility of one's own person. In this respect, it cannot be overlooked that certain relevant aspects have been omitted that an external researcher might uncover.

Time: While case study research provides the opportunity for extensive and thorough analysis to explain a phenomenon, the time available to the author was restricted for a lengthy study (Saunders et al., p. 190); in particular, the interview period was limited.

Sample size: One limitation in this study was the sample size. The targeted population focused on academic managers and therefore excluded all other employees.

Interview session: The interview sessions could have excluded important details that would have helped to understand further causes of and the context of project execution.

Bias of interviewees' answers: Although special attention was paid to the professional affiliations of the participants and the minimisation of their potential biasness through the validation process, this could never be completely eliminated.

Pragmatic validity: Sandberg (2005) emphasises that testing interpretations in practice is the most thorough method of verification. However, this would necessitate a separate study in which the results are recontextualised into the activity being examined.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the limits of the research study based on the research focus and scope. In this sense, the following aspects can be considered:

Purpose: This thesis seeks to investigate how projects for academic work relate to strategic initiatives. The study does not cover all project- or strategy management topics relevant to an organisation, nor does it cover the personnel-critical elements of academic employees.

Single case: Case studies cannot be used to infer causes. The behaviour of this one unit of analysis may or may not mirror the behaviour of other similar entities because a case study examines the actions of a single individual, group or organisation. Therefore, generalisation in this study is delimited to the transferability of newly gained knowledge into similar settings, but is not identical to other settings.

Selected case: A single case in the form of a business school in Europe was chosen. The proposed research purposely omitted organisational (sub-)culture topics and national aspects of the academic managers, although such aspects might be important in other cases.

Theoretical framework: The proposed framework derived from the literature is a variant to designing the research study and may exclude further findings. In addition, other ontological and epistemological perspectives may have lit up the investigated phenomena differently.

Artificial Intelligence in literature research: The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Systematic Literature Reviews (SLRs) has become prominent in recent years, and numerous tools have been developed to assist and partially automate the SLR process (Bolanos et al., 2024). An AI-based literature review (Wagner et al., 2022) was not conducted by the author in this thesis, resulting in the risk of missing additional adequate literature contributions.

3.8 Chapter Conclusion

The strategising process, which followed a descriptive theory approach, presented in the literature chapter will be strengthened through data collection from practice. For this purpose, a representative organisation in the HE sector, namely the business school of a public university, was examined. It is acknowledged that a case study is an appropriate empirical method when a contemporary (past and present) phenomenon within its real-world context is to be better understood (Yin, 2018, p. 18). Case study research allows for a profound convergence to the topic investigated, and it is widely used in business research (Piekkari and Welch, 2019).

While a multi-case study provides more validity (Yin, 2018), the selection of a single case study should be based on the opportunity to learn (Stake, 2005). HEIs' strategic objectives that are executed through projects and explored through case studies represent a potent research design option since PM is strongly influenced by social and behavioural issues (Martinsuo and Huemann, 2021), although the representativeness of case studies is often questioned by scholars (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). Since boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not evident, the use of a common and representative case, such as the chosen one, is suitable for exemplifying and exploring the causal mechanisms of given theories in those fields (Yin, 2018, p. 15). These boundaries are not apparent in the present case and can therefore be seen as gap-spotting modes, as proposed by Sandberg and Alvesson (2011). From an ontological and epistemological point of view, this case study seeks to pursue a constructivist approach in design to capture the perspectives of the academic managers as participants (Yin, 2018, p. 16). Focusing on the conception of these social actors, the interpretative paradigmatic position implies that the understanding must be based on the experience of those who work in organisations (Burrell and Morgan, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 33). The aim was to better understand the mechanisms of implementing strategic projects from the perspective of the academic managers involved. Bloor (2004, p. 321) states that the advantage of qualitative research is that practitioner audiences can creatively compare the study description with their own daily activities because the research methods allow for extensive accounts of everyday practice. Additionally, according to Mason (2018, pp. 111-115), interviewing is appropriate when a researcher is interested in people's interpretations, experiences or stories, or because the data may not be available in any other form. For instance, there is a risk that not all departments are represented in a survey and that managers in particular do not answer surveys by e-mail due to time constraints.

Semi-structured interviews and reflective discussions were therefore conducted with academic managers and their support staff for strategy implementation. In order to capture these voices as precisely as possible, an attempt was made to consider different perspectives from various groups of people in a multi-stage process. Although participation was voluntary and the survey period was limited, it was possible to represent this organisation with eight groups and ensure triangulation by involving all departments and hierarchical levels. The interview questions relate to

the three research questions and the associated topics of the strategising process (see Figure 10 and Table 15). It became apparent that the interview questions had to be constantly adapted depending on the group in order to maximise coverage of the selected topics. An originally intended standardised interview scheme for all groups proved to be suboptimal for differentiated data collection. This resulted in a research question journey during the interview period of the eight groups. The semi-structured interviews and the reflective discussions proved to be a suitable data collection method. The interviews revealed insights that would have been difficult to obtain in written form. The author's own observations made in the form of field notes were also enriching. This has led to a unique picture of the organisation's strategic work, which mostly coincided with the statements of the interviewees.

The findings and suggestions for intervention listed in Chapter 4 (Results and Discussion) can be considered specific to this business school, but will also be generalised for the HEI sector as described in more detail in Chapter 5 (Proposed Framework and Recommendations). It becomes apparent that SP alone cannot be viewed in isolation, but is dependent on the overarching strategy construct of the organisation. The idea of what an SP means for the business school, where and how it is created, who is responsible for it and their own involvement in such work was perceived differently by the interviewees.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

4.1 Impact Case as a Representative of HEIs

In the following, the findings related to the above-described impact case are presented. The underlying business school has gained remarkable performance achievements such as growth or reputation in recent years. Each HEI is unique with its own accomplishments. Simultaneously, this research suggests aspects which might be transferable to multiple HEIs. As Stake (2005, p. 443) argues, a case study comprises a choice of what is to be studied. Examining the deeper reasons of the phenomena in a single case study, research presents an opportunity to provide an in-depth description and analysis of "how" and "why" things occur (Ridder, 2017). Thus, the critical issues about the organisation mentioned in the interviews are not regarded as destructive criticism. On the contrary, they are deemed a valuable starting point for a suggested HEI framework and corresponding interventions presented in Chapter 5 (Proposed Framework and Recommendations). The results

revealed issues that are consistent with the general picture of the HEIs as described in literature. Against this background, the detailed findings are outlined first and summarised in the subsequent text sections.

4.2 Detailed Results

Figure 11 below provides an overview of the above-discussed elements of conceptual framework, research design (phase/group) and bulk themes, all of which lead to the components for the framework presented in Chapter 5.

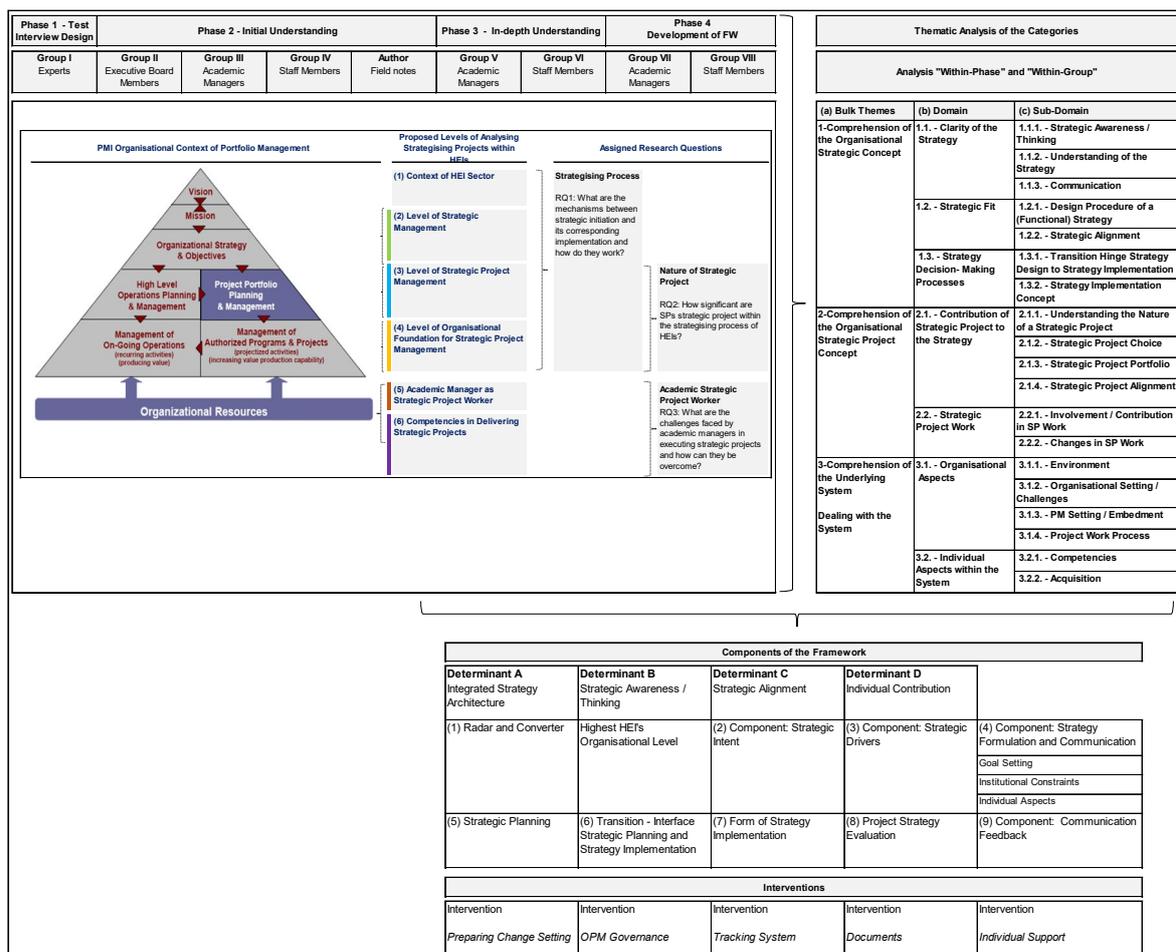


Table 28: Overview of the main elements of the research steps

The results of the meetings in the four phases are summarised below for each group as indicated before in Table 8 in Chapter 3 (Research Methods). In addition, selected quotes support the evidence of this research and will be guided by the principle of authenticity and be representative of the patterns in data as scholars' advice (Morrow, 2005; Lingard, 2019). The voices quoted by the group hereafter are therefore intended to illustrate how the current perception of the topics discussed

above is experienced. Each interviewee was identified with a three-digit code (phase, group, personnel) for the corresponding quota (Q).

Phase 1 – Perspective of the experts (testing the interview design)

This first phase concerns the testing of the interview design with the first group.

1 - Group I: As stated in Chapter 3, the two experts reviewed the first draft questionnaire. They struggled with the first four questions on strategy (Level Strategic Management Process and Level Strategic Execution Choice) not because of the wording, but because of the comprehension of the current business school strategy. One expert explained:

I don't know exactly what the school strategy [...] and the strategic projects [are]. I could only talk about my projects. (Code 112, Q-1)

The other expert reflected on the specifics of the concrete strategy, who determines it and whether it is indeed necessary to communicate.

[The management board] have their own strategic understanding. Do they need me here? What is the strategy here? Do we have a strategy map? Is there such a thing or something in between? (Code 111, Q-2)

Furthermore, the expert covered topics that may need to be considered later in the findings such as wording (different understanding of the word “project”), distribution of power and responsibility in the project allocation of the strategy. In addition, the expert believed that the executive board does not consider the proposed ten criteria for a strategic project in HEIs when planning an SP, but presumably uses them selectively at the end for justification instead. Both experts concluded that the first four questions of the draft questionnaire could only be sufficiently answered by the members of the Executive Board. Their statements indicate that the business school's attitude to strategic management does not fully integrate academic managers. Consequently, these questions were addressed only to Group II.

Phase 2 – Initial Understanding

The second phase comprises the meetings with the Executive Board members, selected academic managers for pilot interviews and members of the subordinated staff unit, followed by the author's own observation field notes.

2 - Group II: Perspective of the Executive Board Members

The first Executive Board member did not respond to the questionnaire or the interview questions. Instead, the focus of the discussion was on identifying the mechanisms involved in the holistic strategy process and the corresponding effects.

You don't just have to scratch the surface; you also have to be insightful. Where does the shoe pinch? Can you recognise irregularities? Where do we stand with our organisation? (Code 231, Q-3)

There was also a request not to describe the results too descriptively. The consultation of Group IV (staff) was recommended for a better understanding of the current strategy and strategic processes.

The second Executive Board member also did not respond to the questionnaire or the interview questions. The discussion centred on the current situation of the business school and the established strategy process with the corresponding responsibilities for strategic activities. In response to the question of how a distinction is made between an operational task and an SP, consultation with Group IV was recommended as well.

Both discussions revealed that strategy and SP are firmly anchored in management as a key topic. However, the anticipated answers, namely gaining more in-depth knowledge, could not be obtained.

3 - Group III: Perspective of Selected Academic Managers (pilot interviews)

The answers to each question from all six interviewees are summarised below.

Level of Organisational Foundation for SP

Embedment (No. 2-1): *"In your view, how does the current organisational PM environment foster the execution of the strategic projects?"*

This question was not answered uniformly by the interviewees. The various responses covered thematically similar points but did not directly address the main question. Only one respondent mentioned that PM and its processes are perceived as positive, and that certain PM material is available. Another claimed that organisational PM support is minimal, and two interviewees expressed that they felt isolated in handling their projects. Thus, it cannot be stated explicitly whether the current PM environment supports the strategic projects and whether this holds any

significance. The difference between projects, PM and strategic projects is not clearly delineated or apparent. The following statements are indicative of this:

I am not entirely familiar with “organisational project management”, but I understand that strategic projects are managed by the staff. (Code 236, Q-4).

When I think of strategic projects, I think the first thing that comes to mind is often staff. (Code 233, Q-5)

There is no clarity about the existence or significance of strategic projects and their contribution to the organisation's performance. Similarly, the responsibilities of an SP cannot be assigned organisationally. None of the respondents recognised a disadvantage or made negative comments about the current state of the OPM. Rather, the question appeared to have elicited a critical response to the school's strategy. The development, organisation and implementation of the current strategy journey are ambiguous. The strategic alignment of the comprehensive school also seems vague. This leads to a lack of clarity regarding the business school's desired achievements and therefore its strategic direction. Transparency of the strategic goals is called into question. The following three statements the significance of strategy in answering the question:

What I think is a bit of a problem here is that it is not always entirely clear what the strategy is, what is not clearly defined. And sometimes we also have the difficulty, at least for me, of identifying which project specifically contributes to which part of the strategy. (Code 234, Q-6)

I just read through our mission statement again in our meeting room this morning. And it's difficult to recognise exactly what we want to achieve. And I'm not talking about operational goals, but really strategic goals. (Code 232, Q-7)

Well, when I look at what the strategy of the business school is, there is of course the first question mark. What really is the strategy overall? And what is the departmental strategy? And what are the knowledge centres where the strategy can really be defined in terms of knowledge, research and also teaching? And I'm not entirely sure, to put it mildly, whether it's all consistent. (Code 234, Q-8)

To conclude, the clarity of the strategy appears to be important when discussing the environment and the execution of strategic projects. It can also be assumed that the key words "organisational PM environment", "execution" and "strategic projects" are not clear terms for the interviewees in the context of the existing organisation.

Conditions (No. 2-2): *"In your opinion, what conditions are needed to further develop project management at the school?"*

As with the first question, the responses were inconsistent and introduced a range of other subject matters. Nevertheless, five conditions emerged. The first one relates to PM training. The voluntary one-day course for PM offered internally relates mainly to internal processes.

There is this [PM] training for everyone. But I have the feeling that it's not customised enough. For me, a lot of what we did there was totally irrelevant. Or rather, I had known it for a long time. What was important was how things are done in this school. How do the processes work that I could perhaps carry from the outside. How is it managed here? (Code 231, Q-9)

In this context, another interviewee stated that an understanding of the "project" and "project management" is needed within the organisation. The second condition relates again to the topic strategy. Three interviewees reiterated the lack of clarity about organisational goals, the strategy desired and strategy implementation. The third condition refers to the management principles:

Which management principles – and that's basically your question – which management principles do you use to run such a successful organisation? And [Hewlett's] answer was: management by walking around. And that is perhaps in the implementation, especially with academics who are primarily intrinsically motivated, that you can meet them at eye level, that you can see and understand where the journey is going. And in terms of organisation, this means management by walking around. I believe the structures are in place. (Code 232, Q-10)

From a personal point of view, what I have already noticed, if I compare my, let's say, 30 years of line management from the industrial with the 10 years in the university environment, what is really different here in a university

environment is this classic expert organisation on the one hand and on the other hand the, limited commercial orientation. (Code 234, Q-11)

The fourth condition addresses the institutional boundaries and the university environment. Within this context collaboration and mutual learning between the different units was difficult for three interviewees and had to be given more consideration for optimisation. However, the responses did not relate directly to the PM setting, but to the business school structure as a whole, which is seen as an obstacle for overarching projects.

Last, the fifth condition concerns individuality. This underscores the fact that the motivations of an expert organisation, such as a university, differ from those in the private sector.

I mean, the way I've experienced it, like in the business world, if it's really a strategic project, then there was sometimes a bit more than a warm handshake. There were also incentives, for example the introduction of a new SAP. There was a core project team and then we also defined core user groups. And in some cases, a bonus pool was set up. Of course everything was sensible in relation to each other. (Code 234, Q-12)

We're from my background, for example, academically trained, others from industry, but also with a certain focus. So I'm not a marketing expert for example. How do I do the best marketing for my products? (Code 235, Q-13)

In addition, four interviewees were optimistic about receiving greater support for their projects.

I use project management techniques intuitively rather than expertly. (Code 236, Q-14)

Based on the responses, the development of PM itself does not seem to be an issue.

Academic Manager as Strategic Project Worker

Criteria (No. 3-1): *“What criteria are important to you when determining the success and benefits of your strategic projects?”*

In response to this question, the interviewees stated 16 different criteria, which can be grouped as follows:

Strategic level:

1. Focal points in the institute
2. Fivefold performance mandate (high-risk project)
3. Strategic and financial targets
4. Positioning

They are actually all bosses here and then it is not always easy to stagger them in a sensible process organisation, in a project organisation. And secondly, what a project manager needs is the ability to mobilise resources, in other words to get the finances, to get the financing, to get the time from the employees and ultimately to make all the resources available in a truly sustainable way. I always find that extremely challenging. We have this fourfold performance mandate, and then there is a fifth, namely the project. And there is a huge risk that these different, very operational demands on a single person will then often conflict with the actual project mandate. (Code 234, Q-15)

What always remains is the financial call. It's simply there. Then there is often positioning. In competition with other providers, with other schools, how do I position myself within this whole market? And then something that also plays a role, but probably has less effect, you could say it's a resource-based approach. When I discuss with my people, we discussed the topic of [...], then the question is governance of AI. That would be a topic that is hot, where you could do something about it. [This question] belongs to economics and governance. But then we had to say that we don't have the expertise. And nobody in my team is actually interested in that. (Code 231, Q-16)

Classic PM criteria:

1. Time
2. Costs
3. Resources
4. Resource-based approach
5. Capacity of the organisation

Effects:

1. Financial benefit
2. Knowledge benefit
3. Impact

Yes, our projects must contribute to our core FOKI areas. This means that it is not just a financial benefit, but a knowledge benefit that we can utilise further. (Code 232, Q-17)

There was an overall [...] strategic project plan, steering group, etc. Was that then rigorously followed in terms of project reporting? Yeah. And [...] in terms of where we are with the project and then where we are with individual activities? No, it wasn't. So, I think the framework is actually not bad [...] within the school, but I'm not sure if we consistently monitor where we are at with it and then the sub elements. (Code 233, Q-18)

Intangible Aspects:

1. Sense Making
2. Learning
3. Intuition
4. Flexibility

In conclusion, the classic criteria of time and cost are only referred to by two interviewees. Overall, these references show that a classic understanding of project criteria differs from the PM literature and guidelines by PM associations (such as PMBOK). The responses also indicate that the criteria mentioned do not relate specifically to the handling of their strategic projects, but rather to their general working activities.

Methodology (3-2): *“Which specific methodology, PM principles or best PM practice method do you use to execute your strategic projects?”*

Only one interviewee mentioned the provided PM templates on the intranet; the rest made no reference to using a specific PM methodology, -tool or -framework:

It's certainly always an issue where you think about how many "opportunity costs" I have, in other words: What am I doing now? How much do I have to invest in order to achieve a goal? But no, I don't have a specific method where I could say that we always follow this and that process. (Code 231, Q-19)

While the frameworks or guidelines of the international PM bodies are known, they are not applied in practice:

I could write something down. You can say, "Oh that looks like PMI or something, yeah." But I wouldn't know Prince if he came out and smacked me on the nose. So, no. I think for me it's about projects. It's more about common sense and [...] I couldn't tell you, for example, what the school approach is in terms of [...] what methodology they use. (Code 233, Q-20)

Three of the interviewees used elements of PM such as target definition, milestones or areas of responsibility. However, these are not always applied systematically or for every project.

In development, for us, the projects that I manage, we have a very detailed project plan. And this is rigorously pursued, not only rigorously in the sense of implementation, but even more so in the sense of the follower. That means there will always be deviations. The journey suddenly goes somewhere else. But these are rigorous followers. There's no hanky-panky, that we look to see if we're getting there. Instead, it's during the project because we carry out projects that have a long lifespan. (Code 232, Q-21)

The different perceptions of the methodological approach are also reflected in this statement:

So, two- or three-year projects are running themselves to death here at the university because there are always new priorities. And I think it's better to have a big strategic project in phases so that you can really capitalise on the interim successes. (Code 234, Q-22)

Essentially, each interviewee had their own style of project management, as reflected in this statement:

I have a straightforward, non-expert approach to project management. (Code 236, Q-23)

It seems that, based on the responses, the well-known standard PM methodologies, international PM frameworks and in-house templates are not given importance, but that projects are handled on the basis of personal experience. Overall, external input or assistance is not an issue, but rather the manner of individual and experiment-orientated handling.

Challenges (3-3): *“What are the greatest challenges when preparing and executing your strategic projects?”*

The interviewees mentioned various challenges.

First of all, the existing system appears to impede collaboration across different units.

The first challenge is actually getting three departments to work together when their systems and procedures and rules are very different. (Code 233, Q-24)

Political pressure is particularly noticeable in cross-departmental projects.

I'm put in this kind of uncomfortable situation where I'm trying to defend it and justify it and there's a negotiation going on. Got there in the end but that was, you know, it was quite political. (Code 233, Q-25)

This is evidently due to the way the organisation is constructed:

I experience a school, as we are, as not being a very coherent organisation. There are a lot of different players with a lot of different interests and different criteria of orientations. If I compare that to a private sector organisation, it's much quicker or clearer to say that we as a company do this and that, whereas in an academic institution, you have many different stakeholders with different interests. (Code 231, Q-26)

As a result, an academic institution also has its own character, which has an impact on the work:

I find this implicit resistance to making any change at all extremely challenging in an expert organisation, because it is a highly intelligent organisation. It's also a self-reinforcing organisation, so it maintains a certain stability within itself, right? (Code 234, Q-27)

However, it is also seen as having advantages in terms of speed, motivation and informal contacts:

On the other hand, what I also think is great about this type of organisation and where an expert organisation has huge advantages is the speed. (Code 234, Q-28)

I think that is perhaps also a difference between an academic and a private-sector organisation. In an academic organisation, and this is definitely a positive thing, you have a lot of people who are simply incredibly interested in the subject they are working on. They find it exciting and cool, and they enjoy working on it. And that's why they're here. And if that doesn't exist, if a project doesn't include that, then it's more like, why should I? Meanwhile, you tend to have fewer people in the company who simply say, "I'm here because it's so great to juggle around with mobiles or some financial tools," where it's much more about moving the company forward and realising themselves internally. (Code 231, Q-29)

[There are] informal contacts, this goodwill and also this mobilisation of forces in favour of a truly forward-looking project. That is already a huge advantage for a university. So, this purpose, this strategic sense, [...] you can really see it. The fact that you really explore the next area and the fact that you can verbalise and communicate this seems to me to be a crucial point here. (Code 234, Q-30)

Overall, it can be said that stakeholder management emerges as the main aspect in the statements. One interviewee mentioned that stakeholder management is also linked to the foundation of PM:

But if the foundations have not been rigorously built, then we won't be able to realise high-rise buildings. But we often dream of these 20-, 30-, 40-, 100-storey blocks. I can describe and design that beautifully, but if the foundation stone is not laid properly. And every floor, to stay with the image, is rigorously checked to make sure that the next floor can be built. (Code 232, Q-31)

The challenges primarily concern the institutional conditions for the implementation of projects. Environmental issues or the inability of the individuals themselves to carry out the project do not play a role.

Changing of Strategic Project Work (3-4): *"To what extent is the management of strategic project work changing and in what direction is it developing?"*

The responses to this question were also diverse. One answer related to the leadership:

There is perhaps a different strategic focus now. That has a lot to do with leadership. The former dean came from the private sector and managed it in a more private-sector way. That was also an understanding. That was also my experience. As Centre Head, I was an entrepreneur. I could do what I wanted as long as it brings in money and doesn't damage the school's profession. Then that's a good thing. And now there are a lot more other criteria that are measured. It's much tighter in a "control things" sense. (Code 231, Q-32)

Another answer referred to the focus of the academic development of the organisation:

So, we are certainly more academic than before. In other words, we have a focus on academic performance. (Code 232, Q-33)

The perception of changes in strategic project work itself varied. One interviewee saw no change:

I don't know if it's changed because I'm not sure if we kind of run a very structured approach here at the moment. (Code 233, Q-34)

On the one hand, increased project work in research is observed due to competitiveness; however, strategic projects still remain undervalued.

In general, I would say that project work at the school tends to be underestimated. I think that project work is done and planned more informally and implicitly; then there really is a formal commitment to a project goal, project time and project budget. (Code 234, Q-35)

The inconsistency in the approach of strategic projects is also mentioned.

I think we're a bit inconsistent as a school about how we approach things [sic] strategic project, and we don't always recognise what is and what isn't in a strategic project. But has it changed? It might not have changed but I don't think it's evolved if this make sense. (Code 233, Q-36)

On the other hand, another direction is also recognised. While the project's contribution to the school's overall knowledge is mentioned, it cannot be explained in more detail. More controlled or disciplined PM practices are perceived.

I can already see that strategic projects are perhaps being managed a little more closely, perhaps also a little more traditionally. When there was still growth in principle [and] sufficient resources were available, that strict management was not so much in demand. (Code 234, Q-37)

One interviewee also stated that the allocation of people is not clear.

Who are the people that we need to be in the lead of strategic projects? Because it's not always the expert. (Code 233, Q-38)

Two interviewees explained that the existing systems for recording projects can only record hours and financial data, but paradoxically no tool can reflect changes in strategy. One interviewee recommended a change towards a PM office rather than merely serving as a controlling function in the accounting department.

To conclude, specific mentions for the changes in strategic project work could not be named as the statements were rather generalised.

Competencies in Delivering Strategies

Competencies (4-1): *“What specific PM competencies would you regard as important to make your project better?”*

It is noticeable in the answers that no competence refers specifically to strategic projects, but competencies are mentioned in general. The following statement is representative of this:

So, I think the first important skill is really to see the big picture and to articulate this beyond the classic strategic skills. Or, to put it another way, the ability to see beyond your own nose and to create the strategic picture and to couple this with your own experience into something visionary for the future. (Code 234, Q-39)

Overall, four competencies have crystallised. First, dealing with the existing system seems to play a special role as a competence. Evidently, the system including political finances poses major challenges for project work. It is mentioned that the competencies are needed to handle the system systematically, to overcome it as a bridge builder or to free oneself from the system.

When I look around me, I see people who are good at it; who understand how a system works, which screws they have to turn to make something move this way and that, what goals they have to fulfil to make a project fly. And then to bring this creativity to use in order to achieve something good in these frameworks. (Code 231, Q-40)

We thought creatively about how to bring the different mechanisms together to make it a working project. We have the ability to understand how a system works and then the creativity to [take] the different systems apart so that they work together. (Code 231, Q-41)

The second competence relates to communication in the sense of discussing and listening.

I think the most important thing, apart from these planning and follow-up aspects, is that you talk to each other. But you talk to each other properly and not in a team meeting, but really discuss where we are, where the series is going. And, above all, involve people in good time for project development so that they can understand their own contribution just like the managers from above. (Code 232, Q-42)

The third competence concerns dealing with people themselves. Here the competencies "empowerment", "selection of people" and "read and understand people" were highlighted.

The last competence pertains to self-management. Factors such as understanding one's own contribution, accountability, allrounder talent, taking on alternating roles and learning by doing were stated. One person mentions that although PM is learning by doing, it is:

[It's] not exactly clear what more could be learnt from PM. (Code 236, Q-43)

Ultimately, the competencies mentioned differ from the PM literature and the PM association bodies. For example, system competence itself is not explicitly listed by the literature. Communication is considered important; however, it is not given any special weighting. Furthermore, while people management can be linked to leadership, it is not addressed as project leadership by the interviewees. The area

of self-management is general and cannot be attributed to strategic projects in particular.

Acquisition Competencies (4-2): *“What is the most appropriate way of acquiring these competencies?”*

Shrewdness, flexible thinking in a wider context and the dependence of competence development of character were mentioned. Two interviewees saw learning by doing as the best method, while two others emphasised short and formal PM training. Five interviewees saw an overarching relationship between a project worker and an experienced foreman in the sense of a role model function.

I believe, just as in the implementation here, that more senior people can and must play a key role in this – not only in the implementation of projects themselves, but the way in which such strategic projects are accompanied. It's not just the “talk the talk”. (Code 232, Q-44)

Two responses referred to a sparring partner who exchanges experiences on equal footing.

So, I think that would certainly be one of the very good things about having a sparring partner, especially now when you don't yet have any experience. (Code 235, Q-45)

In summary, based on the relatively short answers and brief statements, the interviewees' own PM competence development is not of great relevance to them, nor is there an immediate field of action.

Self-learning (4-3): *“How did you self-learn project management?”*

None of the interviewees had undergone PM training. The knowledge they had was acquired through their own experience and experimentation or by obtaining information from other colleagues. The following statements are representative of this:

I've never done project training; I actually started PM in the military. (Code 231, Q-46)

I learnt that from the private sector. (Code 232, Q-47)

I have learnt a great deal from more experienced colleagues. (Code 236, Q-48)

One person also made a comparison with private industry.

I believe that this is very difficult to learn in the filigree organisational structure of an expert organisation. And it's probably not entirely promising to do it as rigidly as in a company. But I still believe that so many of the projects I've seen, some of them with large entourages, go relatively quickly, or some fail, or that in many cases this can be attributed to the stamina of the organisation and the individuals. I could imagine that this one-to-one experience in an industry really works well at least some of the time. (Code 234, Q-49)

In conclusion, despite years of professional experience, the lack of PM training did not appear to be an issue for any of the senior academic managers, indicating that it is not something they felt they lacked. Interest in more PM knowledge was expressed, but not in a standardised procedure such as training.

Various conclusions were drawn from the pilot interviews. First, it appeared unclear to the interviewees what the overarching strategy is and whether SP are related to organisational changes. Furthermore, PM as a whole is neither perceived as an important or positive issue, nor as something bad or in urgent need of revision. In this context, SP itself is not a pain point within the organisation, even if some of the answers were perceived as negative connotations. In addition to the multiple performance mandate of teaching, researching and consulting, SP seems to be an "unspoken" mandate as it is an integral part of an academic manager's scope of work. However, while interviewees clearly understood project fundamentals, the respondents appeared to be unfamiliar with this topic. In comparing the answers with the literature or with the practice-orientated PM guidelines of the PM associations, no (professional) PM language with specific PM elements can be identified in the responses. This is also evident in the lack of differentiation between the terms "PM" and "project", as well as "project" and "strategic project". Thus, PM knowledge and project expertise tended to vary among the interviewees. Each had his or her own knowledge, method, style and understanding of how to deal with projects. Only one interviewee referred to the ten proposed criteria for an SP in HEIs when answering the question. Thus, the interviewees were not fully aware of

whether they were working on an SP. Consequently, they also did not know their contribution to the organisational change.

The above-mentioned quotas Q-11, Q-12, Q-13, Q-26, Q-29 and Q-47 refer to private industry for comparison. This is not surprising, as four of the interviewees had previously worked in private industry for many years. They are therefore familiar with the importance of management performance in the value chain of a business-led organisation. Especially in profit-orientated companies, strategy takes centre stage as stated by Porter (1997). This seems to be different here, as the interviewees neither perceive their own in-house strategy as tangible nor regard SP as a practice or instrument for the improvement of performance management. The final two interviewees had no prior socialisation process within private industry, but grew up in the academic world and were shaped accordingly. The socialisation process of professors through academia and the corresponding effects on their work is a recognised topic in the literature (Floyd, 2009; Billott and King, 2017).

Against this background, the answers reveal an existing tension within the organisation. First, a clearly substantial workload keeps the interviewees on task, but the simplification of organisational processes and optimisation of existing business performance mechanisms do not currently appear to be gaining prominence. Second, many efforts are focused on increasing research-intensive activities. This is in line with the intention that the organisation wants to develop into the top tier field of international business schools where academic expertise and cutting-edge research are a fundamental component.

4 - Group IV: Perspective of the Superordinated Staff Unit

This unit forms the heart of strategy development. In compliance with an established government framework, it is responsible for the functional smooth running of strategic processes from a planning perspective.

The team explained the governance framework in place of the strategy process for which they were responsible. It determined the entire procedure from the mission statement at university level to the annual operational planning. At the same time, they also considered the historical development of the business school's strategy. They outlined that a first strategy formulation was created many years ago. However, the accreditation preparations were the real driving force behind the establishment of a functioning strategic management system.

Then, fortunately, the [first accreditation] also came in between. They said that strategy is good, but the most important thing is the mission. And then a force came from outside that pushed us to have a strategy. Now, for the second time, there is an external force [a second accreditation] that says strategic planning is important. (Code 242, Q-50)

According to the team, this external force has pushed the business school to adopt an initial strategic mindset. The setup of mission-, vision- and core value statements was a crucial step for the further development of the strategy. It was carried out through a broad-based process involving many participants. However, this strategy could not be derived from the overarching university strategy, as there was little in the way of shared values and existing strategy documentation to rely upon. It was noted that the initial endeavours originated on a greenfield site with the courage to initiate progress.

And from there, [the university] should have broken down from above. Unfortunately, some of these [strategy] papers existed and some of them didn't. And then the [business school] invented its strategy itself. (Code 242, Q-51)

The team emphasised that an established strategy with an outlook of 5-10 years is essential for the further development of this business school.

Our industry is slowly moving to the net. Not fast, but slowly moving. We are not somehow a computer industry, or I don't know what, or a fashion industry, but more [slowly]. You have to realise that we don't change our strategy every day so that we can survive. (Code 242, Q-52)

At the core of the strategy is the fulfilment of the university's legal mandate to provide teaching, research and consulting services, all of which are mandatory. Building on this and in line with the legal framework, areas and goals are then defined that differ from other business schools. In order to set the corresponding objectives, an attempt is made to evaluate what is necessary. A strategic situation analysis is prepared on a regular basis, focusing on different topics in each case. The first draft is then discussed with the management in the strategy workshops, the results of which are finalised by the team and returned to the management for final review. The analyses of competitors, which are prepared by the organisation itself, are also taken into

account. Added to this is the need for action, where it is recognised what further needs should be incorporated into the strategy. The thematic orientations for the coming years are therefore known, which also determine the sub-strategies with their detailed implementation plans. According to the team, the strategy has been continuously developed over the past two years. However, it was recognised that there is a need for optimisation in sharpening the strategic positioning, which still appears too generic. The real differentiation from other business schools is seen in the implementation.

I think the implementation is then actually in the strategy implementation planning and in the annual operational planning. I think that sets us apart from others because the textbook approach that we see here is actually put into action. Everyone has the textbook approach, but many don't put it into practice. (Code 243, Q-53)

The interview revealed that the accreditations had shaken up the business school in a positive sense and contributed to the optimisation of the strategic process.

Everyone wants to improve quality, but people are basically lazy and sluggish. And the organisations are also lazy and sluggish and satisfied with themselves. And when someone external comes and says, "We are top quality in this case, and if you want to belong to us and get the badge and have the medal, then you really have to fulfil that" – and I think that is my conviction, the external accreditations have brought our school a lot further, even if it is tedious. (Code 243, Q-54)

Four main drivers are named for the further development of the strategy and sub-strategies: the Dean and the Head of Staff, with their respective valuable ideas based on their observations or experiences at international conferences; the team itself and the external forces of accreditation. The relationship between strategy alignment and the overarching university strategy is seen as challenging. The university's official strategy papers are set with a wide scope for interpretation and a limited multi-year target plan in terms of content, which is seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage.

That's nice that we have that freedom [as a faculty department]. And on the other hand, I would say that we are missing out on something. If you now think

about the interdisciplinary aspects that we could utilise more, with sociologists, psychologists, etc., in my opinion this is not recognised enough, and the trigger should be pulled from the top. (Code 242, Q-55)

They give us a lot of freedom, which is probably right because we are a full university that actually offers everything from business to medicine. And that's also true, but at the same time, I don't think they give us the input as to what it should be about, where it should be together. (Code 243, Q-56)

The team is also responsible for drawing up the strategic implementation plan with the time horizons as well as the annual operational plans, which are drawn up in consultation with the department heads. This procedure is intended to avoid surprises for the departments. The department heads thus also know how to implement the objectives.

You have to imagine: Today, the attitude among the people in the lines outside – everyone everywhere – is that the strategy guys leave us alone with all their strategy, keep us from creating. We have better things to do. (Code 242, Q-57)

In answer to the question of what is considered a project, reference is made to the different ways a project is labelled.

What we have now, in the strategy implementation plan and in the annual planning, I can already find measures that are actually strategic projects. But they are not labelled as such. (Code 243, Q-58)

The team does not know whether the specified topics are dealt with as SPs in the respective departments.

If the department heads don't communicate this properly because they all have the document[s], then people don't recognise the connection between these topics, although there is a connection. And these things, I mean, priority topics such as Responsible Management Education, I don't know if they are running this as a project. Probably not. This is simply an issue that they have to discuss in a meeting. And then somehow they have to find a consensus. It probably won't be a project either and probably not that either. (Code 243, Q-59)

When you ask what a strategic project is and what it is not, then you don't see something that is running in the department as a strategic project. But in the context of the other, it has a strategic meaning, yes. (Code 242, Q-60)

The team is also concerned about the lack of understanding about the individual contribution of employees to the strategy.

That's the difficulty, I think. People in this business school don't recognise what my contribution to the strategy is, although they do a lot to achieve the strategy. It would be great if we could say thank you to them for that, but somehow it doesn't work. (Code 243, Q-61)

In the team's opinion, projects that are implemented inadequately can be attributed to a lack of time and resources, as well as an unclear formulation of the task's objectives. At a higher level, there are activities that affect the entire business school but have no name. In the past, these were technically called STRIP for “*strategic initiatives and programmes*”. These projects are managed in a project portfolio and labelled as projects accordingly. It is implied that these are SPs and are executed by the staff. In this context, the team emphasises the importance of regularly addressing strategy and communicating and refreshing it for those who need to know. The team sees potential for improvement in the communication of such topics within the departments.

To conclude, the great effort and knowledge acquired over the years by staff members in the established strategy process become apparent. However, it is noticeable that the entire effort to further develop the staff's strategy process went largely unnoticed by the other interviewees. Moreover, the strategy process reflects a top-down perspective. The departments themselves are responsible for implementing the specified strategic objectives at their own level. From the team's point of view, the required deliverables are not carried out as a project or at least labelled as such. The specified implementation and handover plans therefore do not include an SP. This confirms the statements of the previous interviewees that the individual contribution to strategic activities (or projects) is not recognised, and there are SPs at the organisational level, but employees are scarcely aware of them.

5 - Author: Perspective of Personal Observation during Strategic Activities

Observing the strategic activities in a chosen department by the author gives an additional view of the above-mentioned topics. These observations may imply a negative connotation, but this is not the case. Rather, they describe an observable attitude toward strategy that appears throughout the observation field. There are three recognisable elements: duration, approach and endogeneity. First, the importance of the strategic dimension of the corresponding activity is recognised by the involved responsible parties, as evidenced through mediums such as e-mails, meetings or internal documents. Most endeavours with strategic relevance do not appear to be subject to any immediate time pressure. Depending on the organisational unit and topic, it can take up to two years to develop a first draft of the corresponding subject. Second, there is an ambiguous course of action. It becomes apparent in several situations with reference to strategic topics that responsibilities, communication and procedures are not clearly or precisely defined beforehand. Similarly, the departments or subordinate units cannot rely on a set of internal standardised templates, handbooks or best practices for their level strategy development. Each department is free to design its own strategy. Third, an endogenous attitude can be noted. While in other industries strategy experts are called in to support with strategic issues (as is common practice in banks, for example), strategic activities are handled endogenously. Although the business school has faculty members with extensive knowledge on strategy and running strategy workshops, they remain unasked.

During the observation period, some strategic issues were dealt with, but they were prioritised in the same way as other daily operational obligations. This observation was also expressed in the use of language. Terms such as “strategic orientation”, “strategic intent”, “strategic projects” or “strategic implementation” were rarely mentioned. In this respect, the language of strategy does not appear to take centre stage in order to support strategic activities.

6 - Interim Conclusion

From the perspective of value as outlined above, the question emerged regarding the business school’s objectives and the nature of the staff’s contributions toward achieving these goals. The responses revealed that while employees perform their duties, their link to the strategy and therefore its organisational impacts, such as

profit, branding or identity, is unclear. These reflections are mirrored by three bulk topics which emerged over the five groups of perspectives.

- (1) The comprehension of the organisational strategic concept: It became evident that the implementation of SP seems only as effective as the preparatory factors. Thus, the front-end structure of SP, which includes the clarity of the strategy, the strategic fit and the strategy decision-making process, must be understood.
- (2) The comprehension of the organisational strategic project concept: Project work through the lens of implementing strategic plans is only recognised in the staff unit, but is not perceived as such within the line organisation for implementation. Accordingly, there is disagreement in the statements regarding the naming and identification of internal SP.
- (3) Comprehension of the underlying system: In addition to the influence of social actors, the system supporting the projects may also play a role. The interviewees' perception of the existing system is varied and complex. It is noticeable that the challenges are primarily seen in the area of stakeholder management in dealing with university structures or processes. As a result, system competence is considered the most important competence. This can only be learnt with reference to actual practice. In this respect, there is little value in having academic managers participate in a generic PM training course that is isolated from an HEI's daily practice, as this does not sufficiently teach strategic and or systemic thinking or leadership behavioural characteristics.

These three bulk themes, which were divided into sub-domains, were depicted in Figure 17 in Chapter 3 above. The next phase of questions was designed in such a way that the findings of the respective questions from the second phase would serve as the basis for the next interviews. The impact, possible reaction and comparison with the industry (learning) are questioned in order to generate solid solutions.

Phase 3 – In-Depth Understanding

This phase includes the groups of academic managers and members of the department staff units.

7 - Group V: Perspective of the academic managers

The following interview questions for Groups V (academic managers) and VI (department staff unit) refer to the recategorisation of the three bulk themes. The focus of the interviews was on further clarity, impact and reaction to the findings mentioned until that point and is an additional supporting step for the presented solution framework in Chapter 5.

Strategic Awareness/Thinking (1/1.1.1.): "How strong do you rate the current strategic awareness/thinking within the school? What significance does the current school strategy have for the further development of the organisation? Is there any connection between the current strategy and future challenges?"

A high level of awareness at the top management level and a vigorous pursuit of strategic goals were perceived by the interviewees. The long-term strategic orientation at the time of the interviews to further develop and tactically position the university and business school is now regarded as successful. The achievement and positions of these strategic goals are characterised by strong formalities such as accreditation achievements or rankings. However, these achievements are less attributable to strategic thinking in the classic sense as they appear to be less content-driven and strength-orientated, based on the interviewees' perceptions. Currently, the focus is primarily on reputation and accordingly on driving forward academic research with corresponding personnel decisions.

Reputation is the key success factor for a university. (Code 352, Q-62)

With regard to the strategic topics, a weakening toward the lower hierarchy levels is observed.

The concerns of the individual organisational units are naturally narrower. They don't just think about the school's overall strategy every day. (Code 352, Q-63)

Comprehension of the School Strategy (2/1.1.2.): "What is the school trying to deliver? What are strategic driving forces of the school? To what extent is the comprehensibility of the current school strategy important for the employees?"

Achieving an impact is the actual driver of the business school from the interviewees' point of view. It is also emphasised that the visibility of the strategy is strongly communicated in terms of what is clear to employees and what counts.

Nevertheless, this question is considered problematic and requires a comprehensive answer.

Communication of the School Strategy (3/1.1.3.): *“How should the school strategy be better communicated internally and externally?”*

Significant efforts are already underway in terms of communication, and they are recognised by employees. However, further attention should be paid to written texts.

I think the greatest care should be taken with the university's public image.
(Code 352, Q-64)

It is also mentioned that the strategy for the future direction should be based on the realisation of the company's own strengths and not driven by external forces.

Strategy Development and Types (4/1.2.1.): *“What different types of school strategies can be distinguished and how are they grouped? Does the observed endogeneity (inhouse) in the development of strategic topics have any disadvantage? Could an external consultant make a significant contribution to improving the quality of the strategy?”*

An overarching strategy and subordinate business area strategy for the departments is perceived, but less so is the connection or mutual influence.

I do believe that strategies are being considered at various levels, at institute level, for example. Exactly. And I think there are different approaches, I suppose. I don't know enough about that. (Code 351, Q-65)

The sub-strategies that are aimed at enhancing reputation and work were deemed important. However, there was still potential in the personnel strategy to attract the top talent to the university, although this was not explained further.

Strategic Alignment (5/1.2.2.): *“Does the overarching school strategy need to be aligned at different levels such as department, institute, centre etc. or shall it not be aligned? Does a SP take place at all levels?”*

At the university level, SPs are recognised and officially seen as strategic initiatives, even if they are not always called “strategic”. They are also recognised in the smallest operating units, which are also considered close to the market. Thus, the

interviewees believe that SPs are carried out at various levels and by different organisational units of the business school, according to the interviewees.

I am convinced that there are strategic projects in all these organisational units. In the sense of innovative products, a research project, a large research project, is in my opinion per se – already has some strategic aspect, although it is of course also something that represents something operational. (Code 351, Q-66)

It is emphasised that these organisational units need the freedom to launch SPs with the appropriate support from their superiors. The term “alignment” is considered difficult to operationalise because it is not clear what precisely alignment should be. Nevertheless, in this context, it would be desirable to bring the mission, which expresses the strength of the application orientation, even more into alignment and to think more deeply about it. Furthermore, the topic of “strategic enabling” is also expressed which focus on where the school has its strengths in order to counteract increasingly harsh conditions.

Transition from Hinge Strategy Design to Strategy Implementation (6/1.3.1.): *“How does the transition from the finalised strategy to the executing units/responsible parties take place?”*

The interviewees described the process: The annual operational plan is passed from the staff to the department heads, where the implementation targets are defined. The targets are then set by the staff and some by the head of department him- or herself. Monitoring is carried out using a traffic light system. However, it is not clear whether projects will also be handed over to the departments.

I'm not really aware of what they think about with the projects and then pass on to us. I hope I'll be spared. (Code 351, Q-67)

Strategy Implementation Practice (7/1.3.2.): *“To what extent are organisational structures and formalism obstacles to strategy implementation? Which strategic implementation types are carried out? “*

Such a basic system is not recognised by the interviewees. There are already enough planning procedures so that new concepts are not desirable. In this context,

the importance of short decision-making processes and having the right people involved is also emphasised.

Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project (8/2.1.1.): *“How are the value and importance of an SP perceived in the organisation? How is SP defined in the organisation?”*

According to the interviewees, an SP is not recognised as an SP but requires internal marketing.

You cannot simply assume that the strategic nature of a project will be recognised automatically. This requires internal marketing. (Code 352, Q-68)

Strategic Project Choice (9/2.1.2.): *“Where and how is it evident that a distinction is made between operational work and strategic project work?”*

The distinction between project- and operational activities is considered important to the interviewees. However, this is not always transparent in practice. The structure of a research area is cited as an example.

When you set up a new research area, you probably can't make such a clear distinction between operational and strategic. (Code 352, Q-69)

In this context, it is mentioned that it is not always possible to continuously pursue strategic initiatives. Strategy is seen as a means of adapting to the market and should not distract from operations.

This is therefore very important, but that doesn't mean that there always have to be strategic initiatives or projects on all topics. (Code 351, Q-70)

Strategic Project Portfolio (10/ 2.1.3.): *“How does the SP grouping look? What are the current strategic projects?”*

The importance and usefulness of a strategic project portfolio was affirmed by the interviewees. But they also emphasised that portfolios should grow gradually in order to ensure the necessary scope for new projects. The current project portfolio in the organisation could not be named.

Strategic Project Alignment (11/2.1.4.): *“How well is the SP alignment structured in the respective department and units?”*

This point has already been covered thematically in the points above.

Involvement / contribution in SP Work (12/2.2.1.): *“Does the quality of the implementation of the Strategic Project depend on the field of any tension? Accordance of Contribution: Teaching, consulting and research (dealing with the performance mandates) vs Divergence (mini-tentities): Building on their academic profile (recognition).”*

The interviewees recognised a conflict of objectives in the fulfilment of multiple tasks. This problem was identified above all in educational bureaucracy, which is considered a threat to the advancement of strategic activities and the development of creativity.

I have the suspicion that in some cases we're doing more bureaucratic work than is necessary to achieve the [...] goals. And in doing so, we are then exercising ourselves without really getting anything in return. And that is dangerous, because it naturally inhibits further strategic initiatives. (Code 352, Q-71)

The individual orientation in the organisation is pronounced and is reflected in the respective subject specialisation of the faculty. Top academic research, and this is why new professors are taken from abroad, must continue to concentrate on their subject areas. However, the focus on specialisation has an influence on the other tasks to be performed, such as projects or team composition.

Changes in SP Work (13/2.2.2.): *“Is the school undergoing an organisational change or on the way to a transformation process? What influence/impact of change does the current school strategy have on the strategic project work?”*

Reflecting on the past three decades, the business school has undergone a transformation in terms of its positioning and the number of students in the view of the interviewees. Despite this, no transformation has been observed in the last ten years, only organic changes. But these changes still have an impact on strategy and

culture today, which is seen as a reciprocal relationship. The interviewees were unable to say whether any changes had taken place in the SPs.

Environment (14/3.1.1.) *“What are the main differences in managerialism between private industry and the school as an academic institution?”*

The different sources of funding are viewed as the main differences. While private companies have to make profits themselves, the university is mainly financed by public tax money. However, there is a perceived contradiction in coping with the different performance mandates while taking into account the given framework conditions, which leads to an area of tension within the organisation.

The highest academic level, in other words a purely academic level with a different mission, and at the same time entrepreneurial university – [...] we have to deliver contribution margins in order to be able to bear these costs, which this research also costs. And then these contradictions. In this context, research is the most important thing. In budgeting, the numbers are the most important thing. That also has to do with this [organisational] division. (Code 351, Q-72)

The most important measure of SP in the private sector is financial return, while reputation is considered the most important for a public university.

And at a public university, that can't be the driver for success. But what really drives success, in my opinion, is reputation, in other words, the contribution to enhancing reputation. That's what drives our business forward, because with a better reputation we get more third-party funding, we attract more students, we attract more continuing education customers, we have a greater impact on society and the economy, our graduates are more successful in the professional world. So our central obligation is to contribute to the reputation of the university; that should be the measure of success, and that is very different from the private sector. (Code 352, Q-73)

PM Setting (15/3.1.2.,3.1.3.): *“Can strategic projects be carried out without an established PM?”*

According to the interviewees, professional and sensible PM can make sense as long as it avoids formalism and does not bureaucratise the processes. Employees

with PM skills must be part of a project team. Further statements on this question could not be obtained.

Competencies (16/3.2.1.): *“What exactly is so difficult about the university system when it comes to organisational project work and dealing with structure, process and people?”* and Acquisition Competencies (17/ 3.2.2.): *“What elements need to be taken into account when increasing individual PM competencies?”*

The interviewees emphasised that the challenge was to take the project from the initial idea through to realisation. The concept did not have to be perfect before starting, nor did it have to be unnecessarily readjusted by perfectionists.

And logically, we have quite a few perfectionists at a university. We are probably all a bit like that. And that of course distinguishes many colleagues from typical managers who have internalised 80-20 rules. We struggle with that. (Code 352, Q-74)

Projects should be carried out by those who enjoy internal acceptance.

The acceptance with us you have when you’ve experienced this stable smell. So, you should have been taught that this is still the core business for us, in other words, really working on the front line in value creation. That’s the acceptance issue. So, it’s not enough for me if someone comes from outside and has learnt project methodology somewhere [...] and then wants to change the world somewhere here, or has never got their hands dirty here, or has thrown coal on the fire. (Code 351, Q-75)

Offering PM training for the staff would be valuable, but at the same time, critical self-reflection is also required:

The management skills we teach our students [...] we are not necessarily able to do ourselves. And perhaps that is also partly the case with project management. (Code 352, Q-76)

To conclude, it is noticeable that the term “strategic initiatives” is still regarded as active at various hierarchy levels of the university. According to the staff, however, strategic initiatives no longer take place within the business school, but only at the university level. The strategy processes and the associated planning procedures are

regarded as well established in the organisation. The importance of SP is also expressed, but the role, function and designation of SP are not clearly outlined. Furthermore, the unclear distinction between project vs operational task becomes evident within the discussions. Last, the discrepancy between the expectation of cutting-edge research and the expectations of management and PM skills is also evident.

Overall, it is noteworthy that individuality was expressed above all within this group: Preserving decentralisation; keeping the existing freedom; and limiting bureaucracy and formalism are seen as prerequisites for the sustainable further development of the business school.

8 - Group VI: Perspective of the Department Staff Units

Strategic Awareness/Thinking (1/1.1.1.): "How strong do you rate the current strategic awareness/thinking within the school? What significance does the current school strategy have for the further development of the organisation? Is there any connection between the current strategy and future challenges?"

A high level of strategic awareness/thinking is perceived at the top management level, while according to the interviewees this decreases towards the lower hierarchy levels. Furthermore, the aspect of the future in the strategy was only recognised by the interviewees for the internationalisation sub-strategy. In this context, it was pointed out that the integration of the English language into daily operational activities such as dealing with foreign faculty or teaching continued to pose a challenge.

Comprehension of the School Strategy (2/1.1.2): "What is the school trying to deliver? What are strategic driving forces of the school? To what extent is the comprehensibility of the current school strategy important for the employees?"

The fulfilment of the performance mandate for the benefit of society with a focus on quality and publications was seen as the focus of strategic efforts. The interviewees agreed that the employees were extensively informed about the strategic intentions. However, it was still questionable whether the employees understood everything about the strategy.

I think very few people really know exactly what is in the strategy now, but I still believe that it is already so noticeable because certain points are repeatedly mentioned with research, internationalisation, but also with the accreditations that we had. (Code 362, Q-77)

Communication of the School Strategy (3/1.1.3.): *“How should the school strategy better communicate internally and externally?”*

According to the interviewees, the organisation is already undertaking significant efforts to communicate the strategy. However, whether all employees have correctly understood it is uncertain. Accordingly, there is a desire to make the strategy even clearer, possibly with more visualisation, in order to generate even more conviction and commitment among employees.

Strategy Development and Types (4/1.2.1.): *“What different types of school strategies can be distinguished and how are they grouped? Does the observed endogeneity (inhouse) in the development of strategic topics have any disadvantage? Could an external consultant make a significant contribution to improving the quality of the strategy?”*

The interviewees did not perceive a recognisable differentiation between the strategy types, except in relation to the existing sub-strategies.

Strategic Alignment (5/1.2.2.): *“Does the overarching school strategy need to be aligned at different levels such as department, institute, centre etc. or shall it not be aligned? Does a SP take place at all levels?”*

Strategic alignment is only understood as guidelines which translates the strategy into operational objectives and thus takes the direct focus off the market. The actual strategy remains at school level and stable level, but an actual strategic alignment is scarcely acknowledged, nor is an SP for implementation.

I don't know whether this is a strategic project because I don't have the feeling that it really is. I have the feeling that it is not being managed as a project. (Code 362, Q-78)

Transition from Hinge Strategy Design to Strategy Implementation (6/1.3.1.): *“How does the transition from the finalised strategy to the executing units/responsible parties take place?”*

The interviewees described the process in the same manner as group G_V above: After the annual objectives are discussed with the department heads and the dean, they are submitted to the staff for finalisation as an operational annual plan. This is then sent to the department heads by e-mail.

Strategy Implementation Practice (7/1.3.2.): *“To what extent are organisational structures and formalism obstacles to strategy implementation? Which strategic implementation types are carried out?”*

An ongoing change in the organisation is perceived by the interviewees, which is linked to the organisation's multiple objectives.

There are a lot of conflicting goals, in other words, financial targets that we have to achieve financially and at the same time what we want strategically, that [don't] always work out. Yes, there is just a lot that is wanted, I have the feeling. (Code 362, Q-79)

[T]here are strategic goals that compete with each other. This results in various challenges during implementation, be it financial, for the staff with the workload, but also very specific, real objectives that are in conflict with each other. (Code 362, Q-80)

Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project (8/ 2.1.1.): *“How is the value and importance of an SP perceived in the organisation? How is SP defined in the organisation?”*

The understanding of an SP was different, and the interviewees were not entirely certain about its nature.

I don't know whether we have strategic projects at school level at the moment, but more so at [the] university level. There are these, I think they're called strategic initiatives. (Code 362, Q-81)

SP are set against market requirements.

It's known, but it's not as prominent. And I don't think it's as relevant on the front line because it's still [...] the market needs that are ultimately more important than for the moment in long-term or strategic projects. (Code 361, Q-82)

Strategic Project Choice (9/2.1.2.): *"Where and how is it evident that a distinction is made between operational work and strategic project work?"*

A distinction between project- and operational work was not recognised. According to the interviewees, either the terms were used synonymously or "strategic initiatives" was used.

Strategic Project Portfolio (10/2.1.3.): *"How does the SP grouping look? What are the current strategic projects?"*

The interviewees had no overview or understanding of the current strategic project portfolio.

Strategic Project Alignment (11/2.1.4.): *"How well is the SP alignment structured in the respective department and units?"*

Alignment is associated with the staff and the previously discussed OJP, but is not explained in detail by the interviewees.

Involvement / contribution in SP Work (12/2.2.1.): *"Does the quality of the implementation of the Strategic Project depend on the field of any tension? Accordance of Contribution: Teaching, consulting and research (dealing with the performance mandates) vs Divergence (mini-tentities): Building on their academic profile (recognition)."*

Two aspects were mentioned in involvement. The first concerns the resource of time and the corresponding workload.

Time is an issue because this academic development or this high level that is required no longer has to be done during working hours, but actually mostly in private [...] People are already very busy. So, they have to make a lot of

improvements alongside their normal work. And then they are working to capacity. So, the hourly quota then allows almost no further involvement. (Code 361, Q-83)

The second aspect concerns the field of tension with a focus on increased research, where commitment is affected due to a lack of time.

I would almost say that it has an influence on the noticeable commitment. So, I think there's a bit of a shift from [the original attitude]: "I'm in this organisation and I identify with the department I work for. And I want this department or this institute to do well and I also feel responsible for it". I think that has diminished over the last few years. (Code 362, Q-84)

Changes in SP Work (13/2.2.2.): *"Is the school undergoing an organisational change or on the way to a transformation process? What influence/impact of change does the current school strategy have on the strategic project work?"*

The interviewees noted both a transformation and a long-term organisational change with the aforementioned focus on publication. This is leading to a change in the workforce.

So, a direction has been taken that may require different personnel, who are currently being recruited. And the new mindset is not always compatible with the existing mindset of employees. (Code 361, Q-85)

The extent to which the SP work is affected by the changes could not be answered.

Environment (14/3.1.1.): *"What are the main differences in managerialism between private industry and the school as an academic institution?"*

Two aspects were mentioned by the interviewees. First, a business school is an expert organisation whose members put the freedom of their work first.

So, we don't just do what's prescribed at the top; we actually prefer to be a bit independent, so that I'm the expert and you don't actually have much to say to me. (Code 362, Q-86)

The second aspect is linked to expertise in the organisation and the corresponding management skills.

And in private industry, I think the main focus for a manager is on management skills, and that's not necessarily the case here. So, there is more emphasis on specialised knowledge than on leadership skills. (Code 361, Q-87)

PM Setting (15/3.1.2.,3.1.3.): *“Can strategic projects be carried out without an established PM?”*

This question could not be answered conclusively; it was only made clear that SP requires a proper breeding ground in the form of a project setting.

Competencies (16/3.2.1.): *“What exactly is so difficult about the university system when it comes to organisational project work and dealing with structure, process and people?”* and Acquisition Competencies (17/ 3.2.2.): *“What elements need to be taken into account when increasing individual PM competencies?”*

Leadership and social skills were primarily mentioned, paired with a holistic view of all upcoming tasks.

Acquisition Competencies (17/3.2.2.): *“What elements need to be taken into account when increasing individual PM competencies?”*

According to the interviewees, PM training would make sense if self-knowledge or self-reflection were considered. In any case, such training should be well aligned with the needs of the individual units.

To summarise phase three, the responses indicated that the organisation is highly formalised with rigid structures. The interviewees recognised that there is an established and proven procedure for strategic activities based on the annual operational planning. But their answers did not reveal a coherent image of the organisation in terms of strategy direction. The knowledge about strategy implementation through projects is distributed differently among the key actors and is therefore fragmented. Similarly, the existing PM is not considered a priority for change, as SPs are also executed without the basis of an established PM. This means that the logic of the theory that SP bring about organisational change cannot be identified in the impact case thus far.

Phase 4 – Development of a new Strategic Project for HEIs

In the individual meetings of groups 9 (Group VII: Perspective of the Academic Managers) and 10 (Group VII: Perspective of the Department Staff Units) a first draft of the framework based on the findings of the previous groups was shared. The feedback is summarised in Table 17 below. The main elements of the framework and the interventions are listed on the left-hand side column.

Components	Code 471	Code 472	Code 473	Code 474	Code 481	Code 482
Determinant A: Integrated Strategy Architecture	* Public universities do not need a strategy as they have a performance mandate. It is more about resource allocation. * Nevertheless, a structural term for strategy is important. * A strategy must trigger a self-dynamics, i.e., a momentum in organisational and product development.	+ Determinant is appropriate	+ Determinant is appropriate	+ Determinant is appropriate	+ Determinant is appropriate	+ Determinant is appropriate * A "Proof of Concept" for the strategies must be considered
Determinant B: Strategic Awareness / Thinking	* Strategic awareness is becoming increasingly important and is a strong basis for working strategically. * An understanding of strategy and the corresponding development of a strategic backdrop must be considered.	+ Determinant is appropriate	+ Determinant is appropriate	* Strategic Awareness / Thinking and the individual area are important spheres that have been neglected up to now, but are of enormous importance for the success of strategic initiatives and projects.	* The question arises whether strategic thinking can be developed by experts who themselves have had little to do with strategy work in practice. This is because academic socialisation is very pronounced and the focus on academic merit is correspondingly strong.	* Strategic thinking is important.
Determinant C: Strategic Alignment	+ A holistic understanding and appropriate time are needed.	+ Determinant is appropriate	- The question of the university's overarching strategy is important for understanding the strategies in the organisational units listed below (departments, institutes, centres, etc.).	+ Determinant is appropriate	+ Determinant is appropriate	+ Determinant is appropriate
Determinant D: Individual Contribution	+ Strategy work must be qualifiable for employees.	+ Determinant is appropriate	* It is important to consider the soft elements. * With regard to individual contribution, each player should be in his or her own position rather than work individually anywhere.	+ Determinant is appropriate	+ Determinant is appropriate	+ Determinant is appropriate
(1) Radar and Converter	* The question is whether the organisation understands exactly where it stands. * Converter important to recognise external disruption.	+ Component is appropriate	* The strategy should not be developed in isolation, but based on the mission and vision, taking into account the changing world.	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate
Highest HEIs Organisational Level	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	* Strategy must happen at the highest organisational level.	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate
(2) Component: Strategic Intent	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	* Mission statements, visions and values must be regularly adapted to avoid becoming outdated.	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	* The strategic orientation for academic managers and a sustainable impact of the strategy must be included.
(3) Component: Strategic Drivers	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate
(4) Component: Strategy Formulation and Communication (9) Component: Communication Feedback	* The question of communication is very important.	* For change management in HEIs to be successful, communication must be linked to incentives and targets.	* Employees must be told that they have completed a project and that they are on track. This is seen as an important motivating factor (feedback loop).	* Communication in planning and implementation, especially transparency, is an essential aspect that still receives too little attention at the university.	* A university needs a communication narrative regarding the strategy and a corresponding commitment on the part of the management.	* Communication is central. * Divergences should be highlighted: It is essential to be honest and take as many people with you (convince) as possible.
Objectives	* The ambition of the employee must be taken into account.		* In order to define objectives, an understanding of the constraints and the individual aspects is required so as not to overburden employees. Consequently, these two aspects must be looped back to the target definition.		+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate
Individual Constraints	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate
Individual Aspects	* It must be considered that the organisation is an expert commission. * The incentive system and the respective financing of the project and commitment must be taken into account.	* Incentives and objectives must consider the personal academic agenda, as academic managers are topic-driven and primarily distinguish themselves through their specialist areas (expert organisation). * Incentives for resources and time ensure personal commitment and dedication.	* The ability to lead projects must be taken into account.	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	* The personal academic agenda of academic managers must be considered in their behaviour towards strategy work.
(5) Strategic Planning	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate
(6) Transition - Interface Strategic Planning and Strategy	- Dynamic implementation of strategy work is an important interactive element.	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate
(7) Form of Strategy Implementation	- The organisation must be aware of its operational overload.	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	- An SP always needs a sponsor.	+ Component is appropriate
(8) Project Strategy Evaluation	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate
(9) Communication Feedback Loop Lessons Learnt Corresponding Adjustments	* The agglutination of strategy work must be recognisable as a strength of an HEI.	+ Component is appropriate	+ Component is appropriate	* Communication is needed at all levels. Accordingly, the communicative loops are important, particularly towards employees.	+ Component is appropriate	- Lessons learnt are important and must be explicitly expanded. Experiential knowledge must be discussed in order to promote a sense of cohesion. A drive element (spirit) can be created for the organisation.
Interventions			* With a framework, the justification arises as to which practical tools are available so that organisations can continue to develop in accordance with the framework. It is important to consider who does what and at what level.			* This is a positive approach with a solution-based orientation.
Intervention Preparing Change Setting	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	* The problem of different perspectives between management and employees must be taken into account in the change setting.	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	* Change management is key.
Intervention OPM Governance	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	- PMOs can reduce mistrust between staff and operational units and create trust. However, there is a risk that all tasks will be delegated to a PMO.	- PMO is important
Intervention Tracking System	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable
Intervention Documents	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable
Intervention Individual Support	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable	+ reasonable

Table 29: Feedback on the framework proposal from Group VII and VIII (author's)

A range of viewpoints was gathered from the responses and led to a deeper understanding of an SP within the impact case. As a result, the characteristics of an HEI's described in the literature are recognisable. It is apparent that publicly

financed educational institutions must first and foremost fulfil their state mandate. Consequently, the focus is primarily on the allocation of the resources within a highly regulated field of higher education.

In this regard and as outlined in Chapter 2, Müller and Lecoeuvre's (2014) four (generic) paradigms of "flexible economist", "conformist", "versatile artist" and "agile pragmatist" are to be mentioned here. These paradigms are aligned according to the shareholder or stakeholder governance orientation and their organisational control structures being merely behaviour- or outcome oriented. Using the example of the impact case, not all SPs, if identified as such by the interviewees, can be classified in one of the four proposed types of governance paradigms. But essentially, a shareholder-oriented approach with a behaviour control is recognisable with its focus on "conformist paradigm". Although standardised PM methodologies that are applied to SP are not discernible, this paradigm emphasises conformance and compliance with existing methodologies and processes, and a homogenous set of project types.

In terms of organisational integration and project governance, the PM literature assumes that organisations treat projects either as sovereign, autonomous entities with distinctive governance structures or as integrative parts of a programme, and they are therefore governed in dependency of other projects in the programme. But HEIs can pursue a mixed form despite not running PMO institutions at a strategic or tactical level. This consideration is discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.3 Main Findings Summarised

The following section provides a summary of the overall main findings of the thematic analysis of strategy, SPs and academic managers.

Strategy

Comprehensibility of the strategy: The business school has documented and made publicly available its mission statement, strategic goals and values. To the outside viewer, this appears to correspond to the "Strategy as Design" perspective (top-down strategy) by Lundin and Hällgren (2014) mentioned in Chapter 2 (Literature Review). This perspective is defined at the executive level and followed by the realisation of subordinated levels. However, the overarching- and sub-strategies are not exactly comprehensible to the interviewees. Apart from the intention to

strengthen the international reputation of the business school through further accreditations, research/publication activities, membership with international associations/network and so forth, the defining characteristics of the school's strategy is scarcely recognisable. Furthermore, the exact distinction to other business schools, such as value propositions, as well as the path to a differentiated positioning is not immediately apparent. How to respond to the any future world's challenges or address the potential economic, environmental, geopolitical, societal or technological risks (WEF, 2022) also remain unclear. Addressing such challenges leads to the organisational strategy and its method of handling it, which is in line with the observation of strategy talk by Alvesson and Willmott (2012, p. 148). Debates over the meaning of strategy and its appropriate interpretation go against the presumption that the topic is important. The authors note that everything and anything, whether operational or administrative, is labelled as strategically important and, as a result, managerial work becomes mystical. This resonant with the calls by various scholars to investigate HEI's challenges in providing a comprehensible strategy (Egorov and Platonova, 2023; Zipparo, 2023), and the need to apply professional management procedures to develop organisational strategy (Fumasoli and Hladchenko, 2023).

Priority of the strategy: The strategy is perceived as important; nevertheless, it is not the primary focus when compared to enterprises within the private industry (Alford and Greve, 2017), for instance. Figuratively speaking, the significance of the impact case's strategy can be likened to the stern flag of a riverboat. The existence and labelling of its strategy toward the outside are visible, but they are not like the ornamental figure "Spirit of Ecstasy" from Rolls Royce which symbolises power, as the key driving force to pull the organisation forward. Strategic activities appear to be more of a passive consequence of external requirements, such as the fulfilment of the legal performance mandate or the regulations of the accreditation authorities, than a proactive driving force. Strategy is destiny and shapes a company's future as stated by Burgelman (2020, p. 3). For instance, in the case of the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (Jiang 2022), it became clear that only the university's new strategy was a decisive driver when its organisation transformation began. Hence, scholars, being aware of this issue, discuss the importance and priority of the strategy within HEIs (Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016; Stensaker, 2019).

Level-fragmentation of the strategy: There is no recognisable stringency or consistency of strategy at different organisation levels and units (strategic alignment). As outlined in Chapter 2 (Literature Review), Whittington et al. (2020, p.12) proposed three strategy levels (corporate, business and functional) which are recognisable at the university and business school level; however, a thematic connection is not immediately apparent. This fact seems to be accepted as the nature of an HEI's, and there is no indication that this will change in the near future. As stated in Chapter 2, multi-level strategies are not a matter of course in HEIs and are thematised in this respect by scholars (Deiaco et al., 2012; Stensaker and Fumasoli, 2016). Following the fourfold matrix of Hasanefendic and Donina (2023, p. 394) presented in Chapter 2, a combination of Field 1 (complex field/complete organisation) and Field 3 (complex field/fragmented organisation) is identifiable as shown in Table 18.

	Complete Organisation	Fragmented Organisation
Complex Field	Field 1 - Strategic selectivity - Participative strategising	Field 3 - Strategic arena - Strategic specialisation of subunits
		
Coherent Field	Field 2 - Strategic consistency with field demands	Field 4 - Strategic compliance under pretext - Strategic coherence without centralised intention

Table 30: Positioning Impact Case in Fourfold Matrix (Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023)

The organisation of the impact case (Field 1) on the one hand reflects the situation of pluralistic, incompatible and conflicting demands which stem from the field where leadership is the dominant actor (such as the Dean and Executive Board) within the organisation and controls the strategising conformity to its vision, agenda and priorities (strategic selectivity). On the other hand (Field 3), the business school is typically split into disciplinary communities, each with their own professional norms and values, and each loosely coupled with another. This frequently results in disconnected (unit-)strategies (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) that are centred around influential chairholders and/or individual academics who manage crucial internal resources (Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023).

My recommendation is to define the strategy for my [unit] level in such a way that it matches the current status and tends to endure. The basic orientation [of the business school] will remain the same. You have to be able to define your strategy [for your unit] where both [are] specific, and generic is enough. You have to regularly scrutinise and adapt your own [unit] strategy [yourself].
(Code 241, Q-88)

Strategic Project

Every project is Strategic Project: How an SP is characterised or defined in the organisation is unclear, as there is no uniform understanding of it. It is not transparent which projects are designated as “strategic projects” for the interviewees, nor is it clear whether projects are an approach to organising work as a visible part of the school strategy. There is a lack of clarity regarding what constitutes a successful project at the organisation as the success criteria of a strategic project remain ambiguous. This issue is consistent with the conclusions made by Todorović et al. (2015) regarding inadequate project success analysis and documentation of the outcomes of earlier initiatives. The four steps to identifying KPIs project success that are proposed by the authors was mentioned in Chapter 2. The link between the school’s strategic drivers and objectives to its corresponding strategic projects is barely perceptible as a structured organisational PM work environment is not established. Furthermore, the school’s strategy does not mention its means of integration through a PM mechanism. The various definitions of project typologies were explained in Chapter 2. In the impact case, an official categorisation of all projects does not appear to exist. However, Sulkowski et al. (2018) propose four types of projects for implementation which are basically visible in the impact case: the quality of the principles of teaching (system and industry accreditations; certifications); the research (publications); the design of new products and services based on scientific activities; and the organisational processes (efficiency, effectiveness and quality improvement).

“Tower of Babel” phenomena: A specific strategic or project-specific language is scarcely discernible. The meetings revealed that the terms “project”, “strategic project” and “project management” were used interchangeably. There was almost no selectivity in the meaning of these terms, as is the case in literature. Bolland (2020, p. 9) speaks of “Power Word” for expressions which are the foundation of

core words used in daily communication. Furthermore, linguists Triki and Taman (1994) state that language, when formulated in a particular manner, produces an effect which markedly influences people's social behaviour. The proper use and maintenance of strategy language is also supported by Mantere (2013), who explains that the process of how strategies become shared amongst organisational members is not well understood.

In the impact case, the execution of the SPs is controlled by the annual operational planning and analysed in a quarterly manner. When specifying objectives, there is almost no distinction between repetitive and one-off execution for the type of activity to be carried out. Each Head of Department is responsible for the realisation of the objectives defined by management in his or her area of work. However, the report does not contain the results or benefits of the project types (such as research projects) which are listed as cost centres in the university project database. Instead, the data of the recorded projects are sent to management in a separate report as a data extract on request. This procedure demonstrates that the pursuit of a strategic goal does not happen through an officially defined project, and the implementation is technically called an operational action. This procedure fits Van der Walt's (2016) explanation of traditional wisdom that ongoing activities or functional operations are meant to realise an organisation's strategy, therefore not projects. Strategist researchers emphasise that a plan or planning is not a strategy (Patanakul and Shenhar, 2012; Lafley and Martin, 2013, p. 3). Furthermore, Fuentes et al. (2020) highlight that a corporate strategy and its implementation should be the main practice of the contemporary era that has come to replace previous management activities such as "administration" or "planification." In this regard, Abeysinghe and Pallapa (2021) describe an ambiguous distinction between the strategy and operational sides, or the connectivity between strategy and operational details, as the "messy middle". For instance, confusion between strategy, plan and execution with the planning of new executive programmes was observed by the author in the impact case. Furthermore, operational activities were interwoven with strategic positioning and planning. Consequently, the missing relationship can lead to friction within the organisation's implementation process. If the staff involved is not fully aware of valid or non-valid activities, the chance of "operational messiness" or "background noisiness" increases due to issues such as time pressure, unclear processes or inexperience in executing such activities.

The question mark with the SP portfolio: There are differing individual perceptions what the organisation's current SPs are. The attempt to name SPs tends to trigger a guessing process among the respondents rather than a clear understanding. In this regard and with reference to Chi and Spowage's (2010) five levels of classification of methodologies presented in Chapter 2, a specific level of methodology in the impact case is difficult to identify. For instance, not all projects are officially recorded in the university database, and there is no official categorisation of all (strategic) projects. The author has attempted to establish such a categorisation, but this could not be confirmed by the responsible staff. Accordingly, it is difficult to say how well technology enables project work (Retnowardhani and Suroso, 2019).

Implementation gap: Due to their function, the staff team, which is responsible for the strategy process, fulfils an indispensable task in the development of the annual strategic plan. In doing so, they liaise with the relevant heads of various entities. However, the tasks of the strategic planning staff remains to planning and does not lead to practical implementation support. This fact is in line with the research findings of Zubac et al. (2022, p. 66). Distinguishing between the formulation and implementation of a strategy caused problems, making it necessary to bridge the implementation gap for a strategy to be successfully realised according to the authors. They observed an acknowledgment, even a resignation, that a top-down strategic management approach in which managers direct and the organisation responds and realises a strategy is an "idée fixe". Consequently, it is essential to liberate implementation from planning and develop an alternative understanding that recognises strategy implementation as an activity. Sanaghan (2021, p. 92) confirms through his many years of observing strategic planners at universities that they are restricted in their far-reaching activities and pursuit of objectives due to existing structures and capacity.

Academic Managers

Taking competencies for granted: Strategy implementation through projects depends on the (PM) competencies of the project worker. His or her understanding and experience of how a strategy is developed and implemented is a crucial part of project implementation. The competencies identified and listed in literature are assumed to be applicable to all project workers, thus also to academic managers.

Therefore, the assumption is that competencies can be standardised in the sense of “one size fits all”.

In this research, it was discovered that no academic manager participants had formal PM-related training or certification. This finding is representative of the HEI as described in the literature (Havermans et al., 2019). Their actions in project was based on their previous work experience, which led them to perform intuitively. Consequently, offering them standardised PM training such as PMP or IPMA-level courses would be insufficient because not all projects at the organisation are carried out in a standardised or uniform manner; for instance, they may not have acquired the relevant competencies within their respective organisational contexts. Academic managers are knowledge workers who are highly trained in different areas; many of the proposed competencies in literature such as communication, contextual- or teamwork competencies are instilled through academic managers’ intellect and applied in their daily work. It would therefore be reasonable to assume that academics are already highly experienced in some of the competencies. Admittedly, the process of (PM) competence acquisition is assumed to be independent of personality and character. In the impact case, the systematic PM competence development for the academic staff is voluntary and not part of an HR development set. To date, literature has not adequately dealt with the PM training of university employees. In his dissertation, Lyken (2017) deals with the lack of qualified project managers at US universities and searches for new solutions for adequate recruitment processes. He concludes that at his place of study (Liberty University in the US), PM training should be provided to university project managers to enhance their ability to run projects more successfully. Little is written in the literature about internal training or career programmes of university staff (Spowart et al., 2019); even less has been researched on the promotion of staff PM competencies (Myalkina and Zhitkova, 2018).

Against this background, managing stakeholders in cross-institutional initiatives that have disparate interests, protocols and systems is viewed as a considerable difficulty. Therefore, system knowledge emerged as a vital competence in the impact case. To create a change, academic managers must know which components of the organisational system to adjust. Special skills are also needed to read and comprehend people and their interests so that communication can be

tailored appropriately. This finding is in line with King's (2012, p. 138) observed need of techniques and attributes that managers can use to fully integrate strategies and projects to create cohesion. It should be noted that internal documentation on how projects are expected to run internally is available to employees. But regarding "Lessons learnt of projects" (Duffield and Whitty, 2015), a further concept is needed.

Individual contribution: The interlocutors are uncertain about whether they are currently working on or have previously worked on officially declared SPs. The extent of personal involvement in the SP is often ambiguous to the academic managers. In addition, it is not always obvious whether the tasks to be executed belong to a strategic project (or strategic activity). This issue is in line with the research findings of Ashforth et al. (1996). The authors describe the correlation of strategy and organisational identity, both of which provide a context within which individuals are embedded and are therefore both enabled and constrained. The authors declare the need for awareness of the contribution to the strategy, which encourages the individual identity. This necessity for increased awareness is also emphasised by Barrick et al. (2014), who assert that strategic implementation is related to the motivational antecedents of motivating work design, human resource management practices and CEO transformational leadership. According to Jelinek and Litterer (1994, p. 19), strategy addresses the question "Where are we going and how do we get there?", which leads directly to the follow-up question "Who are we?" The authors conclude that this correlation is critical because of its tremendous potential to motivate and shape strategic choice and its execution activities.

Workload: Academic managers are all-rounders who are required to undertake a variety of tasks, some of which are new, complex or otherwise associated with major challenges. The corresponding support and expertise provided by the organisation are not equally aligned, however. Accordingly, some academic managers wish to have more support when implementing SP, although it is not exactly clear what form the assistance should take. This finding aligns with Floyd's (2016) area of research on optimised support for academic middle managers in performing their role.

Ego profile: Academic managers who have been strongly socialised professionally in academia, in particular professors (Parry 2007, p. 25), find themselves in an interplay between their efforts to raise their academic profiles (in other words independently of their employer) and to perform the tasks set by their employer. The

so-called “Self-employment” was therefore discussed several times in the interviews. This leads to tension between the relentless pursuit of academic achievements and the management duties to be fulfilled. The balance of power which stems from alternating roles is recognised by scholars (Evans et al., 2013; Ekman et al., 2018; Geschwind et al., 2019) and addressed specifically in connection with “managerialism”, which was outlined in Chapter 2.

These summarised findings are reproduced in detail in the following text sequence. In addition, and in alignment with the list of literature in Chapter 2.8, the literature supplementing the main findings is depicted in Table 31 below.

#	Topic	Findings	Issues	In alignment with literature (in addition to literature in chapter 2)
1	Strategy	1) Comprehensibility of the strategy	1) The overarching- and sub-strategies are not exactly comprehensible to the interviewees. 2) The defining characteristics of the school's strategy is scarcely recognisable. 3) The exact distinction to other business schools, such as value propositions, as well as the path to a differentiated positioning is not immediately apparent. 4) How to respond to the any future world's challenges or address the potential economic, environmental, geopolitical, societal or technological risks (WEF, 2022) also remain unclear.	Alvesson and Willmott, 2012; Lundin and Hällgren, 2014; Fumasoli and Hladchenko, 2023; Egorov and Platonova, 2023; Zipparo, 2023
		2) Priority of the strategy	5) The strategy is perceived as important; nevertheless, it is not the primary focus when compared to enterprises within the private industry. 6) Strategic activities appear to be more of a passive consequence of external requirements, such as the fulfilment of the legal performance mandate or the regulations of the accreditation authorities, than a proactive driving force.	Alford and Greve, 2017; Jiang, 2022; Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016; Stensaker, 2019
		3) Level-Fragmentation of the strategy	7) There is no recognisable stringency or consistency of strategy at different organisation levels and units (strategic alignment)	Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Deiaci et al., 2012; Stensaker and Fumasoli, 2016; Whittington et al., 2020; Hasanefendic and Donina, 2023
2	Strategic Project	1) Definition of SP	8) How an SP is characterised or defined in the organisation is unclear, as there is no uniform understanding of it. 9) It is not transparent which projects are designated as “strategic projects”, nor is it clear whether projects are an approach to organising work as a visible part of the school strategy.	Todorović et al., 2015; Sulkowski et al., 2018
		2) Synonym of the terms	10) A specific strategic or project-specific language is scarcely discernible. The meetings revealed that the terms “project”, “strategic project” and “project management” were used interchangeably.	Triki and Taman, 1994; Patanakul and Shenhar, 2012; Lafley and Martin, 2013; Mantere, 2013; Van der Walt, 2016; Bolland, 2020; Fuertes et al., 2020; Abeyasinghe and Pallapa, 2021
		3) SP portfolio	11) Not all projects are officially recorded in the university database, and there is no official categorisation of all (strategic) projects.	Chi and Spowage, 2010; Retnowardhani and Suroso, 2019
		4) Implementation gap	12) The tasks of the strategic planning staff remains to planning and does not lead to practical implementation support.	Sanaghan, 2021; Zubac et al., 2022
3	Academic Managers	1) Importance of the responsible person	13) No academic manager participants had formal PM-related training or certification. Their actions in project was based on their previous work experience, which led them to perform intuitively.	King, 2012; Lyken, 2018; Myalkina and Zhitkova, 2018; Havermans et al., 2019; Spowart et al., 2019
		2) Individual contribution	14) The extent of personal involvement in the SP is often ambiguous to the academic managers. In addition, it is not always obvious whether the tasks to be executed belong to a strategic project (or strategic activity).	Jelinek and Litterer, 1994; Ashforth et al., 1996; Barrick et al., 2014
		3) Workload	15) Academic manager are all-rounders who are required to undertake a variety of tasks, some of which are new, complex or otherwise associated with major challenges. The corresponding support and expertise provided by the organisation are not equally aligned, however.	Floyd, 2015
		4) Ego profile	16) Academic managers who have been strongly socialised professionally in academia, in particular professors, find themselves in an interplay between their efforts to raise their academic profiles and to perform the tasks set by their employer.	Parry, 2007; Evans et al., 2013; Ekman et al., 2018; Geschwind et al., 2019

Table 31: Sources used for main finding discussion (author's)

Those findings are underpinned in the following Figure 12 with the corresponding evidence based on the three phases. This compilation also provides the components required for the framework.

#	Topic	Thematic Analysis	Phase 1 Test Interview Design		Phase 2 Initial Understanding			Phase 3 In-depth Understanding	
			Group I Experts Code 111 / 112	Group II Executive Board Members 221 / 112	Group III Academic Managers 231 / 232 / 234 / 235 / 236	Group IV Staff Members 241 / 242 / 243	Author Field notes	Group V Academic Managers 351 / 352	Group VI Staff Members 361 / 362
1	Strategy	Comprehensibility of the strategy - strategy that strives our school to more research oriented. - Strategy becoming a better teaching school - more students. - strategy increasing ranking, accreditation - No strategy map in place. - Management has its own understanding about strategy -> does it need me?	- Referral to the department staff unit members for questions about strategy and strategic processes for consultation.	* Code 234, Q-6 / Code 234, Q-8 / Code 234, Q-11 / Code 234, Q-30 / Code 232, Q-31 6-2. Lack of clarity about organisational goals. 2-2.2. Lack of clarity of the management principles for the organisation. 2-1.1. Lack of clarity in the development of the strategy. 3-6.1. Changes: Lack of clarity about changes. 2-6.2. Changes: Contribution of the projects to the overall knowledge of the school. 4-6.6. Changes: Strategic projects managed more closely.	* Code 242, Q-52 - Accreditations pushed the business school to adopt an initial strategic mindset	- Some strategic activities are set up in a professional way, other strategic goals are executed in a unclear approach/manner in terms operations or in form of a project. - No internal or external specialists are involved in questions of strategy and strategy development.	* Code 352, Q-71 - High level of awareness at the top management level and a vigorous pursuit of strategic goals. - The achievement and positions of these strategic goals are characterised by strong formalities such as accreditation achievements or rankings. - Strategic enabling - considering the strengths of the organisation	* Code 362, Q-77 - High level of strategic awareness/thinking is perceived at the top management level -> decreases towards the lower hierarchy levels.	
			Priority of the strategy	- Not aware of any strategy.	* Code 232, Q-7 / Code 234, Q-8 / Code 232, Q-33 2-1.1. Lack of clarity as to what exactly the school wants to achieve. 2-1.1. Lack of clarity in the existing school strategy. 2-1.5. Lack of clarity if strategy is in connection with external financing and performance mandate with a focus on customers (students). 5-1.1. Lack of clarity about strategy. 6-2.1. Lack of clarity about strategy desired. 2-6.1. Changes: Focus more on academic development.	* Code 242, Q-50 - Too generic strategy descriptions	- Long duration for strategy development	* Code 351, Q-72 / Code 352, Q-73 - Fulfillment of the performance mandate -> focus of strategic efforts	* Code 362, Q-79 - Fulfillment of the performance mandate -> focus of strategic efforts
			Level-Fragmentation of the strategy	- Departments decide for themselves.	* Code 233, Q-18 / Code 233, Q-24 / Code 231, Q-26 4-1.1. Lack of clarity about strategy and strategy alignment. 4-1.2. Lack of clarity in the consistency of the strategy hierarchies. 5-1.3. Lack of clarity of strategic alignment from school to centre level. 6-1.3. Understanding of strategic alignment is key.	* Code 242, Q-51 / Code 242, Q-55 / Code 243, Q-56 - Strategy alignment and the overarching university strategy is seen as challenging		* Code 351, Q-65 - Different approaches assumed but not clear enough - Term "alignment" is considered difficult to operationalise because it is not clear what precisely alignment should be.	* Code 362, Q-78 - Actual strategic alignment is scarcely acknowledged, nor is an SP for implementation.
			Definition of SP	- No definition in place. - Proposed ten criteria for SP more for justification.	* Code 234, Q-12 / Code 231, Q-16 / Code 232, Q-17 / Code 233, Q-34 / Code 234, Q-35 6-1.2. Awareness of SP present, but not exactly clear. 2-1.4. Lack of clarity about the existence of strategic projects. 3-1.2. Lack of clarity as to what exactly an SP is. 6-1.1. Difficult to categorise OPM Described characteristics 1-3.1. Strategic and financial targets 1-3.2. Positioning 1-3.3. Resource-based approach 2-3.1. Financial benefit 2-3.2. Knowledge benefit 3-3.1. Lack of clarity about monitoring and tracking projects 4-3.1. Sense making 5-3.1. Time and costs 5-3.2. Focal points in the institute 6-3.1. Learning, time, impact, feasibility, resources	* Code 242, Q-60 - Not clear if specified topics are dealt with as SPs in the respective departments.	* Code 352, Q-68 / Code 351, Q-70 - SP is not recognised as an SP.	* Code 362, Q-81 / Code 361, Q-82 - Not entirely certain about its nature. - Not sure if SP is important.	
2	Strategic Project	Definition of SP	- No definition in place. - Proposed ten criteria for SP more for justification.	* Code 234, Q-12 / Code 231, Q-16 / Code 232, Q-17 / Code 233, Q-34 / Code 234, Q-35 6-1.2. Awareness of SP present, but not exactly clear. 2-1.4. Lack of clarity about the existence of strategic projects. 3-1.2. Lack of clarity as to what exactly an SP is. 6-1.1. Difficult to categorise OPM Described characteristics 1-3.1. Strategic and financial targets 1-3.2. Positioning 1-3.3. Resource-based approach 2-3.1. Financial benefit 2-3.2. Knowledge benefit 3-3.1. Lack of clarity about monitoring and tracking projects 4-3.1. Sense making 5-3.1. Time and costs 5-3.2. Focal points in the institute 6-3.1. Learning, time, impact, feasibility, resources	* Code 242, Q-60 - Not clear if specified topics are dealt with as SPs in the respective departments.	* Code 352, Q-68 / Code 351, Q-70 - SP is not recognised as an SP.	* Code 362, Q-81 / Code 361, Q-82 - Not entirely certain about its nature. - Not sure if SP is important.		
			Synonym of the terms	- No distinction between SP and normal project.	* Code 233, Q-20 5-1.4. Operational Annual Planning as objectives, but missing link to strategy and project. 1-1.3. Difference between projects and strategic projects not clear. 3-2.1. Lack of clarity between projects or project management.	* Code 243, Q-58 / Code 243, Q-59 - Project are labelled differently.	* Code 351, Q-66 / Code 352, Q-69 - Activities are not always called "strategic".		
			SP portfolio	- Included in the Annual Operation Planning.	* Code 236, Q-4 / Code 234, Q-22 / Code 233, Q-36			* Code 351, Q-67 - Not aware about the handling process of SPs	- Not perceive a recognisable differentiation between the strategy types.
			Implementation gap	- Is there any strategy implementation at all?	- All implementation runs via the Annual Planning Process.	* Code 231, Q-9 / Code 232, Q-10 / Code 234, Q-15 / Code 232, Q-21 / Code 234, Q-28 / Code 231, Q-41 2-1.1. Lack of clarity on how the school strategy will be implemented. 2-2.1. Lack of clarity in strategy implementation. 3-2.2. Process and Structure in place. 4-3.3. Lack of capacity for projects in addition to quadruple performance mandate. 3-6.2. Inconsistency in approaching strategic projects.	* Code 243, Q-53 - Clear planning processes for preparing the strategic goals but no specific plan or regulations for implementation process.	* Code 351, Q-67 - Not aware about the handling process of SPs	
3	Academic Managers	Competencies	- Not aware of the specific competencies.	* Code 231, Q-9 / Code 235, Q-19 / Code 236, Q-14 / Code 234, Q-39 / Code 231, Q-40 / Code 235, Q-45 / Code 231, Q-46 / Code 232, Q-47 / Code 234, Q-49		* Code 352, Q-74 / Code 351, Q-75 / Code 352, Q-76 Code 361, Q-87 - Management skills are questioned in the organisation.			
			Individual contribution	- Only operational contribution to daily business.	* Code 234, Q-15 / Code 231, Q-19 / Code 233, Q-25 / Code 231, Q-29 / Code 234, Q-37 / Code 232, Q-42 3-1.1. Responsibility for strategic projects only with the staff. 5-1.2. Lack of clarity regarding the contribution of projects to the strategy. 2-1.2. Proposal: Clarify contributions to performance through SP.	* Code 243, Q-54 / Code 242, Q-57 / Code 243, Q-61 - Lack of understanding about the individual contribution of employees to the strategy.			
			Workload	- High workload for academic managers - Leadership training must be developed further for the organisation's own people.	* Code 231, Q-19 / Code 231, Q-32				Code 361, Q-83 - Overloading (resource time)
			Ego profile	- Certain people have the right to make decisions, it's also about power.	- Important to recognise the difference between the tasks of a manager and an academic.	* Code 234, Q-27 / Code 233, Q-38 / Code 236, Q-43 / Code 232, Q-44 1-6.1. Change in leadership focus: transition from private-sector management style to control thing. 5-6.1. Changes: More project work in research due to competitiveness.		- Focus on research specialisation has an influence on the other tasks to be performed, such as projects or team composition. Code 362, Q-84 / Code 361, Q-85 / Code 362, Q-86 - Commitment has changed. - Different mindset with new professors. - Independent work is required.	

#	Topic	Thematic Analysis	Phase 1 Test Interview Design	Phase 2 Initial Understanding			Phase 3 In-depth Understanding	
		Additional characteristics		<p>Character</p> <p>4.-2.3. Expert organisation - individually.</p> <p>1.-1.2. Perception: PM with the processes in the organisation perceived as positive.</p> <p>4.-4.1. Project work is underestimated at the school.</p> <p>4.-6.2. Project work is done informally and implicitly rather than planned and formally binding.</p> <p>Challenges</p> <p>Stakeholder</p> <p>1.-5.1. No coherent organisation: many different stakeholders with different interests</p> <p>1.-5.2. Bringing together different interest groups</p> <p>1.-5.4. Stakeholder Awareness</p> <p>3.-5.1. Coordination and Negotiations Cross-institutional</p> <p>Process & Structure</p> <p>5.-5.2. Bureaucratic hurdles</p> <p>4.-5.1. Resistance - inertia - and sensitivities</p> <p>2.-5.1. Laying a solid foundation for the project</p> <p>6.-5.1. Research project during Covid</p> <p>Support</p> <p>3.-5.2. Being in the political spotlight</p> <p>3.-5.3. First-time project</p> <p>3.-6.4. Wrong People allocation for projects</p> <p>4.-5.2. Obtain appropriate resources</p> <p>People</p> <p>1.-5.3. Motivational element - meaningfulness in an academic organisation</p>			* Code 352, Q-62	- Reputation is the key success factor for a university.
				<p>Methodology</p> <p>1.-4.2. No specific method</p> <p>4.-4.4. No standard methodology</p> <p>6.-4.1. No standard methodology</p> <p>5.-4.1. No framework or tool available</p> <p>1.-4.1. Templates of the organisation</p> <p>4.-4.1. Simple classic PM</p> <p>2.-4.1. Own detailed project plan - no standard methodology</p> <p>6.-4.2. Own points</p> <p>4.-4.2. Problem of multi-year projects</p> <p>4.-4.3. Agility would be possible</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>2.-7.1. Communication in the sense of discussion through</p> <p>4.-7.3. Communicating (and listening) to pick up sensitivities early</p>				- Organisation undertakes much efforts to communicate the strategy. -> whether all employees have correctly understood it is uncertain.
		Proposals		<p>Strategic Awareness / Thinking</p> <p>2.-1.1. Proposal: questioning again strategy and strategic goals and make them transparent.</p> <p>System Thinking and Dealing</p> <p>1.-7.1. System competence</p> <p>5.-7.1. Systematic and structured approach in the system</p> <p>4.-7.1. Classical strategic skills of seeing the big picture and articulating it - thinking the big picture</p> <p>3.-7.1. System political finance</p> <p>4.-7.2. Free yourself in the system</p> <p>1.-2.2. Proposal: Query individual competencies</p> <p>3.-7.2. Selection of people</p> <p>Character/Personality</p> <p>1.-8.2. Character dependent</p> <p>1.-8.3. Stewardness</p> <p>1.-8.1. Flexible thinking in a wider context</p> <p>2.-7.3. Empowerment</p> <p>2.-7.4. Accountability</p>			- Greatest care should be taken with the university's public image. (Code 352, Q-64)	- Preserving decentralisation; keeping the existing freedom; and limiting bureaucracy and formalism are seen as prerequisites for the sustainable further development of the business school.
				<p>PMO</p> <p>6.-6.3. Future: Multistakeholder collaboration.</p> <p>4.-6.5. Proposal: Project Management Office.</p> <p>4.-8.2. Proposal: More power - rigorous - rigid of projects.</p> <p>Tools</p> <p>6.-6.1. Proposal: Application of better tools for complex, virtual projects.</p> <p>4.-6.4. Paradox: financial leadership project management tool but nothing for strategy change.</p> <p>6.-7.1. Using PM tools collaborative, inter-university projects (Learning with PM Tools)</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>4.-2.2. University environment is different from industry - commercial orientation - black zero.</p> <p>2.-1.3. Lack of clarity of the presence of the PM environment.</p> <p>Learning & Support</p>				
				<p>Training</p> <p>6.-8.1. Short PM training</p> <p>5.-8.2. Formal training</p> <p>Sparring Partner</p> <p>5.-8.1. Sparring partner</p> <p>6.-8.2. More sparring partner</p> <p>Role model/Guidance in experience process</p> <p>1.-8.4. Proposal: Example of a master teacher system with autonomy</p> <p>2.-8.1. Role model</p> <p>2.-8.2. Master teacher</p> <p>3.-8.1. Guided experience</p> <p>6.-8.1. Talk to other who have experience</p> <p>1.-8.3. Learning by doing</p> <p>1.-8.3. Learning by doing</p> <p>5.-7.2. Learning by doing - but not exactly clear what more could be learnt from PM</p> <p>5.-2.1. Desire for more individual support, as no experience from industry such as marketing, projects</p>				- PM training would make sense if self-knowledge or self-reflection were considered

Phase 1 Test Interview Design	Phase 2 Initial Understanding				Phase 3 In-depth Understanding	
Group I Experts Code 111 / 112	Group II Executive Board Members 221 / 112	Group III Academic Managers 231 / 232 / 233 / 234 / 235 / 236	Group IV Staff Members 241 / 242 / 243	Author Field notes	Group V Academic Managers 351 / 352	Group VI Staff Members 361 / 362
- First four questions of the draft questionnaire about business school's strategy could not sufficiently answered. - Business school's approach to strategic management does not fully integrate academic managers.	- Strategy and SP are firmly anchored in management as a key topic. - Department staff seems to be the most important point of contact for all questions relating to strategy and strategic activities. - Department staff members themselves are not professional strategists, however, but specialised in strategic planning processes and running projects	- Unclear what the overarching strategy is and whether SP are related to organisational changes. - PM as a whole is neither perceived as an important or positive issue, nor as something bad or in urgent need of revision. - SP itself is not a pain point within the organisation. - Lack of differentiation between the terms "PM" and "project" - no PM language - Socialisation process of academics becomes evident.	- It is noticeable that the entire effort to further develop the staff's strategy process went largely unnoticed by the other interviewees. - Strategy process reflects a top-down approach. - Departments themselves are responsible for implementing the specified strategic objectives at their own level. - No specified implementation support for departments. - Individual contribution to strategic activities (or projects) is not recognised. * There are SPs at the organisational level, but employees are scarcely aware of them.		- Strategic initiatives no longer take place within the business school, but only at the university level. - SP is also expressed, but the role, function and designation of SP are not clearly outlined. - Unclear distinction between project vs operational task. - Discrepancy between the expectation of cutting-edge research and the expectations of management and PM competencies.	- Opinion that organisation is highly formalised with rigid structures. - Established and proven procedure for strategic activities based on the annual operational planning. - Knowledge about strategy implementation through projects is distributed differently among the key actors and is therefore fragmented.

Components of the Framework				
Determinant A Integrated Strategy Architecture	Determinant B Strategic Awareness / Thinking	Determinant C Strategic Alignment	Determinant D Individual Contribution	
(1) Radar and Converter	Highest HEFs Organisational Level	(2) Component: Strategic Intent	(3) Component: Strategic Drivers	(4) Component: Strategy Formulation and Communication Goal Setting Institutional Constraints Individual Aspects
(5) Strategic Planning	(6) Transition - Interface Strategic Planning and Strategy Implementation	(7) Form of Strategy Implementation	(8) Project Strategy Evaluation	(9) Component: Communication Feedback
Interventions				
Intervention <i>Preparing Change Setting</i>	Intervention <i>OPM Governance</i>	Intervention <i>Tracking System</i>	Intervention <i>Documents</i>	Intervention <i>Individual Support</i>

Table 32: Thematic analysis of the main findings (author's)

4.4 Reaching the Critical Point

The feedback from the interviewees indicates that the organisation of the impact case has reached a critical point. Recognising the critical point within the organisational development is an important element in the strategic thinking process (Dixit et al., 2021) and should help to initiate appropriate measures. Figure 13 below illustrates this generically. Organisational development is presented in two dimensions: (1) “Management Excellence” and (2) “Research Excellence”. It has been shown in the business school that research depends on how management performance is conducted in order to manage the preconditions and finance the research activities. Achieving the highest levels of excellence in management and research performance leads to the “Top Tier” field (3). The critical point (CP) is centred for reasons of generic simplicity (4).

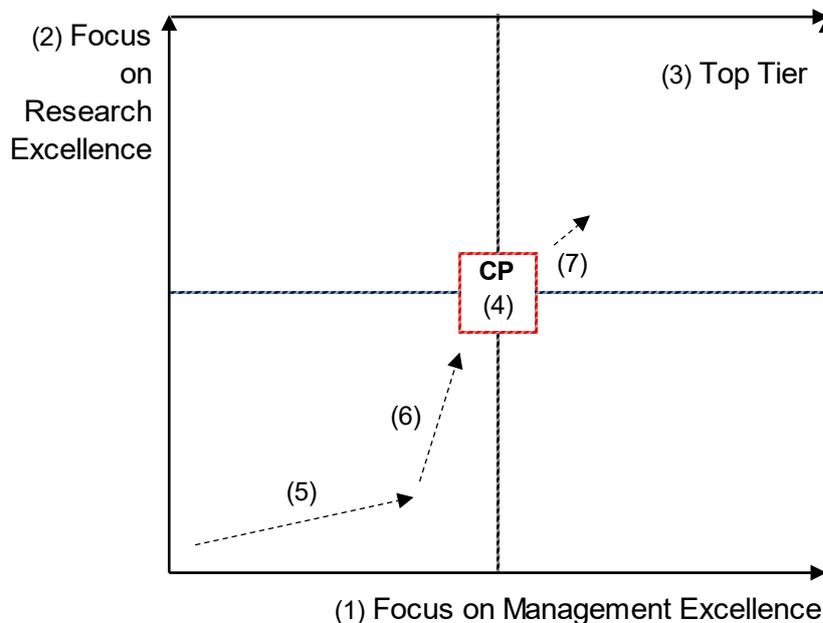


Table 33: Critical point in an HEI's organisational development

As outlined in the literature chapter, management excellence in the context of HEIs refers to building up sound expertise in strategic management; the use of a professional leadership practice; the development of efficient and effective operational processes; the sensible use of resources; and agile, customer-orientated products and services such as programmes, consulting or bespoke company trainings (Ojokuku, 2013; Cardoso et al., 2016; Micelotta et al. 2017; Munir et al., 2017; Camilleri and Camilleri, 2018; Lin and Kellough, 2019). The pursuit of a meaningful managerialism perspective that is both accepted by the faculty (including factors such as identity or motivation) and fulfils the target performance

such as revenue or cost savings is crucial for further organisational development (McCormack et al., 2014; Martin, 2016).

Research Excellence, on the other hand, strives for cutting-edge and quantitative sufficient research outputs. This is accomplished, for instance, through research projects or by publishing articles in peer-reviewed journals. These outputs are measured on the basis of various metrics and observed by different associations such as accreditation bodies or ranking organisations (Olavarrieta, 2022). Accordingly, the organisational structures, processes and know-how development must be in place to support the knowledge generation in the best possible way.

The CP (4) in Figure 13 reflects a decisive moment for an HEI's. The example of the impact case shows that the business school has grown substantially for many years due to its strong focus on "Management Excellence" (5) and is therefore currently financially sound. At the same time, research activities are not prioritised. But the most recent development shows that the opposite is currently the case. The current strong focus on "Research Excellence" (6) has decelerated further development in "Management Excellence". Notably, the appointment of new professors to almost all key positions is associated with the fact that those academic managers have to master the entire range of managerialism as well as top-level research. However, the results of the discussions indicate a risk of overloading these academic managers and a dispersion of their forces due to this pursuit of multiple objectives. The consequence would be an eventual decline in research power and performance. To elude from the CP (4) and enter the Top Tier field (3), attention must be paid to both dimensions (7) and an appropriate path must be considered; this will be explained in more detail in the following text sections.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

HEIs are specific organisations that differ from the private sector in terms of management, structures and financing (Musselin, 2007, p. 69; Bonaccorsi, 2020; p. 2698). Bossidy and Charan (2002) provide in their book an overview of the ideal-typical optimal strategy process from the viewpoint of the private American sector. The fundamental tenet of their recommendations is that the company's strategy procedure is a strict top-down process, and that management should strictly oversee strategy execution throughout the entire functional organisation (p. 185). Girma (2022) also argues that for the private sector to ensure a plan is implemented

successfully, businesses must set up a transparent evaluation mechanism and foster a sense of ownership. He argues that research that is more comprehensive and field work-based is required to examine and address the challenges of the implementation phase. This call is confirmed by the international consulting firm Gartner, whose study discovered that 61% of corporate strategists claim that poor strategy execution is the primary reason that new growth initiatives fail (Gartner, 2023).

Against this background, the findings have proved that using an HEI's impact case allows for an in-depth comprehension of the strategy implementation through projects. Based on the results, five overarching areas have emerged that shape how SP are set up and conducted.

First, the challenges of the external environment do not appear to have a direct influence on an agile strategy adaptation with a correspondingly speedy implementation response. A high degree of formalism and rigid structures are the hallmarks of an HEI's. Second, strategy needs to be embedded in a holistic management construct so that its meaning, purpose and effects can be understood. Kiernan (1993) emphasises that constructing strategic architecture requires conscious attention to developing mechanisms, for example for strategic re-framing, innovation or organisational learning. Third, the ability to think strategically appears to be an essential requirement for devising sound strategies and SPs. Scholars agree that strategic thinking is essential for organisations to ensure a sustainable competitive advantage (Smriti et al., 2021); promote and increase employee creativity (Alzghoul, 2023); and enhance corporate culture and knowledge management (Dixit et al., 2021). Fourth, the knowledge of one's own contribution to strategy implementation has been revealed as essential necessity which is also confirmed by literature (Wahu, 2016; Yimer, 2021). Finally, considering the optimisation of strategic project alignment is an unintentionally overlooked topic. This finding is in line with the report by Keyedin (2022), who surveyed over 100 project managers in the private sector globally. According to the figures, none of the projects or resources are perfectly aligned with the strategic business priorities while 58% are somewhat aligned.

These five areas will be consolidated as determinants in the suggested framework in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Proposed Framework and Recommendations

5.1 An HEI's Strategic Project Framework

Purpose of a Framework

A new framework was derived from the literature review and the findings from the impact case. A framework is the product of a prolonged, iterative and collective process of “disciplined imagination”, according to Weick (1989); helps to bring a complex topic into an understandable format (Partelow, 2023); and provides a foundation for inquiry (Schlager, 2007, p. 293). Therefore, the purpose of the framework is to serve as a reference orientation for a strategising process within an HEI's. It aims to ensure a system in place in a changing environment that can capture the sort of direction of the HEI's strategy. In addition, it assists in diverting the focus from operational activities and emphasises the importance of the proper implementation of strategies. The presented construct will encourage strategic thought architecture in order to systematically initiate a change process driven by SP in a focused manner. Furthermore, the framework can also serve as a basis for a strategy implementation communication practice, thus fostering further strategic awareness for the involved stakeholders.

Derivation of the HEI's Strategic Project Framework

In order to answer the research questions, a synthesising grid was created that identifies the dimensions “Organisational Design” and “Human Influence on Shaping the Organisational Development”. This has resulted in the five subject areas of “Strategic Management”, “Strategic Project Management”, “OPM”, “Academic Personnel Management” and “PM Competence Management”. Furthermore, the research journey with the eight interview groups resulted in a topic construct of the three bulk topics (1) “Comprehension of the Organisational Strategic Concept”, (2) “Comprehension of the Organisational Strategic Project Concept” and (3) “Comprehension of the Underlying System” with seven domains and nineteen sub-domains. The resulting tables from the literature reviews and the interview journey are reflected in Table 20 below.

Derived from Literature		Derived from Interviews - Groups I to VIII			
Literature Synthesising Grid (author's)		(a) Bulk Themes	(b) Domain	(c) Sub-Domain	
Dimension of the Organisational Design	(1) Context of HEI Sector	1-Comprehension of the Organisational Strategic Concept	1.1.-Clarity of the Strategy	1.1.1.-Strategic Awareness / Thinking	
	(3) Strategic Project Management and (4) Organisational Foundation for SPM			1.1.2.-Understanding of the Strategy	
(6) Academic Personal Management	1.1.3.-Communication				
Way of Realisation (1) OPM (2) PPM (3) Strategic PM (4) Strategic Project	Role and Function of Social Actor (1) Managerialism in HEIs (2) Duties of Academic Managers (3) Competence Development for Academic Managers		1.2.-Strategic Fit	1.2.1.-Design Procedure of a (Functional) Strategy	1.2.2.-Strategic Alignment
Focus Research of the Case Study Phenomenon (Business School)					1.3.-Strategy Decision Making Processes
Strategising Process RQ1: How does the mechanism between strategic initiation and its corresponding implementation work?				1.3.2.-Strategy Implementation Concept	
Nature of Strategic Project RQ2: What signification is assigned to a strategic project within the strategising process of HEIs?			2-Comprehension of the Organisational Strategic Project Concept	2.1.-Contribution of Strategic Project to the Strategy	2.1.1.-Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project
Academic Strategic Project Worker RQ3: How are strategic projects executed by academic managers?					2.1.2.-Strategic Project Choice
(4) Strategic Execution Choice (3) Strategy Implementation (2) Strategic Planning (1) Strategising Practices and Multi-level Strategy Achieving Strategic Goals and Objectives	(2) Specific PM Competencies (1) Development of PM Competencies Personal Qualification for SP Delivery				2.1.3.-Strategic Project Portfolio
(2) Strategic Management	(5) PM Competence Management				2.1.4.-Strategic Project Alignment
Dimension of the Hum an Influence on Shaping the Organisational Development		2.2.-Strategic Project Work		2.2.1.-Involvement in / Contribution to SP Work	2.2.2.-Changes in SP Work
					3.1.- Organizational Aspects
		3.1.2.-Organisational Setting / Challenges			
		3.1.3.-PM Setting / Embedment			
		3.1.4.-Project Work Process			
		3.2.-Individual Aspects within the System		3.2.1.-Competencies	3.2.2.-Acquisition
		3-Comprehension of the Underlying System Dealing with the System	3.1.- Organizational Aspects	3.1.1.-Environment	
				3.1.2.-Organisational Setting / Challenges	
		3.2.-Individual Aspects within the System	3.2.1.-Competencies	3.2.2.-Acquisition	

Table 34: Summarised "Literature Synthesising Grid" and "Structure of interview topics" (author's)

The derived HEI's Strategic Project Framework is particularly influenced by the PMI concept of portfolio management (PMI, 2013, p. 8) as well as by the onion model of OPM (Müller et al., 2019), and is depicted in Figure 16 below following Dubin's (1978, in Holton and Lowe, 2007) characteristics of a theoretical framework:

- (1) Variables and units of analysis: these are (generic) business strategies and different elements of activity in the strategy construct;
- (2) the laws of interaction among units of the framework: the strategic alignment process as well as the "Communication Feedback Loop / Lessons Learned Cycle" indicates the law (or mechanism) of interaction;

(3) boundaries within which the theory is expected to hold: the boundaries are set by four determinants;

and (4) propositions of the framework: the anticipated application of the framework is with respect to SPs within an HEI's.

Framework Composition

The individual elements of the framework, which comprise five determinants and eight individual fields, are explained below.

(0) *Environmental Determinants*: The external pressures that affect the HEI's sector are manifold and of differing degrees. These forces must be named and identified specifically for a better understanding, as they intermingle in reality. The "Drivers" and "Stakeholder Influences" have therefore been named for the framework (although the list is not exhaustive), which should influence the strategy design.

The framework acknowledges the autonomy of the various organisational units of an HEI's which is the "Highest HEI's Organisational Level". For instance, the parent university can define the strategic direction for its business school (faculty) to varying degrees. Furthermore, four main determinants surround and form the systematisation of the eight fields. These factors decisively affect the nature of the strategy implementation through projects and influence the conditions of the outcome. They have been revealed in the literature review to be less coherently thematised and attested to be marginally existent in HEIs, which is also confirmed in the impact case.

(A) *Integrated Strategy Architecture*: Strategies are responses developed to address the environmental pressures. The strategy architecture formed by the organisation is therefore pivotal to its further development. The challenges for the managers are to comprehend how distinctive and robust the construct should be. This is related to both the ability of strategic awareness / thinking (see determinant B) and the contribution of the members of the organisation (see determinant D), which in turn refer to their individual competencies and willingness to exclude particular individual interests.

(B) *Strategic Awareness / Thinking*: Thinking strategically and developing an awareness of how strategies influence organisations has proven to be another key

determinant, especially for academic managers. This determinant also comprises a holistic understanding of how to respond strategically to the major challenges with existing organisational structures.

(C) *Strategic (Project) Alignment Design*: The stringency of the strategising process can be seen as the backbone of strategy implementation. It connects and holds together all the essential units in order to confirm the mission on the basis of visible steps towards success. The prerequisites for this are appropriate strategic awareness / thinking (see Determinant B), an overarching strategic umbrella structure (see Determinant A) and an understanding of the individual contributions of the employees in this process (see Determinant D). The efficiency and effectiveness of how an SP is executed depends essentially on how this backbone is designed.

(D) *Individual Contribution to Strategy Implementation*: Contributing to the implementation procedure through key actors is the fourth central determinant. These players work in a specific employment relationship with a specific function, different working behaviour and an understanding of leadership. Therefore, strategic awareness (see Determinant B) is the prerequisite for supporting the strategic umbrella (see Determinant A) with the corresponding knowledge of the organisational members. The challenge is therefore to be able and willing (for example, avoiding pride or fearing the loss of prestige) to identify the necessary competencies for the key actors.

Within the four determinants, there are seven fields that reflect the main phases of the strategising process in a sequential manner.

(1) *Radar and Converter*: HEIs are not among the organisations that adapt quickly to the outside world and are typically regarded as slow to do so. But understanding how effective and detrimental the pressures of drivers and stakeholder influences are to the future organisational development is crucial. Thus, the radar is intended to be a systematic observation process that visibly identifies the influencing factors and forces and assesses their risk of negative impact on the organisation. Recent examples are disruptive innovations such as ChatGPT (Adeshola and Adepoju, 2023), the search for a new form of institutional neutrality in a polarised world (Powell, 2024) or the increase in state budget cuts for HEIs (Guraja et al., 2022). Thus, a radar should also provide an understanding of where the organisation

currently stands. In the sense of a converter, appropriate measures should be introduced promptly, leading to the subsequent fields of the framework.

(2) *Strategic Intent*: Following Hamel and Prahalad (1989), this first field represents a proactive mode in strategising, a symbol of the organisation's will about the future which energises all organisational levels for a collective purpose. As heterogeneous entities made up of several individuals pursuing various purposes, strategic intent can be viewed as an integrator of intentions throughout the organisation that guides the acquisition of required competencies (Mantere and Sillince, 2007). Results show that well-written and executed vision and mission statements have the power to impact organisational employees' daily tasks and help the organisation achieve its objectives by using the mission and vision as a compass (Taiwo et al., 2016).

(3) *Strategic Drivers*: The main priorities and initiatives that a company concentrates on in order to meet its objectives are set in this second field. They are the key areas of attention that determine whether an organisation's strategy is successful, and they should be in line with the company's overall mission and vision. Prioritising the strategic drivers and assessing each initiative in light of them will help ensure that the drivers are in line with the goals of the company.

(4) *Strategy Formulation and Communication*: The third field is composed wording the strategy by identifying and deciding how to respond to the combination of different factors. A well-thought-out strategy supports the organisation and allocation of an its resources into a distinct and feasible stance depending on its relative internal competencies (Sarbah and Otu-Nyarko, 2014). Therefore, drawing and communicating the strategy provides an effective orientation for action and for helping organisation members to focus their attention and energy. How and how often the strategy is communicated must be meticulously planned. The sub-field "*Goal-setting Framework*", in which the objectives and KPIs are specified, is set accordingly. This setting must consider both the institutional constraints and the individual aspects of the key actors; otherwise, there is a risk of "Ivory Tower Management". Typically, these institutional constraints and individual aspects are recognised by the organisation, but are rarely recorded as codified knowledge. Particularly when considering the individual aspects, soft skills like project leadership are essential. Finally, the HEI should decide whether to formulate one uniform strategy or one at each hierarchical level or organisational unit.

(5) *Strategic Planning*: The fourth field sets the concepts, procedures, methodologies, tools, techniques and actions that support the organisation in defining and achieving their mission and vision (Mathies and Ferland, 2023, p. 93). Strategic planning has a positive, moderate and significant impact on organisational performance when performance is measured as effectiveness and when strategic planning is measured as formal strategic planning, according to George et al. (2019). Thus, the groundwork for projects and operational tasks is prepared in this fourth field.

(6) *Transition*: This field includes the important interface between strategic planning and strategic implementation. Organising the cooperation between planners and implementers is crucial to ensure that strategic plans are not only robust but possess practical effectiveness. As seen in the impact case above, understanding this connection mechanism helps to clearly outline the responsibilities, support and priorities of the actors involved.

(7) *Form of Strategy Implementation*: The decision on how the strategy should be implemented must be made consciously by the organisation, taking into account the previously defined goal-setting framework. If the implementation formats are muddled, for example by labelling an operational activity as a project, there is a risk that none of the chosen formats will be carried out professionally. A focus on the efficient and effective implementation of SP requires sufficient will, knowledge and resources on the part of the decision-makers.

(8) *Project Strategy Evaluation*: Having a review process in place is key to measuring the achievement of the defined objectives and to complete the KPIs. By introducing a monitoring and controlling system, the metrics will help to understand the effectiveness of the strategies and allow for corresponding adjustments. This relates to the return loop or arrow back to the "SP" and "Goal Setting Framework" in Figure 14.

The arrows between the fields are each marked with a (t), which represents "time". As HEIs have a reputation for being inflexible in changes, the speed of the SP should be given special consideration.

(9) *Back Loops*: The strategising process must consider the element of agility (dynamics), which is why three types of loops are mapped at all levels:

Communication Feedback Loop: An active two-way communication (top-down, bottom-up) is essential to include the people involved in the endeavours and to reveal any divergences. This loop also creates the opportunity to promote the in-house language of the strategy.

Lessons Learned Cycle: This loop generates expertise and can prevent future errors in activities. In addition, the experience gained can create a sense of cohesion in the sense of identification (“We can do it”). As HEIs face major and diverse challenges, as outlined in the literature review, it makes sense to learn at all levels of the organisation (Wiewiora et al., 2019).

Corresponding Adjustment: Figuratively, this feedback loop is comparable to adjusting screws. At these points, it is possible to take corrective measures and update the processes. For instance, the vision and mission as well as the strategic orientation must be periodically adjusted.

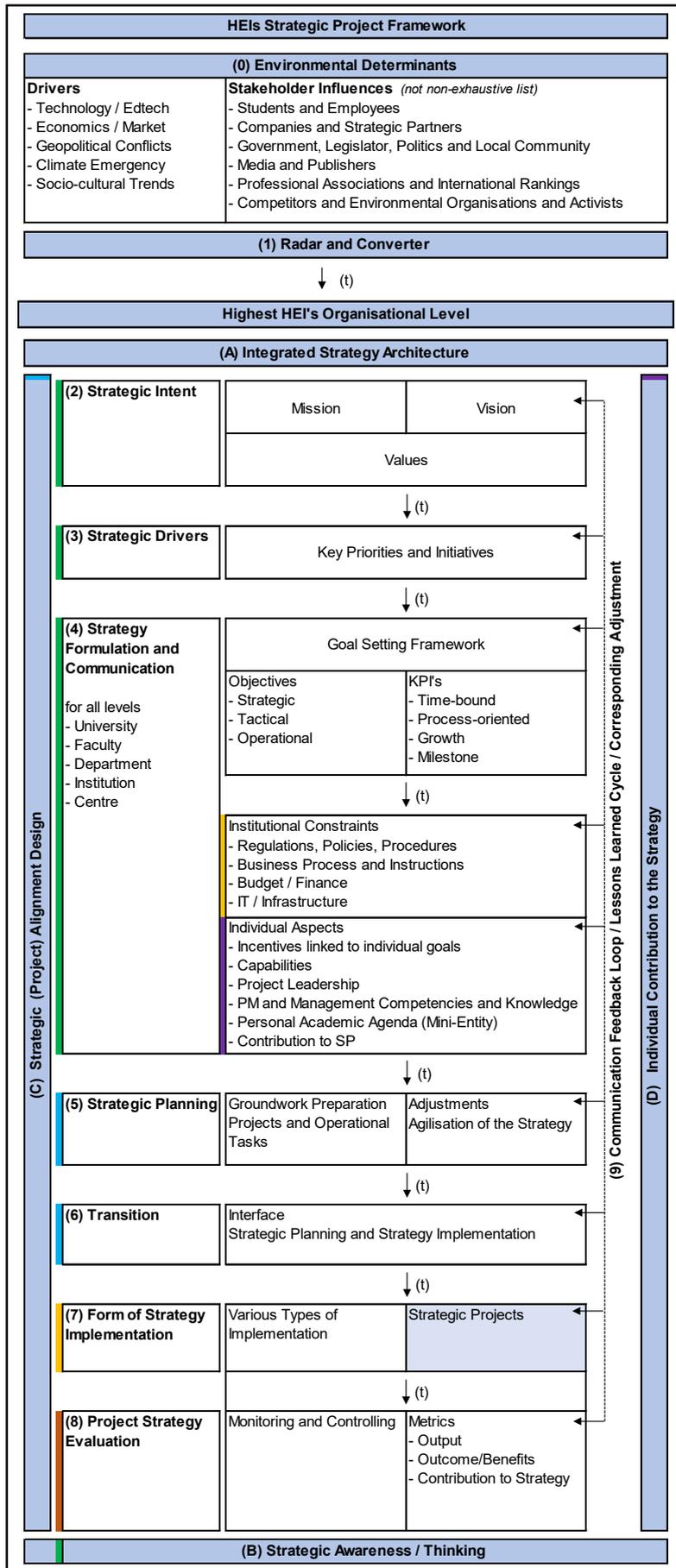


Table 35: HEI's Strategic Project Framework (author's)

As noted above, the elements of the framework are derived from the literature as well as from the interviews; they were then further verified by Groups VII and VIII for sense-making. The following table depicts the individual fields of the framework and the derivation from the interviews (indicated as "INT x.x").

Field	Derivation from Chapter 4.2. "Main Findings"	Derivation from Chapter 4.3. "Detailed Results"
(0) Environmental Determinants		INT 3.1.1.
(A) Integrated Strategy Architecture	Comprehensibility of the Strategy; Priority of the Strategy	INT 1, 2, 3
(B) Strategic Awareness / Thinking	Priority of the Strategy; Individual Contribution	INT 1.1.1.
(C) Strategic (Project) Alignment Design	Level-Fragmentation of the strategy	INT 1.2 / 1.2.2. / 2.1.4.
(D) Individual Contribution to the Strategy	Individual Contribution	INT 3.2 / 3.2.1. / 3.2.2.
(1) Radar and Converter		INT Group VIII
(2) Strategic Intent	Comprehensibility of the Strategy; Priority of the Strategy	INT 1.1
(3) Strategic Drivers	Comprehensibility of the Strategy; Priority of the Strategy	INT 1.1
(4) Strategy Formulation and Communication	Comprehensibility of the Strategy	INT 1.1.2. / 1.1.3.
	Institutional Constraints	INT 3.1 / 3.1.2. / 3.1.3.
	Individual Aspects	Importance of the responsible person: Individual Contribution
(5) Strategic Planning	Implementation Gap	INT 1.2.1.
	Adjustments	INT Group VIII
(6) Transition	Implementation Gap	INT 1.3 / 1.3.1. / 1.3.2.
(7) Form of Strategy Implementation	SP Portfolio	INT 2.1
	Various Types of Implementation	INT 2.1.2.
	Strategic Projects	INT 2.2 / 2.1.1. / 2.1.3.
(8) Project Strategy Evaluation	Synonyms of the Terms	INT 3.1.4.
	Definition of SP	INT 2.2.2.
(9) Lessons Learned Cycle	Importance of the responsible person	INT Group VIII

Table 36: Sources of Derivation (author's)

In addition, the five orientation colours of Figure 1 were considered to make the individual fields more visible.

Critical Conclusion of the Framework

The framework was discussed with Groups VII and VIII in Phase 4 and adjusted accordingly. The following points reflect critical considerations of the proposed framework.

Top-Down Perspective: The framework suggests a top-down approach to strategy implementation, which may contradict other theories and disciplines, with a particular focus on agile organisational structures such as strategic agility (Joshi, 2023), disruption management (Schmidt and van der Sijde, 2022) or trends in restructuring organisations (Ernst and Young, 2024; PWC, 2024). Other determinants that have been excluded, such as system-specific corset conditions or

(national or organisational) cultural factors affecting organisational behaviour and leadership, may also be considered important. For instance, it became clear in the various discussions that appreciation and trust towards employees plays a certain role. If there is a lack of empathy in management, additional disruptive factors can have an impact on the given structure.

HEI Organisational Structure: HEIs differ in their structure and organisation. While state universities are typically driven more by the respective chairs, private universities have more management-orientated structures due to a different funding basis. In this proposed framework, the allocation competence is not defined; in other words, it is not explicitly stated who does what. The responsibilities of the listed fields are not linked to a formal or informal structure. In this respect, the framework can be criticised for presenting the complex issue of strategy implementation in an overly simplified manner.

Motivation for Strategic Thinking: The framework assumes that the organisation wants to systematically cultivate strategic thinking. However, the framework cannot reflect the management's will or active efforts for strategic activities.

Different Perspectives: Members of management and employees may have different views and opinions regarding the strategic understanding and direction of the organisation. The corresponding discrepancy in these opinions cannot be absorbed by the framework.

GAP Analysis: The framework reflects a target structure. Therefore, the actual comparative structure requires an understanding of how to overcome the difference between actual and targeted. For a GAP analysis, the operationalisation procedure with the corresponding tools to minimise the difference is not apparent. The framework cannot demonstrate how to get to the optimum point, for example through best practices or the development of specific structures to better empower people for SPs.

However, this framework is meant to be an abstraction of purposefully arranged and interrelated activities in which the HEI provides the functionality of strategy implementations. Additional constituents can be added if they serve the further and main insight of course. As Sharp (1998) states, using a case study, researchers provide explanations for the connections between the variables they discover in their

investigations through theoretical generalisation. These theoretical justifications are meant to apply to other groups as well as the populations on which the investigations were based on Firestone (1993). For this reason, the following section provides recommendations on how the critical points mentioned can be addressed.

5.2. Recommendations for Improvement Initiatives

In alignment with the determinants and fields of the framework, proposals for organisational enhancements are suggested. As Parry et al. (2018) state, improvement initiatives are iterative, adaptive and context-specific, considering the theory of change including the “What”, the “Context” and the “How”. Figure 135 below attempts to reflect this reasoning; the improvement initiatives are presented by two steps: (1) “Setting the Strategic Project Framework” and (2) “Field of Interventions”. Based on these initiatives it should be feasible for an organisation to better identify disruptive factors in its strategy execution endeavour through projects.

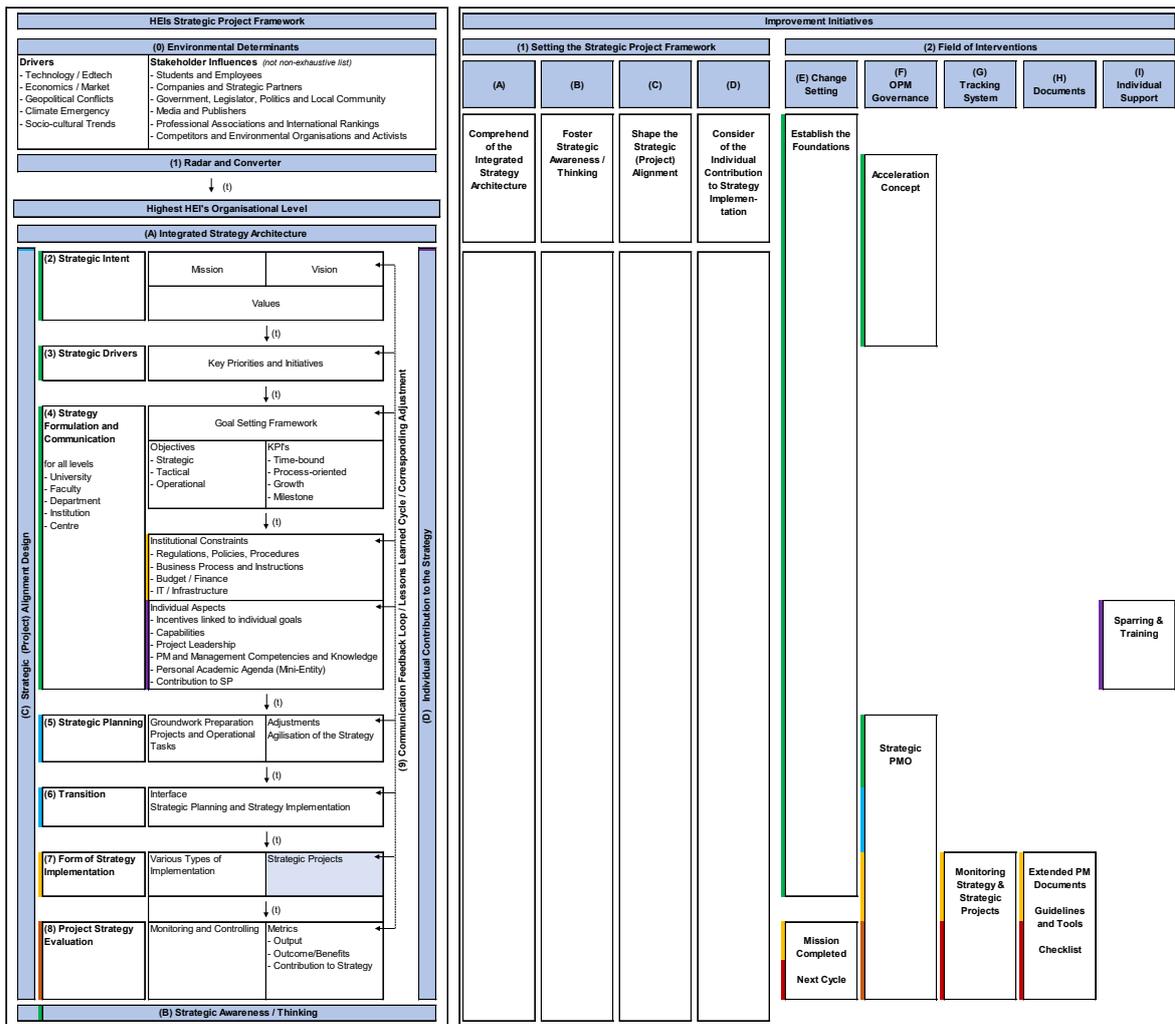


Table 37: Organisational Enhancements (author's)

(1) “Setting the Strategic Project Framework”, which represents the “What”, describes the rationale for what changes are and leads to improved outcomes. The setting here relates to the composition of the four described determinants: (A) the comprehension of what and integrated strategy architecture; (B) the fostering of the strategic awareness / thinking; (C) the careful design of the strategic project alignment; and (D) the consideration of the individual contribution to the strategy. The literature has shown that a desire for strategic fitness improvement with a corresponding willingness to change the organisation is required to shape these four determinants. Depending on the organisational construct, the specific implementation plan (the “How”) can look different and should be developed on the basis of important aspects as described below.

First, Alvesson (2012, p. 218) stresses the importance of reflexivity as the capacity to reflect critically in order to transform the “quality” of this “external reality”. The act of periodically pausing to consider the significance of recent events for both oneself

and those in the immediate area has been defined as reflection by Raelin (2002). In this regard, Weick (2002) states that reflective learning may also involve disbelieving what was previously considered true. Therefore, initiating a sophisticated rethinking process reflects a true intention for organisational improvement.

Second, external professional advice, such as from consultants or advisory boards, or advice from a company's own faculty (such as professors for strategic management) should be taken into account even if it is critical (Shore, 2024).

Third, systematic learning from best practices has proven to be an effective method to initiate new ways of organisational improvement (Duarte and Snyder, 1997; Schwandt and Marquardt, 1999, p. 94) and should therefore be considered as well when setting the determinant framework.

(2) "Field of Interventions", also known as the "How", reflects the activities for the actual implementations. Five proposals for improvement interventions, based on the explanations in Chapter 4, are depicted in Figure 15. They are assigned accordingly to the seven fields in the framework on the left which seek to categorise the item of "Context" within which the improvement will be made. These five proposals, again marked with the corresponding orientation colour, will be developed for an HEI's in an iterative and adaptive way.

The change setting (E) within the strategising process is regarded as a priority. The foregoing has shown that organisational preparatory steps are needed to enable change through strategy implementation. The type of change communication and a supportive incentive practice play a decisive role here, and they form the establishment of the foundations. For the orientation and the knowledge of the strategic activities, a common understanding of the strategic endeavours and a common language should be facilitated. The goal is for everyone to align in the same direction or to maintain some degree of divergence as long as the broadest priorities are known. Moreover, trust and motivation should be maintained during the change process, which will be achieved by a well-crafted change communication strategy. This is particularly the case when the mission or project has been fulfilled. If the success is consciously communicated at the end, motivating conditions are set for the next project. In addition to communication, incentives play a decisive role in linking personal goals with targets. Within an expert organisation such as an HEI's, academic managers generally pursue a profile in their specialist area and

often move more independently in their work activities as a result. The focus is on the academic agenda rather than an administrative employee who pursues other personal goals. It is therefore a challenge to provide appropriate incentives and resources such as time so that the changes or the SP are supported by the key actors. Established management structures favour such an incentive system to avoid sole dependence of the HEI on voluntary commitment.

The next area is the promotion of an OPM governance (F). Engwall (2003) states that no project is an island, and projects should be linked to context. This link can be strengthened through an OPM approach as outlined in the literature review. Organisations must make a conscious effort to establish a PM governance system that would install the standards, processes, tools and training that will move them from the traditional methods focused on timely delivery to strategic methods focused on business results (Holzmann et al., 2017, p. 41). Therefore, the promotion of a hereafter PMO as an organisational structure has proven its worth in other industries (Oliveira et al., 2017; Fernandes et al., 2018) and differs in its typology and function (Monteiro, 2016). In the context of interventions for HEIs, the SP aspect should be considered, especially to prevent a potential gap between planning and actual implementation. However, it is crucial that a PMO construct is trusted by both management and employees (Roden et al., 2017, p. 16). Therefore, the tasks and responsibilities must be precisely defined to facilitate SP in the best ways (Anantatmula and Rad, 2018). The OPM governance area also includes the development of an acceleration concept which aims to identify external influencing factors and incorporate them into the organisation in a structured manner. This is meant to prevent a late or incomplete response to decisive external influences.

The establishment of a tracking system (G) is a further step towards professionalising SP. Seeber et al. (2015, p. 1452) doubt the usefulness of managerial tools for evaluation and control due to the complex nature of academic activities and special (governance) arrangements in HEIs as well as the mistrust by faculty towards such measures. Furthermore, Klein (2013, p. 244) argues that organisations impose too many controls and procedures in their effort to reduce errors but simultaneously prevent the creation of new ideas and innovation. Kure et al. (2021) report about the attempt to introduce an objective and results-based management in Danish university institutions. A culture of deception and arbitrary

authority was fostered by this novel proposal in performance measurement, which created an atmosphere in which top managers are not held responsible for outcomes. However, the literature review and the impact case have revealed that effective deviations from the documented strategy of the organisation are not systematically recorded. Similarly, not all parameters of an SP are tracked; this includes impact measurement. Thus, KPIs would serve as early warning indicators which denote that adverse outcomes may ensue if an unfavourable circumstance persists and is not addressed (Kerzner, 2022, p. 122). KPIs are high-level snapshots that show the development of a project in relation to predetermined goals. Thus, the establishment of a dashboard, scorecard or additional report for strategic activities including SPs will provide users with a brief, high-level overview of the achievement of present business objectives (Eckerson, 2011, p. 18). Such a reconceptualisation of measurement would facilitate the further learning process within the HEI (Maheshwari and Janssen, 2014).

In this context, a PM setting is essential to achieve a project's goals; to manage the involved staff and results; and to evaluate options to meet the needs of various stakeholders (Gomes and Romão, 2016). However, the literature recognises that to date, there is little evidence of a correlation between established PM and the successful implementation of an SP in HEIs. In this respect, a PM setting in the sense of a strategic asset setting (Jugdev and Mathur, 2006) is desirable to improve the overall quality of projects. In particular, the use of technology can play an important role. The literature recognises the importance of information technology (hereafter IT) as a critical influence factor for organisational strategy (Sibanda and Ramathan, 2017), the contribution to the improvement of profitability, organisational performance and efficient business processes (Sabherwal et al., 2006; Burton-Jones and Gallivan, 2007). In this regard, the application of suitable software and programmes such as the Project Management Information System (hereafter PMIS) helps to control the flow of project data and information. Both the set-up of an IT system and its application as knowledge sharing can have an influence on project success (Raymond and Bergeron, 2008; Yang, 2012). Thus, the importance of IT as a knowledge sharing promoter has been recognised for successful project implementation (Davison et al., 2013; Sensue et al., 2021). Technology such as e-mail or instant messaging, which was examined closely by Gomes et al. (2018), shows different extents of types of technology during the

different project phases. Yet the literature is relatively quiet about understanding how project managers cope with the given technological infrastructure in their organisations, especially in business schools, and why the individual technology applications are chosen.

Against this background, the creation and maintenance of helpful documents (H), guidelines, principles, tools and checklists are important improvement efforts. They would also include the criteria for an SP proposed in the literature review, so that the SP can be better addressed in the HEI (listed again in Appendix 17). Establishing and developing a PM setting can be a challenge. To help with the process, Appendix 18 provides an overview of the various PM topics from the perspective of the PM textbook from Maylor and Turner (2022) and the PM associations of IPMA (2022), GAPPS (2024), PMI (2021) and APM (2024). Based on these different methodologies in this overview, a checklist is proposed to determine the specific situation of the HEI with its projects. The suggested structure with the corresponding questions should encourage the responsible project managers to reflect and inspire the further development of their own in-house PM guidelines (Appendix 19).

Finally, individual support is to be addressed (I). The findings have shown that academic managers are not professional project managers; they normally acquire their SP skills through trial and error, which can be suboptimal from an economic perspective. Accordingly, tailor-made assistance consisting of two methods is recommended: first, the support for specific (PM) competencies acquisition, and second, the introduction of sparring partners for demanding SPs. Both require an intentional learning mindset within the organisation (Ford, 2020, p. 12).

Specific competencies acquisition for SP can take place through organised training formats (such as formal-, guided- or self-directed learning), especially for younger academic managers. While standardised training formats are criticised for their limited practical application, research on organisational training programmes is still scarce. If the training takes place in-house, its measurable contribution to business results should be considered as an important requirement (Barnett and Mattox, 2010; Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2016, p. 62). This is supported by Berkley and Kaplan (2019, p. 16). A learning strategy ensures that the personnel of an organisation is equipped with the competencies needed to execute the business strategy's recommended course of action. A useful reference in this case is the five-

stage level rating system of PM competency put forth by De Rezende Blackwell (2019). The five levels, namely Aware, Practiced, Competent, Proficient and Expert, with their corresponding descriptions (p. 50) indicate the level of knowledge to which the specific topic should be “Lessons Learned” by employees. Compared to standard training formats, the advantage of in-house training sessions is that organisation-specific challenges can be addressed in greater depth. In addition, the comprehension of the integrated strategy architecture of the school and strategic thinking can be increased. De Haan (2014) recommends providing training for academics as a mode to change the mindset of a commonly adopted practice of strategic management. However, while academics become more professionalised in this field, Haan emphasises that a non-cooperative attitude can occur. Training may be interpreted as the controlling and monitoring of their activities, an increase in centralisation and the promotion of performance measurements.

The second strategy for individual support is the use of a sparring partner. Sparring partners can provide academic managers a neutral, open area to consider their strategic questions, ideas and solutions on an equal footing. As they provide firsthand experiences and understand the strategic context, they should be a trusted person, either internally (such as head office or PMO) or externally (for instance a project consultant).

To conclude, the suggested improvement initiatives, which are linked to the proposed framework, resulted from the literature review and the findings of the impact case. But taking action depends on the respective willingness, capacity, knowledge and given structures of individual HEIs as SP triggers change. Martinsuo et al. (2020) state that one of the major challenges in SP is the implementation of change in a permanent organisation. Chapter 7 summarises and critically reflects those challenges.

Chapter 6: Evaluation of the Impact Plan

The purpose of the DBA research journey is to adopt a new approach to the development of expected and crucial competencies of the researcher in a more effective and efficient way (Hay, 2022). Furthermore, Mortari (2015) states that reflection is a crucial cognitive practice in qualitative research, in which it is used to legitimise and validate research procedures. "A turning back onto oneself" is what reflection entails when the inquirer is both an observed and an engaged observer (Steier, 1995, p. 163). Thus, hereinafter, the evaluation of the author's personal, practical and academic impact will be reflected upon.

Personal Impact

Following the phenomenological perspective of Husserl (1982, cited in Mortari, 2015, p. 5), the DBA research journey can be described as a lived experience or mental processes of consciousness (Erlebnisse). Based on the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) from Vitae (2024), those mental processes and the consciousness process are outlined for the impact on this research skills development. The RDF, depicted in Figure 16 below, is divided into domains that address knowledge, behaviours and attributes of researchers.

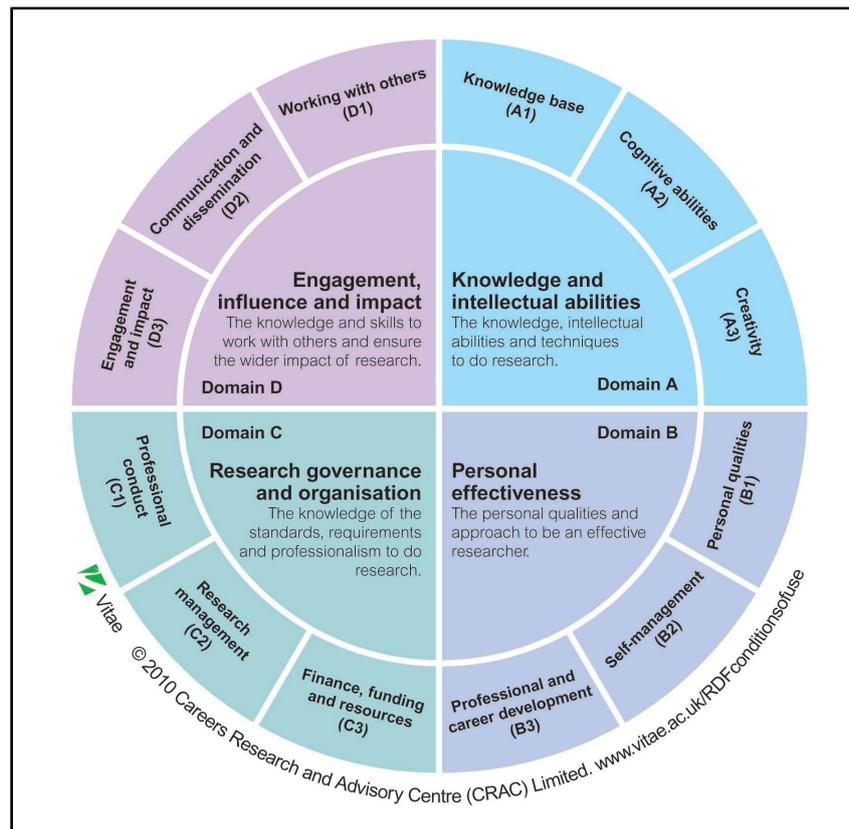


Table 38: Researcher Development Framework (Vitae, 2024)

Immersing in an academic field and claiming a research field was a new and unique experience (Domain A). Increasing the knowledge and fostering the intellectual abilities to do doctorate research have led to a new personal dimension. The extensive reading of the literature as well as the understanding of different research philosophies and methods for finding the “truth” were an indispensable broadening of the horizons. Going through a research process from start to finish by analysing, synthesising, engaging in critical thinking and evaluating was a new personal dimension in the comprehension of a research endeavour. Additionally, the inquiring mind and intellectual insight were strengthened through the process of being precise and rigorous in understanding the research problem, and learning to narrow and delimit the topic.

As a consequence of these mental processes of consciousness, personal effectiveness was improved (Domain B). The numerous interruptions during the writing process caused by work and private challenges were a demanding test of perseverance and self-confidence. Time management and work-life balance proved to be highly variable and strenuous. Responsiveness to change also became a personal imperative to continually reinforce the commitment for this research.

However, the newly acquired skills are an important part of further professional development: on the one hand, in cooperation with the private sector with regard to solving problems; on the other hand, in academia when developing new programmes and scientific contributions.

The knowledge of the standards, requirements and professionalism to conduct research became apparent (Domain C). It was important to understand what the ethical principles were and what legal principles needed to be followed for data collection and compilation. Academic work is always associated with respect for others' achievements. This knowledge will later be passed on to other people, such as students or employees, in further professional work whenever possible. In addition, the literature review and manifold meetings have promoted a better understanding of the organisational processes and helped the author to constantly rethink his own research strategy.

But at the same time, the emotional distance to the organisation and people could be increased, which proved to be an advantage in understanding the research phenomenon. This distance affected the relationship with the employees, especially due to their efforts for the good of their employer (Domain D). The search for an understanding of SP created the opportunity to see people in their organisation through a new lens. It was a lived experience and impressive to see how sensitively and reflectively the interviewees perceived their work. In this context, the author's personal respect for leading an HEI's has grown. Due to their performance mandate, HEIs are complex in their organisation and correspondingly difficult to manage. It will therefore be compelling to use the newly acquired knowledge to write academic journals and to participate in international academic conferences in future.

Practice Impact

The discussion of bridging theory and practice in social science is longstanding (Kondrat, 1992; Rousseau, 2006). Van de Ven (2007, p. 2) notes that while practical managers do not do enough to translate their practice into theory as they ignore pertinent research, management researchers are also criticised for not effectively translating their abstract knowledge into practice. In search of what constitutes theoretical contribution, Whetten (1989, p. 493) asserts that "theoretical insights come from demonstrating how the addition of a new variable significantly alters our understanding of the phenomena by reorganising our causal maps". Furthermore,

he argues that the process of developing a theory entails appropriating concepts from various disciplines, which in turn drives the change of existing metaphors in ways that challenge the underlying assumptions of conventional theories. In this context, there has been concern about the disparity between management scholars with the focus on academic rigor on the one hand and the perceived need for relevance on the part of practitioners on the other (Bartunek and Rynes, 2014).

Thus, the five proposed fields of intervention described in the previous chapter are intended to generate practical relevance and will therefore be presented in practice. The feasibility of the suggestions is meant to create added value for HEIs. This is to take place first in the impact case organisation, where currently a new change management dashboard (including SP) is already being planned in one centre. Furthermore, the author's increased understanding of strategy and strategic projects at the in-house strategy workshops were helpful. The proposed framework and solutions will also be discussed with other HEIs, especially at international conferences, in order to follow the appeal of Nenonen et al. (2016). Academic researchers will intensify the theorising with managers to achieve results that are both academically rigorous and managerially relevant.

Academic Impact

The contributions to theory derived from case study research designs is thematised differently. According to Ridder (2017, p. 292), four different case study research design typologies have emerged, namely "no theory first" (Eisenhardt, 1989), "gaps and holes" (Yin, 2018), "social construction of reality" (Stake, 2005) and "anomalies" (Burawoy, 1998). The strict adherence to these classical categories for the purpose of theory generating is helpful, for instance, for contextual explanations or interpretive sensemaking (Tsang, 2022), although it is not always practical in application. Kesting (2023) therefore emphasises that theory is an element of explanation rather the explanation itself and contradicts the claim made by Sutton and Staw (1995, p. 375) that a theory must explain why variables or constructs arise or why they are related. Recognising the above-mentioned critical aspects in providing a solid impact to organisational science and to the practice world, this case study follows the guide of Makadok et al. (2018, p. 1532) on making contributions to theory, originally based in the strategic management field. In the guide's

framework, six levers of the theorising process are proposed (see Appendix 1), as already mentioned in Chapter 1 and applied for this study. The levers are as follows:

Lever-1 (How?): The mode of theorising is the intellectual process by which a theory's main input, or the research question, is transformed into its output. This lever defines how theorisation occurs.

Applied for this study: As outlined above, the proposed research questions encompass a setting of multidisciplinary research such as strategic management, PM, competence research and academic development. While the implementation of a strategic plan is seen as a straightforward conclusion of actions, the human and personal aspects within this process become crucial (Mathis and Ferland, 2023; p. 100). The switching from the informal- to the formal theorising mode is part of this study contribution. Informal theory is connected to an employee's values and perceptions of a circumstance, also expressed as "mental maps" (Argyris and Schon, 1974) or "practice wisdom" (Healy, 2005). It discusses how individual professionals attempt to bring about the anticipated results in their daily work (Love, 2012). As academic managers behave and act as practitioners and scholars, their individually perceived methods of delivering strategic projects refers to this theory field. Formal theory, on the other hand, describes collective-, explicit-, public- and ordered views of certain phenomena (Love, 2012). To ensure that a practitioner's actions are efficient and proactive, formal theory can be helpful as a corrective (Evans and Guido, 2012). In this view, the theory incorporates a range of characteristics (Patterson, 1980, in Love, 2012) such as "precise and understandable" (there are clear definitions of key concepts and variables which are internally consistent); "simple and parsimonious" (theory is stated succinctly with a limited number of variables); "operationalisable" (concepts are precise enough to be observed and measured); "logical" (the variables fit together in clear and consistent ways); and "fruitful" (professionals can utilise the approach to produce new research, information, ideas and thinking). These characteristics will aid this study in structuring and organising the set of assumptions and propositions derived through a systematic and scientific method.

Lever-2 (Who): This lever of analysis refers to the research focus on a certain organisational level by simultaneously taking into account the heterogeneity of the overall organisational performance.

Applied for this study: This study considers the two perspectives of the school's executive board and the execution level. These groups of individuals are deemed important influencing stakeholders in the strategic implementation process (Falqueto et al., 2020).

Lever-3 (Where): This lever is the phenomenon that determines where the newly crafted theory and its context are relevant. Any given theory could have applications to many situations and consequences for various occurrences.

Applied for this study: The phenomenon takes place in a business school which is seen as a quasi-commercial organisation (Brookes, 2006). As HEIs are recognised as strategic actors in an emerging global knowledge economy (Deiaco et al., 2012), how they apply strategic projects in fulfilling economic and societal goals is an overlooked phenomenon.

Lever-4 (Why): The causal mechanism is the lever that defines why the theory's proposed relationships or effects occur.

Applied for this study: To date, Cohen and March's (1974) term of "organised anarchy" to describe universities has stuck with HEIs as an expression for various negative organisational complications when managing academic institutions (Teffer, 2014). Therefore, a deeper understanding of the interplay between the following two mechanisms will be illuminated: (1) the organisational-economic mechanisms which focus on strategising, including principles, functions, logical structure, time aspect, controlling and norms (in the context of strategic project delivery); and (2) the psychological mechanisms, including the perception, behaviour, cognition and competencies of the academic managers (Makadok, 2018; Aristarchova and Fakhrutdinov, 2019).

Lever-5 (What): This lever explains the context of the theorising. The relationship of variables and construct is at the core of a research endeavour and needs to be transparent (Calder et al., 2020). "Variables" in qualitative research is another term for categorical or nominal, and therefore cannot be used numerically (Aspers and Corte, 2019). The variables support the dynamic of meaning-making, which comprises sense-making and sense-giving, in a local context within a social construction (Bartunek and Seo, 2002).

Applied for this study: Considering the contextual setting, independent- and intervening variables are selected to explore the strategising process within an academic entity.

Lever-6 (When): Boundary conditions rely on a theory to define whether a theory is valid. These conditions explain the bounds of a theory's generalisability (Whetten, 1989) and are most significantly related to boundaries in time, location and the researcher's values (Bacharach, 1989). As Makadok et al. (2018) argue, boundary conditions may be unclear when a theory is initially developed through an informal mode of theorising. Such a theory can be predicated on unstated presumptions. Clarifying the theory's premises in these circumstances aids to define the boundary conditions, which is a useful theoretical contribution.

Applied for this study: As the boundary condition function of a given theory depicts the accuracy of theoretical predictions for any context given a certain structure of the theory (Busse et al., 2017), the rigorous generalisability for this kind of explorative case study is less applicable. Therefore, the boundary conditions follow the outside-in approach proposed by Busse et al. (2017) by focusing on a context in which a theory is not applicable. As outlined in the first lever, the research questions are not based on a recognised theory, but instead derive from a phenomenon within an institutional context of a research-intensive business school that affects a number of topics from other organisational disciplines which will be further outlined below. To conclude, it is intended that the findings will also help answer Kondrat (1992) and Van de Ven's (2007, p. 15) questions of what knowledge the practitioner of a profession uses. This to imply that practical knowledge is not a derivative of scientific knowledge. "When this status is granted, the practical takes its place alongside the scientific as constitutive elements of professional knowledge" (Kondrat, 1992). Against this background, the final chapter summarises this study and answers the research questions. Furthermore, critical reflections about the implications of the author's position, the chosen research method and findings are discussed. Finally, recommendations for action in practice and for further study are provided.

Chapter 7: Summary and Critical Reflections

7.1 Summary

HE plays a decisive role in the further development of the national economy. In particular, business and management schools are among the most influential actors in the world as they shape the skills and mindsets of future leaders. As one was used as a representative case for HEIs in this thesis, a multi-dimensional field of tension is placed on business educators. This includes: experiencing pressure to be successfully part of international rankings (Borden et al., 2019); offering up-to-date and cost-covering programmes; and providing consulting services for companies and conducting research in compliance with accreditation regulations (such as AACSB, AMBA or EQUIS), which are all under the consideration of constantly changing socio-political frameworks and rapid technological developments (Teixeira and Maccari, 2018; Casell, 2019). Therefore, the competitive self-awareness of HEIs is crucial for implementing adaptable strategies in advance of impending changes that both internal and external factors may already suggest are probable (Nguyen and Van Gramberg, 2018). At times, the resulting changes are so significant that the organisations, including HEIs, must reconsider their missions, strategies, value goals, markets, offerings, structures and value chains (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998; Huy et al., 2014). Such transformations can be labelled strategic - they renew the foundations upon which organisations choose to operate. While strategic change and transformation can sound attractive and are occasionally necessary, they are known to be challenging and prone to failure or lengthy delays, calling for skilful execution (By, 2005; Huy et al., 2014). Consequently, strategies must be developed and implemented in a suitable manner. Strategy implementation is the process of transforming by communication, interpretation, and adoption and enactment of strategic plans into practical actions to meet specified objectives and aims (Noble, 1999, p. 120; Waweru, 2011). In this context, the strategic role of projects in the organisation has been widely discussed (Cleland, 1990; Grundy, 1998; Cooke-Davies, 2009) and projects are therefore the means by which beneficial changes are implied in organisational strategic objectives (Görög, 2016). Hence, the proper implementation of PM to add value to the organisation has been widely accepted (Zwikael and Smyrk, 2011, p. 54; Shi, 2012). Furthermore, organisational performance should be optimised through projects (Aubry and Hobbs, 2011; Sepúlveda-Rivillas et al., 2022) which have led to the evolving

research area of OPM (Aubry et al., 2012). The benefits of PM are obviously recognised by HEIs to successfully fulfil these strategic requirements through projects. However, while PM in HEIs has great potential for optimisation, too little importance is attached to the implementation and application at all hierarchical levels. Scholars agree that the acceptance and implementation of PM in HE is not as pervasive as in other industries (Atkins, 2019).

This thesis discussed the importance of strategising with the inclusion of SP as a valuable choice for strategy implementation within HEI. Strategising, seen as a new and uncertain endeavour in business, involves ongoing thought and action about the organisation in order to create a clearly defined path toward a desired organisational state (Bolland, 2020, p. 3). Thus, in the context of this study, “strategy as design” (Lundin and Hällgren, 2014) is assumed where strategy is defined at the executive level and then followed by the realisation of subordinated levels (top-down perspective); this is mostly common within the HEI sector. PMI's Organisational Context of Portfolio Management (PMI, 2013, p. 8) was therefore used as a helpful initial stage to explore the various steps in the top-to-bottom strategising process for HEIs. In this context, the alignment between business strategy and PM plays a decisive role and can significantly enhance the chances for organisations to achieve their strategic objectives as well as improving performance (Gomes and Romão, 2016). An attempt was made to shed more light on the strategising process with the levels of Strategic Management, Strategic PM and OPM and to capture the nature of SP. But strategising is so vague that even as employees are engaged in it, they may not recognise that they are strategising (Bolland, 2020, p. 6). Criticism was voiced that senior managers see themselves as playing key roles during the strategy, although in reality they do not “[get] their hands dirty” with regard to putting that strategy into action (Amoo et al., 2019). But it is precisely those responsible for strategy implementation through projects in HEI that are key figures and have hardly been recognised in the literature to date. The human factor is considered one of the decisive factors for success where the PM competencies of a project manager are crucial (Blaskovics, 2016). Thus, scholars agree that the delivery of a (corporate) strategy through projects by means of different process steps requires different competencies (Hanley, 2007; Alsudiri et al., 2013). In the case of HEIs, academic managers play an important role in organisational transformation processes (Siekkinen et al., 2019). Therefore, this study considered academic managers as

key actors within the strategising process due to their multifaceted responsibilities and leadership positions at different organisational levels in different types of units. This may not be the case for all HEIs, but it is so for most established institutions, especially business schools. To clarify the question of how SPs are executed by academic managers in addition to the other two research questions previously mentioned the application of an impact case for this study has generated valuable insights.

A single real case has been extensively studied in literature as a source of information in a variety of fields; it can be used as a model to follow, a sample of potential outcomes, or a source of vicarious experience (Mariotto et al., 2014). Vicarious experiences aim to expand the range of interpretations available to the reader. Moreover, reading from the researcher's perspective allows the reader to see details that they might have otherwise overlooked. In addition, people's personal barriers to the assimilation of the phenomenon become reduced when individuals share others' experiences, making the reader's learning process easier. These experiences were assessed in a multiple interview process with eight groups in the case study and revealed the following main findings that can be generalised for learning purposes.

In this regard, the top-down strategising process is only stringent to a limited extent across the various organisational levels and is in some cases fragmented. Strategy implementation takes place in the form of operational activities and only takes a limited account of the project format for specific plans. Not all stakeholders are equally aware of SP as an implementation method or the individual contribution to SP. There is only a partial understanding of what exactly constitutes an SP and what impact it should have on the organisation. It is also evident that academic managers are under great pressure to perform at a high level, both academically and in a business-orientated manner. They are all-rounders such as leaders, teachers, researchers, consultants, strategic thinkers, strategy implementers and project managers, which can lead to overload in the long term. These findings are in line with the literature. To answer the well-known question "So what?", it is in HEI's self-interest to continuously improve in line with its full potential in responding to the many challenges it faces.

Therefore, the presented "HEI's Strategic Project Framework" and the proposed interventions will serve as guidance for the further meaningful development of HEIs.

Answering the Research Questions

Four research objectives were derived for this thesis.

Firstly, the environmental dimensions, conditions and key factors influencing the implementation of a HEI's strategy is to be understood. The proposed framework addresses those essential requirements.

Secondly, the individual components of a HEI's strategising process is to be identified. The literature emphasises the importance of strategic projects, preferably integrated into alignment, in achieving successful organisational development. The impact case has illustrated that this is also desirable in practice, but only takes place in part. Accordingly, specific interventions are required depending on the HEI.

Thirdly, the logic of sequence for executing SPs is to be examined. When implementing SPs, the literature emphasises how crucial it is to follow a strict and rational order. The case has shown that this is only partially true, thus confirming the current situation in practice.

Fourthly, the responsible academic project worker in their way to deliver SPs is to be comprehended. The case study has shown that the academic managers, as non-professional PMs, typically do not have a systematic approach to projects; nor have they generally taken part in any PM training themselves. Their way of carrying out projects is based on their own professional experience. In this context, the competencies that best underpin managing strategic projects was looked at as well. The literature offers a wealth of PM competencies. However, its consideration is insufficient in the context of the HEI sector and does not sufficiently recognise the link of PM competencies acquisition to personality and the personal environment. The decisive PM competencies were discussed in this thesis.

Based on the research objectives, the three research questions are addressed. The first question thematises the strategising process and how the mechanism between strategic initiation and its corresponding implementation works. The steps involved in the process from establishing a strategy to implementation handover to the responsible academic manager have been outlined. The process of the practical realisation of the strategic plans and the subsequent fulfilment of the implementing objectives could be explained.

The second research question seeks to understand the nature of an SP by illuminating what signification is assigned to an SP within the strategising process of HEIs. The types and characteristics of the SP that align with the strategic objectives and contribute to the overall strategy have been outlined. Thereby, the meaning of OPM in facilitating strategic project implementation has been addressed.

The third research question relates to the strategic project worker by understanding how strategic projects are executed by academic managers. The difficulties academic managers face and how they methodically overcome the obstacles that arise were explored in this thesis.

7.2 Critical Reflections

Both the understanding our experiences in social settings and how we might apply this knowledge to advance our practice going forward are necessary for critical reflection according to Hickson (2010). In this sense, May and Perry (2022, p. 24) state that the knowledge researchers produce transcends the contexts in which it is created. Gaining knowledge about how and why things happen, in addition to how the finding is received, processed and acted upon, can help the researchers better comprehend the social world and the ways in which it is constructed according to the authors. Thus, in the following section, critical reflection entails the consideration of the applied practice to create new findings and proposals for future research fields.

Implications of the Author's Position

In social sciences, complete objectivity is still a difficult to achieve. In this regard and by applying an impact case, the author followed an interpretivist epistemology approach, recognising that there may be different interpretations of the same phenomena. Furthermore, at an ontological level, the constructivist view of reality was constructed through social interactions between those participants. This leads to criticism in the literature that with this chosen stance and with only one investigator, the viewpoint is inevitably biased. But the counterargument is also put forward whether bias is an omnipresent element of any research, and researchers should endeavour to reflect on their own prospective biases in the methodology chapter (Lee and Saunders, 2017, p. 5). The worth of the effort, the qualities of the findings and whether bias was properly prevented from influencing the research report are then determined by others, according to Lee and Saunders (2017). This

understanding is relevant for this study because with regard to informed construction, interpretivism knowledge is considered to be in accord between the researcher's interpretation and the reality under study (Avenier and Thomas, 2015). The people involved in this occurrence provide the meaning based on their personal experiences, and through an iterative process, this agreement is progressively reached.

Implications of the Chosen Research Inquiry

Habib et al. (2014, p. 3) state that research is a scholarly, scientific and systematic investigation to establish facts or principles, or to collect information on a subject to be presented in a detailed and accurate manner. In this context, the debate about the quality of qualitative research, to which this thesis also contributes, is longstanding in the social sciences (Welch and Piekari, 2017). With the choice of a single-case study, Stake's (1982) view the main role of the single-case study researcher is not to provide generalisations, but to illustrate the case adequately, capturing its unique characteristics. Furthermore, the researcher's responsibility is to provide sufficient contextual information to facilitate the reader's judgment as to whether the features and findings of a case can be transferred from one situation to another (Mariotto et al., 2014). The application of the impact case has provided a valuable opportunity to immerse oneself in an organisation in order to gain a deeper understanding of mechanisms in relation to SP. The qualitative interviewing was useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and perspectives which could not necessarily be accommodated in a formal questionnaire, as also mentioned by Byrne (2018, pp. 220). Czarniawska (2014, p. 38) states that interviews give access to representations or accounts of how people present versions of reality, although the idea of "completeness" may itself be an illusion since face and behaviour must also be considered (Silverman, 2024, p. 311). However, the conducted interviews in this study gave the participants the chance to realise what the organisation is doing well and to reflect on how the school can be improved.

Implications of the Findings

Three main areas of strategy, strategic project and academic managers to which the research contributes will be outlined as follows:

Strategy: The seven issues regarding strategy at HEIs address the areas of comprehensibility, visibility, significance and strategic alignment. The case study

shows the impact that can result when insufficient attention is paid to those aspects of strategy in practice. Although these aspects are addressed by researchers, the case study highlights the knowledge transfer problem from theory to practice mentioned by De Ven and Johnson (2006). It is therefore essential to further enhance the research contribution of those topics while monitoring the "knowledge of how to do things" (p. 802). In addition, Hasanefendic and Donina's (2023) theory of the proposed four-field matrix was outlined, and the case was made by applying this theory to the case study. Classifying the case into the four fields proved useful for explaining existing HEI structures. However, the study showed that more data are needed to refine and improve the four-field matrix to improve further contributions in this research field.

Strategic Project: Researchers and international PM associations emphasise the importance of defining a project and distinguishing it from other activities such as operational tasks. The findings of the case study have contributed to this body of knowledge by highlighting the effects of imprecise SP designations. The importance of linguistic precision in management activities such as SP for academics should be reinforced with further contributions in order to better support managers in strategy implementation.

Academic Managers: The literature covers a wide range of topics related to PM competencies. While most articles assume that PM is a separate profession, this study has shown that further articles are needed on professions such as academics, where PM competencies are not required or specifically trained by the employer, even if the projects involve large sums of money. It has also revealed a new perspective on academics. Their organisational positions, high workloads and personal agendas for raising their own academic profile make it difficult for academic managers to acquire the competencies required to perform SP. The proposed framework is intended to provide support to the managers responsible.

Against this background, three implications from the findings of this study have emerged:

- (1) *SP as an eligible thematic research lens*: In the search for how SP is implemented within an HEI's, an increasing understanding of the characteristics of the organisation itself emerged, with such characteristics including the strategies, structures, processes, policies, employee behaviour and framework conditions. In this sense, SP can be seen as a separate field of research and valuable for rethinking new ways to analyse HEIs. References for further research directions are provided below.
- (2) *SP as an unaffiliated dynamic organisational construct*: This thesis has revealed that SP must be viewed in a differentiated way than other project types, and that it can also be decoupled from supporting PM. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the implementation of SP depends on a wide range of determinants, such as the surrounding framework conditions, the overarching strategy construct, the competencies and capabilities of the actors and their job conditions. Thus, SP cannot be viewed in isolation, nor can the multitude of success factors for projects reported in the literature simply be adapted, even though justified with justification. As it is essentially a bridge builder across various processes, organisational units and individuals involved, SP will be preferably regarded as a dynamic organisational construct. This significance should also be taken into account in further research directions.
- (3) *SP as an organisational awareness accelerator*: In the sense of constructivism, the design of the interviews was not aimed at collecting criticism of the impact case, but rather understanding the value of maintaining the stability of a complex organisation such as an HEI's. Current reports show that the stable further development of an HEI's can no longer be taken for granted. Additionally, if there is no unique knowledge in the operating mode of how SP works, less can be improved in the hinge structure of strategy implementation. Because of the inability to misunderstand whether SPs are the right driving shaft for organisational change and whether this power transmission works properly in its construction, its opportunity for prosperous organisation growth should be realised. Accordingly, practical measures are recommended below.

Recommendations for Action in Practice

For years, PM academics have been working to identify the key components of PM success and to develop methods for enhancing PM. It is consequently essential to consider management-established structures, procedures, framework circumstances and the ability of staff members to complete projects successfully. It appears that certain businesses have realised this. For instance, the management of the German machine manufacturer Norma Group SE (Frankfurt School, 2019) and the German automotive supplier Carcoustics GmbH (Grassler et al., 2019) committed to corporate-wide professional PM and took the appropriate precautions, focusing on the systematic PM competence training of each employee combined with a career development setting. The focus was on a holistic approach rather than individual measures. Another example is the co-operation between university and practice. A consortium between the Danish Industry Foundation, Implement Consulting Group, Aarhus University and Technical University of Denmark (DTU) was established to find a project methodology that could increase the success rate of projects in Danish companies (Half Double Institute, 2023). Such further endeavours are desirable for the HEI sector. This is how the IPMA has launched its own special interest group, the Smarter University SIG, which shows the growing interests in learning about projects in educational processes (IPMA SIG, 2022). But universities as modern institutions have been characterised by over-complexity and under-differentiation (Enders and Boer, 2009, p. 174). As a consequence, scholars of HEI systems have different perspectives on how future HEIs should be (Frank and Meyer, 2007, p. 32; Pinheiro et al., 2016; Lee and Ramirez, 2023). According to Pinheiro and Young (2017, p. 124), universities have embraced vertical differentiation through rankings, indicator-based management, scoreboards and excellence initiatives, but have largely resisted horizontal differentiation. Rather than leading to differentiation, universities have continually added on new functions and units, resulting in “multiversity.” However, universities already recognise the importance of professional SP management. For instance, specific leadership positions have been created to foster efficiently the implementation of SP or to drive forward strategic changes, such as at the University of Lancaster (2022), University of Cambridge (2022) or Tufts University (2021). The professionalisation of SP implementation will become increasingly relevant in the future for HEIs. The main recommendation is therefore to actively address SP implementation and to learn from the practical experience of other HEIs and

organisations in other industries. The prerequisite for this is a commitment and conviction on the part of the executive board that SP must be organised professionally at all levels of the hierarchy (appropriate to the level). Therefore, further research can be a driving force to gain new insights in this direction.

Recommendations for Further Study

By drawing new, important distinctions as a result of being closer to the phenomenon investigated, qualitative research is an iterative process that improves comprehension for the scientific community (Aspers and Corte, 2019). In this regard, suggestions for possible further research directions which draw from the implications of the findings above will be given without claim to completeness. Seeing SP as eligible thematic research reflects the current PM community's endeavour for wider recognition as an equivalent research discipline (Locatelli, 2023) like general strategy or marketing, for example. The topic therefore appeals to researchers from other management disciplines to incorporate the knowledge gained (Teerikangas and Geraldi, 2015) in PM into future joint research activities (Huemann, 2022). Projects should be analysed not only in isolation, but preferably within a multidisciplinary lens (Martinsuo et al., 2020). Oswick et al. (2011) argue along the same lines in the field of organisational theory, where more original and radical theories should be developed instead of the common practice of "theory borrowing" from other disciplines. Thus, accepting SP as an unaffiliated dynamic organisational construct would provide a new avenue of research and would follow the call to search for additional perspectives on different origins of PM. In addition, it could counter Sandberg and Alvesson's (2011) critique of gap-spotting dominance in the generation of research questions, especially in established disciplines, and favour new disruptive modes as requested by the authors. This understanding would also favour Fumasoli and Hladchenko's (2023, p. 333) proposals for future research. Further investigation on strategic management in higher education will focus on the questions of how HEIs strategically position themselves; what specific strategies they develop in terms of different aspects of higher education; and what role university leadership and representatives of different administrative and supportive departments play in this context. Fumasoli and Hladchenko's (2023) suggestions are also in line with the European Commission (2024) directorate to research to transformational education in poly-crisis. A new paradigm in HE is advocated that integrates research, innovation, entrepreneurship and education to drive tangible

transformation in the real economy and broader society. Thus, SP as an organisational construct would be a suitable lens for this forward-looking and transformative research stream.

Finally, and in reference to the frequently undervalued gap between strategic intent at the top of an organisation and the actual, realised strategy in practice, Bonchek (2017) makes the claim that "execution is where good strategies go to die". This thesis intended to help ensure that good strategies in HEIs do not die in their implementation, but are kept alive with SPs. This intention is meant to strengthen Huemann's (2022) assertion that projects are expected to create the future. (Strategic) projects are powerful because they are future-focused, solution-oriented and energising based on their transient nature. By allowing an outward perspective and engaging with other management fields by infusing projects into organisational and management theorising (Huemann, 2022; Locatelli et al., 2023; Baba and Brunet, 2023), the future research avenue for enhancing the management of SP within HEIs becomes even more fruitful. A summary table (Table 39, amendment of Table 31) is provided below which links the above-mentioned themes, key literature, contributions and recommendations.

# Topic	Findings	Issues	In alignment with key literature (in addition to literature in chapter 2)	Contributions	Implications from the findings	Recommendations for Action in Practice	Recommendations for Further Study
1 Strategy	<p>1) Comprehensibility of the strategy</p> <p>2) Priority of the strategy</p> <p>3) Level-fragmentation of the strategy</p>	<p>1) The overarching- and sub-strategies are not exactly comprehensible to the interviewees.</p> <p>2) The defining characteristics of the school's strategy is scarcely recognisable.</p> <p>3) The exact distinction to other business schools, such as value propositions, as well as the path to a differentiated positioning is not immediately apparent.</p> <p>4) How to respond to the any future world's challenges or address technological risks (WEF, 2022) also remain unclear.</p> <p>5) The strategy is perceived as important, nevertheless, it is not the primary focus when compared to enterprises within the private industry.</p> <p>6) Strategic activities appear to be more of a passive consequence of external requirements, such as the fulfilment of the legal performance mandate or the regulations of the accreditation authorities, than a proactive driving force.</p> <p>7) There is no recognisable stringency or consistency of strategy at different organisation levels and units (strategic alignment).</p>	<p>Avesson and Wilmott, 2012; Lunin and Halgren, 2014; Fomac and Hlaschenko, 2023; Eggen and Ratanova, 2023; Zappas, 2023</p> <p>Alford and Greve, 2017; Jiang, 2022; Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016; Stensaker, 2019</p> <p>Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Deacon et al., 2012; Stensaker and Fumasoli, 2016; Whittington et al., 2020; Hasanahendi and Donina, 2023</p> <p>Todorović et al., 2015; Sulowski et al., 2016</p> <p>Triki and Taman, 1994; Patankul and Shenhar, 2012; Laflay and Martin, 2013; Mentere, 2013; Van der Wal, 2016; Boland, 2020; Fuentes et al., 2020; Alesioglu and Palapa, 2021</p> <p>Chi and Spowage, 2010; Renowardhani and Surossi, 2019</p> <p>Saraghat, 2021; Zubac et al., 2022</p> <p>King, 2012; Lyen, 2018; Mylena and Zhikova, 2018; Hevermans et al., 2019; Spowar et al., 2019</p> <p>Jelinek and Litterer, 1994; Ashforth et al., 1996; Barrick et al., 2014</p> <p>Floyd, 2015</p> <p>Parry, 2007; Evans et al., 2013; Einman et al., 2016; Gschwind et al., 2019</p>	<p>Contribution to HEIs' Project Strategic Alignment:</p> <p>This thesis identifies the different types of projects and their contribution to the strategic agenda. This is a step towards a more developed and visible strategic alignment framework concept for business schools.</p> <p>Contribution to Project Management Comprehension in HEIs:</p> <p>This thesis seeks to clarify how PM is operationalised in HEIs. The use of empirical data will provide a better understanding of the PM context in that setting.</p>	<p>(1) SP as an eligible thematic research lens: SP can be seen as a separate field of research and valuable for refining the ways to analyse HEIs. Research questions are provided below.</p> <p>(2) SP as an unaffiliated dynamic organisational construct: SP cannot be viewed in isolation, nor can the multitude of success factors for HEIs be identified, even though justified with justification. As it is essentially a bridge builder across various processes, organisational units and individuals involved, SP will be preferably regarded as a dynamic organisational construct.</p> <p>(3) SP as an organisational awareness accelerator: If there is no unique knowledge in the operating mode of how SP works, less focus on the single structure of strategy implementation. Because of the inability to understand whether SPs are the right driving shaft for organisational change and whether this power transmission works properly in its construction, its opportunity for prosperous organisation growth should be realised. Accordingly, practical measures are recommended below.</p>	<p>The main recommendation is therefore to actively address SP implementation and to learn from the practical experience of other HEIs and organisations in other industries.</p> <p>The prerequisites for this is a commitment and conviction on the part of the executive board that SP must be organised professionally at all levels of the hierarchy (appropriate to the level).</p> <p>Therefore, further research can be a driving force to gain new insights in this direction.</p>	<p>A new paradigm in HE is advocated that integrates research, innovation, entrepreneurship and education to drive tangible transformation in the real economy and broader society.</p> <p>This SP as an organisational construct would be a suitable lens for this forward-looking and transformative research stream.</p>
2 Strategic Project	<p>1) Definition of SP</p> <p>2) Synonym of the terms</p> <p>3) SP portfolio</p> <p>4) Implementation gap</p>	<p>8) How an SP is characterised or defined in the organisation is unclear, as there is no uniform understanding of it.</p> <p>9) It is not transparent which projects are designated as "strategic projects", nor is it clear whether projects are an approach to organising work as a visible part of the school strategy.</p> <p>10) A specific strategic or project-specific language is scarcely discernible. The meetings revealed that the terms "project", "strategic project" and "project management" were used interchangeably.</p> <p>11) Not all projects are officially recorded in the university database, and there is no official categorisation of all (strategic) projects.</p> <p>12) The tasks of the strategic planning staff remains to planning and does not lead to practical implementation support.</p>	<p>King, 2012; Lyen, 2018; Mylena and Zhikova, 2018; Hevermans et al., 2019; Spowar et al., 2019</p> <p>Jelinek and Litterer, 1994; Ashforth et al., 1996; Barrick et al., 2014</p> <p>Floyd, 2015</p>	<p>Contribution to the Academic Manager as a Project Worker:</p> <p>Project managers in business schools are not to be considered generically as distinct professional types, but as individuals who, with their different personalities and behavioural patterns, influence the projects and the project landscape. This study attempts to create a new framework for PM working in a changing HE landscape.</p> <p>Contribution to Research on PM Competencies in HEIs:</p> <p>The thesis contributes additional findings on how systematic PM competence acquisition can be effectively organised in HEIs.</p>	<p>(1) SP as an eligible thematic research lens: SP can be seen as a separate field of research and valuable for refining the ways to analyse HEIs. Research questions are provided below.</p> <p>(2) SP as an unaffiliated dynamic organisational construct: SP cannot be viewed in isolation, nor can the multitude of success factors for HEIs be identified, even though justified with justification. As it is essentially a bridge builder across various processes, organisational units and individuals involved, SP will be preferably regarded as a dynamic organisational construct.</p> <p>(3) SP as an organisational awareness accelerator: If there is no unique knowledge in the operating mode of how SP works, less focus on the single structure of strategy implementation. Because of the inability to understand whether SPs are the right driving shaft for organisational change and whether this power transmission works properly in its construction, its opportunity for prosperous organisation growth should be realised. Accordingly, practical measures are recommended below.</p>	<p>The main recommendation is therefore to actively address SP implementation and to learn from the practical experience of other HEIs and organisations in other industries.</p> <p>The prerequisites for this is a commitment and conviction on the part of the executive board that SP must be organised professionally at all levels of the hierarchy (appropriate to the level).</p> <p>Therefore, further research can be a driving force to gain new insights in this direction.</p>	<p>A new paradigm in HE is advocated that integrates research, innovation, entrepreneurship and education to drive tangible transformation in the real economy and broader society.</p> <p>This SP as an organisational construct would be a suitable lens for this forward-looking and transformative research stream.</p>
3 Academic Managers	<p>1) Importance of the responsible person</p> <p>2) Individual contribution</p> <p>3) Workload</p> <p>4) Ego profile</p>	<p>13) No academic manager participants had formal PM-related training or certification. Their actions in project was based on their previous work experience, which led them to perform intuitively.</p> <p>14) The extent of personal involvement in the SP is often ambiguous to the academic managers. In addition, it is not always obvious whether the tasks to be executed belong to a strategic project (or strategic activity).</p> <p>15) Academic manager are all-rounders who are required to undertake a variety of tasks, some of which are new, complex or otherwise associated with major challenges. The corresponding support and expertise provided by the organisation are not equally aligned, however.</p> <p>16) Academic managers who have been strongly socialised professionally in academia, in particular professors, find themselves in an interplay between their efforts to raise their academic profiles and to perform the tasks set by their employer.</p>	<p>King, 2012; Lyen, 2018; Mylena and Zhikova, 2018; Hevermans et al., 2019; Spowar et al., 2019</p> <p>Jelinek and Litterer, 1994; Ashforth et al., 1996; Barrick et al., 2014</p> <p>Floyd, 2015</p> <p>Parry, 2007; Evans et al., 2013; Einman et al., 2016; Gschwind et al., 2019</p>	<p>Contribution to the Academic Manager as a Project Worker:</p> <p>Project managers in business schools are not to be considered generically as distinct professional types, but as individuals who, with their different personalities and behavioural patterns, influence the projects and the project landscape. This study attempts to create a new framework for PM working in a changing HE landscape.</p> <p>Contribution to Research on PM Competencies in HEIs:</p> <p>The thesis contributes additional findings on how systematic PM competence acquisition can be effectively organised in HEIs.</p>	<p>(1) SP as an eligible thematic research lens: SP can be seen as a separate field of research and valuable for refining the ways to analyse HEIs. Research questions are provided below.</p> <p>(2) SP as an unaffiliated dynamic organisational construct: SP cannot be viewed in isolation, nor can the multitude of success factors for HEIs be identified, even though justified with justification. As it is essentially a bridge builder across various processes, organisational units and individuals involved, SP will be preferably regarded as a dynamic organisational construct.</p> <p>(3) SP as an organisational awareness accelerator: If there is no unique knowledge in the operating mode of how SP works, less focus on the single structure of strategy implementation. Because of the inability to understand whether SPs are the right driving shaft for organisational change and whether this power transmission works properly in its construction, its opportunity for prosperous organisation growth should be realised. Accordingly, practical measures are recommended below.</p>	<p>The main recommendation is therefore to actively address SP implementation and to learn from the practical experience of other HEIs and organisations in other industries.</p> <p>The prerequisites for this is a commitment and conviction on the part of the executive board that SP must be organised professionally at all levels of the hierarchy (appropriate to the level).</p> <p>Therefore, further research can be a driving force to gain new insights in this direction.</p>	<p>A new paradigm in HE is advocated that integrates research, innovation, entrepreneurship and education to drive tangible transformation in the real economy and broader society.</p> <p>This SP as an organisational construct would be a suitable lens for this forward-looking and transformative research stream.</p>

Table 39: Links of themes, literature, contributions and recommendations (author's)

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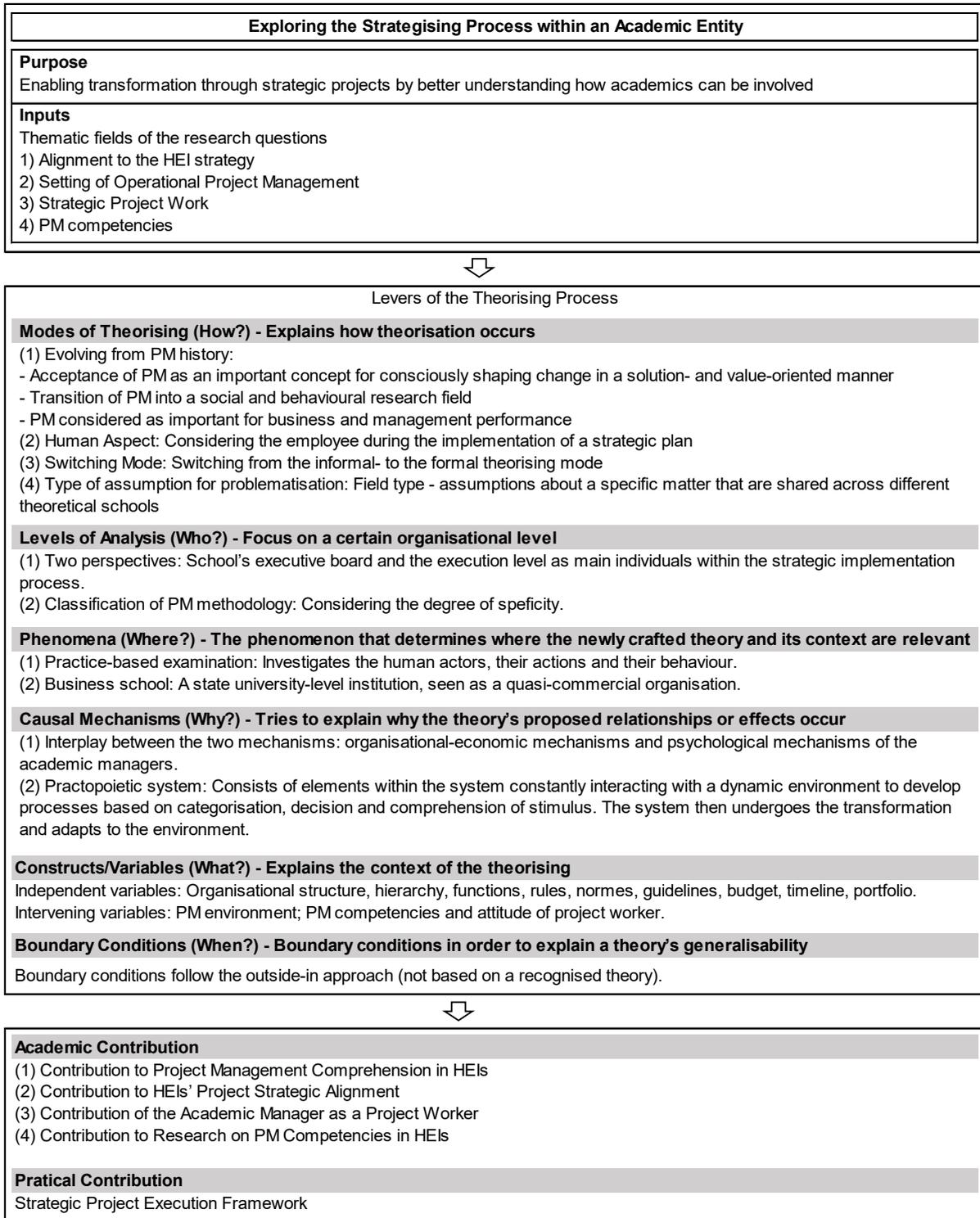
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Appendix

Appendix (1): Contribution Mapping (based on Makadok et al., 2018)



Appendix (2) : Research Sequence

1		2				3				
Theory Building	Knowledge Transfer	Types of Research		Research Conceptualisation		Philosophy of Management Research			Approaches to Theory Development	
		Nature of Management Research		Research Dilemma		Ontology				
		Business Research				Subjectivism	Epistemology			
		Social Science				Social Constructionism	Interpretivism	Axiology	Nature of Research Design	
		Applied Research	Engaged Research	Habitus	Abduction			Exploratory Studies		

4		5										
Methodology Research Design / Strategy		Methodological Choice										
Qualitative Research Design		Qualitative Research Design										
Case Study	Method Choice		Framing Qualitative Data				Qualitative Data Analysis		Data Presentation			
	Mono Method		Time Horizons		Data Collection		Sample Selection	Convergence of Evidence - Single Study	Materials and Instruments	Data Analysis Techniques	Reflection Process	
Single-case Design / Holistic View		Com-positional Structure	Reliability	Validity	Cross-sectional Design	Access	Bias Domains	Data Collection vs. Design	Structured Interviews	Recording Devices	Software Tools	Feedback

Appendix (3): Distribution of the individual groups across the four phases

Classification within the organisation (columns 1-5):

	Total per Phase	(2) Academic Title			(3) Located in Organisation							(4) Role Assignment						
		Prof Dr	Dr	None	Dep No. 1	Dep No. 2	Dep No. 3	Dep No. 4	Dep No. 5	Dep No. 6	Staff	Head of Depart	Head of Institute	Head of Center	Head of Unit	Head of Staff	Senior Lecturer	Staff member
Group I	2	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Group II	6	3	1	2	-	1	-	-	5	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	1	-
Group III	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Group IV	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Group V	2	2	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Group VI	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Group VII	4	3	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	-
Group VIII	2	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Sum	23	10	3	10	3	1	3	2	6	2	6	1	1	9	4	1	4	3

Professional experience (columns 6-7):

	Total per Phase	(6) Experiences			(7) Professional Background	
		Senior	Mid-Senior	Junior	Socialised mainly in private industry	Socialised mainly in academia
Group I	2	1	1	-	1	1
Group II	6	5	1	-	4	2
Group III	2	2	-	-	1	1
Group IV	3	2	1	-	3	-
Group V	2	2	-	-	1	1
Group VI	2	-	2	-	1	1
Group VII	4	3	1	-	-	4
Group VIII	2	1	1	-	1	1
Sum	23	16	7	0	12	11

Project work (columns 8-10):

	Total per Phase	(8) PM Training		(9) Experienced Projects		(10) Project Work Phases	
		Certified	None	First-Time (FT) and Repetitive (R)	Only Repetitive	1-Init 2-Plan 3-Coord 4-Implem	5-Only Participation
Group I	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Group II	6	-	6	4	2	4	2
Group III	2	1	1	1	1	2	-
Group IV	3	-	3	3	-	3	-
Group V	2	-	2	2	-	2	-
Group VI	2	-	2	-	2	-	2
Group VII	4	-	4	4	-	4	-
Group VIII	2	-	2	-	2	-	2
Sum	23	2	21	15	8	16	7

Realisation (columns 11-13):

		(12) Location			(13) Language		
		office	online	email	English	Official	Dialect
		Total per Phase					
Group I	2	1	1	-	1	1	-
Group II	6	4	1	1	2	1	3
Group III	2	2	-	-	-	1	1
Group IV	3	3	-	-	-	-	3
Group V	2	2	-	-	-	2	-
Group VI	2	2	-	-	-	2	-
Group VII	4	3	1	-	-	4	-
Group VIII	2	2	-	-	-	2	-
Sum	23	19	3	1	3	13	7

Appendix (4): Group I detailed information

Perspective of the Experts - Testing Semi-Interview Design

1	2	3	4	5	6
Assigned Code	Academic Title	Located in Organisation	Role Assignment (official - contract)	Level of Authority	Years of Professional Experiences in Academia and other Industries
				R1-Academic Executive (High level of decision-making authority) R2-Academic Manager (Medium decision-making authority) R3-Professional Services (Executor)	1- Senior (from 45 years) 2 - Mid-Senior (from 35-45 years) 3 - Junior (until 35 years)
G_I/1	Prof Dr	Department 1	Head of Center / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R2	1-Senior - in academia: 14 years - in other industry: 5 years Doctorate in Project Management
G_I/2	Dr	Department 3	Senior Lecturer / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R2	2 - Mid-Senior - in academia: 8 years - in other industry: 2 years Doctorate in Strategic Management

7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Professional Background	Certified PM Training	Description of Experienced Project Spectrum	Project Work Phases	Interview conducted	Location	Language
		High Volume - Low Variety -> Repetitive (R) Low Volume - High Variety -> First-Time (FT)	1 - Initialisation 2 - Planning 3 - Coordination 4 - Implementing 5 - Only participation			1 - English 2 - The official language 3 - Dialect version of the national language
Former various management positions in private and government organisations	Yes	R; FT	1, 2, 3, 4	12.04.2023 10.30-11.30am	Office	3
Academic tenure track with focus in strategy	none	R	5	12.05.2023 11-12am	MSTeams	1

Appendix (5): Group II detailed information

Perspective of the Executive Board Members

1	2	3	4	5	6
Assigned Code	Academic Title	Located in Organisation	Role (official - contract)	Level of Authority	Years of Professional Experiences in Academia and other Industries
				R1-Academic Executive (High level of decision-making authority) R2-Academic Manager (Medium decision-making authority) R3-Professional Services (Executor)	1- Senior (from 45 years) 2 - Mid-Senior (from 35-45 years) 3 - Junior (until 35 years)
G_III/1	Prof Dr	Department	Head of Department / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R1	1-Senior - in academia: 15 years - in other industry: 5 years
G_III/2	none	Staff	Head of Staff	R1	1-Senior - in academia: 25 years - in other industry: 10 years

7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Professional Background	Certified PM Training	Description of Experienced Project Spectrum	Project Work Phases	Interview conducted	Onsite / Online	Language
		High Volume - Low Variety -> Repetitive (R) Low Volume - High Variety -> First-Time (FT)	1 - Initialisation 2 - Planing 3 - Coordination 4 - Implementing 5 - Only participation			1 - English 2 - The official language 3 - Dialect version of the national language
Former consultant and member of the Board of Directors of a large company	none	R; FT	1, 2, 3, 4	30.08.2023 1-2pm	Office	2
Former various management positions in different organisations	none	R; FT	1, 2, 3, 4	13.09.2023 2-3pm	Office	3

Appendix (6): Group III detailed information

Perspective of selected Academic Managers - Pilot Interviews

1	2	3	4	5	6
Assigned Code	Academic Title	Located in Organisation	Role (official - contract)	Level of Authority	Years of Professional Experiences in Academia and other Industries
				R1-Academic Executive (High level of decision-making authority) R2-Academic Manager (Medium decision-making authority) R3-Professional Services (Executor)	1- Senior (from 45 years) 2 - Mid-Senior (from 35-45 years) 3 - Junior (until 35 years)
G_II/1	Prof Dr	Department 5	Head of Center / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R2	1-Senior - in academia: 12 years - in other industry: 12 years
G_II/2	none	Department 5	Head of Center / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R2	1-Senior - in academia: 12 years - in other industry: 25 years
G_II/3	none	Department 5	Head of Center / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R2	1-Senior - in academia: 12 years - in HE industry: 27 years
G_II/4	Dr	Department 2	Senior Lecturer / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R2	1-Senior - in academia: 10 years - in other industry: 30 years
G_II/5	Prof Dr	Department 5	Head of Center / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R2	1-Senior - in academia: 25 years - in other industry: 0 years
G_II/6	Prof Dr	Department 5	Head of Center / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R2	2-Mid Senior - in academia: 23 years - in other industry: 0 years

7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Professional Background	PM Training	Description of Experienced Project Spectrum	Project Work Phases	Interview conducted	Onsite / Online	Language
		High Volume - Low Variety - > Repetitive (R) Low Volume - High Variety - > First-Time (FT)	1 - Initialisation 2 - Planing 3 - Coordination 4 - Implementing 5 - Only participation			1 - English 2 - The official language 3 - Dialect version of the national
- Former various management positions in private and government organisations in Europe	none	R; FT	1, 2, 3, 4	15.12.2023 1-1.45pm	Office	3
- Former various management positions in private companies in Europe	none	R; FT	1, 2, 3, 4	18.12.2023 4-4.45pm	Office	2
- Former various management positions in HEIs in Europe	none	R; FT	1, 2, 3, 4	18.12.2023 1.30-2.15pm	Office	1
- Former Senior Manager in various international companies in Europe and Asia - Board Member of a major healthcare organisation	none	R; FT	1, 2, 3, 4	19.12.2023 3-3.45pm	Office	3
Various academic positions as a faculty and researcher	none	R	1, 2	21.12.2023 2-2.40pm	MS Teams	3
Various academic positions as a faculty and researcher	none	R	1, 2	10.01.2024	via E-Mail	1

Appendix (7): Group IV detailed information

Perspective of the Staff Steering, Development & Strategy

1	2	3	4	5	6
Assigned Code	Academic Title	Located in Organisation	Role Assignment (official - contract)	Level of Authority	Years of Professional Experiences in Academia and other Industries
				R1-Academic Executive (High level of decision-making authority) R2-Academic Manager (Medium decision-making authority) R3-Professional Services (Executor)	1- Senior (from 45 years) 2 - Mid-Senior (from 35-45 years) 3 - Junior (until 35 years)
G_IV/1	none	Staff unit	Senior Project Manager - Assistant to Head of Staff	R3	1-Senior - in academia: 12 years - in other industry: 15 years
G_IV/2		Staff unit	Strategy & Projects in the staff unit	R3	1-Senior - in academia: 15 years - in other industry: 25 years
G_IV/3		Staff unit	Strategy & Projects in the staff unit	R3	1-Mid-Senior - in academia: 5 years - in other industry: 10 years

7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Professional Background	Certified PM Training	Description of Experienced Project Spectrum	Project Work Phases	Interview conducted	Onsite / Online	Language
		High Volume - Low Variety -> Repetitive (R) Low Volume - High Variety -> First-Time (FT)	1 - Initialisation 2 - Planning 3 - Coordination 4 - Implementing 5 - Only participation			1 - English 2 - The official language 3 - Dialect version of the national language
Various specialised positions in the manufacturing and trade industry	none	R; FT	1, 2, 3, 4	20.02.2024 2.30-3pm	Office	3
Former various management positions in different organisations	none	R, FT	1, 2, 3, 4	26.02.2024 9 - 10.30am	office	3
Various specialised positions in the different industries	none	R, FT	1, 2, 3, 4	26.02.2024 9 - 10.30am	office	3

Appendix (8): Group V detailed information

Perspective of the Academic Managers

1	2	3	4	5	6
Assigned Code	Academic Title	Located in Organisation	Role (official - contract)	Level of Authority	Years of Professional Experiences in Academia and other Industries
				R1-Academic Executive (High level of decision-making authority) R2-Academic Manager (Medium decision-making authority) R3-Professional Services (Executor)	1- Senior (from 45 years) 2 - Mid-Senior (from 35-45 years) 3 - Junior (until 35 years)
G_V/1	Prof Dr	Department 1	Head of Institute / Fulfilment of the multiple performance mandate	R2	1-Senior - in academia: 12 years - in other industry: 18 years
G_V/2	Prof Dr	Department 4	Senior Lecturer / Former longstanding Executive Board Member of the school	R2	1-Senior - in academia: 25 years - in other industry: 8 years

7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Professional Background	PM Training	Description of Experienced Project Spectrum	Project Work Phases	Interview conducted	Onsite / Online	Language
		High Volume - Low Variety -> Repetitive (R) Low Volume - High Variety -> First-Time (FT)	1 - Initialisation 2 - Planing 3 - Coordination 4 - Implementing 5 - Only participation			1 - English 2 - The official language 3 - Dialect version of the national language
- Former various management positions in private and government organisations in Europe	none	R, FT	1, 2, 3, 4	13.06.2024 1.30-2.30pm	office	2
- Various positions in the law sector	none	R, FT	1, 2, 3, 4	20.06.2024 2-3pm	office	2

Appendix (9): Group VI detailed information

Perspective of the Department Staff Units

1	2	3	4	5	6
Assigned Code	Academic Title	Located in Organisation	Role (official - contract)	Level of Authority	Years of Professional Experiences in Academia and other Industries
				R1-Academic Executive (High level of decision-making authority) R2-Academic Manager (Medium decision-making authority) R3-Professional Services (Executor)	1- Senior (from 45 years) 2 - Mid-Senior (from 35-45 years) 3 - Junior (until 35 years)
G_VI/1	none	Department 1	Head of unit	R3	2 - Mid-Senior - in academia: 7 years - in other industry: 8 years
G_VI/2	none	Department 5	Head of unit	R3	2 - Mid-Senior - in academia: 12 years

7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Professional Background	PM Training	Description of Experienced Project Spectrum	Project Work Phases	Interview conducted	Onsite / Online	Language
		High Volume - Low Variety - > Repetitive (R) Low Volume - High Variety - > First-Time (FT)	1 - Initialisation 2 - Planing 3 - Coordination 4 - Implementing 5 - Only participation			1 - English 2 - The official language 3 - Dialect version of the national
- Various former positions in the private sector	none	R	5	18.06.2024 10.15-11am	office	2
- Professional experiences only in HEIs	none	R	5	19.06.2024 3-4pm	office	2

Appendix (10): Group VII detailed information

Perspective of the Academic Managers

1	2	3	4	5	6
Assigned Code	Academic Title	Located in Organisation	Role (official - contract)	Level of Authority	Years of Professional Experiences in Academia and other Industries
				R1-Academic Executive (High level of decision-making authority) R2-Academic Manager (Medium decision-making authority) R3-Professional Services (Executor)	1- Senior (from 45 years) 2 - Mid-Senior (from 35-45 years) 3 - Junior (until 35 years)

vII/1	Prof Dr	Department 1	Senior Lecturer (former Head of Center)	R2	1 - Senior - in academia: 18 years - in other industry: 9 years
vII/2	Prof Dr	Department 6	Head of Center	R2	1 - Senior - in academia: 16 years - in secondary school industry: 12 years
vII/3	Prof Dr	Department 3	Head of Center	R2	1 - Senior - in academia: 26 years - in other industry: 4 years
vII/4	none	Department 6	Head of Center	R3	2 - Mid-Senior - in academia: 20 years

7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Professional Background	PM Training	Description of Experienced Project Spectrum	Project Work Phases	Interview conducted	Onsite / Online	Language
		High Volume - Low Variety -> Repetitive (R) Low Volume - High Variety -> First-Time (FT)	1 - Initialisation 2 - Planing 3 - Coordination 4 - Implementing 5 - Only participation			1 - English 2 - The official language 3 - Dialect version of the national language
- Former positions in private companies in Europe	none	R, FT	1, 2, 3, 4	12.08.2024 2-3pm	MSTeams	2
- Professional experiences only in HEIs and secondary schools	none	R, FT	1, 2, 3, 4	22.08.2024 2-3pm	office	2
- Former positions in private companies in Europe	none	R, FT	1, 2, 3, 4	22.08.2024 2-3pm	office	2
- Professional experiences only in HEIs	none	R, FT	1, 2, 3, 4	14.08.2024 10-11am	office	2

Appendix (11): Group VIII detailed information

Perspective of the Department Staff Units

1	2	3	4	5	6
Assigned Code	Academic Title	Located in Organisation	Role (official - contract)	Level of Authority	Years of Professional Experiences in Academia and other Industries
				R1-Academic Executive (High level of decision-making authority) R2-Academic Manager (Medium decision-making authority) R3-Professional Services (Executor)	1- Senior (from 45 years) 2 - Mid-Senior (from 35-45 years) 3 - Junior (until 35 years)
G_VIII/1	none	Department 4	Head of unit	R3	2 - Mid-Senior - in academia: 6 years - in other industry: 8 years
G_VIII/2	Dr	Department 3	Head of unit	R3	1- Senior - in academia: 14 years - in other industry: 17 years

7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Professional Background	PM Training	Description of Experienced Project Spectrum	Project Work Phases	Interview conducted	Onsite / Online	Language
		High Volume - Low Variety - > Repetitive (R) Low Volume - High Variety - > First-Time (FT)	1 - Initialisation 2 - Planing 3 - Coordination 4 - Implementing 5 - Only participation			1 - English 2 - The official language 3 - Dialect version of the national
- Former various positions in private companies in Europe	None	R	5	08.08.2024 10.30-11.30am	office	2
- Former various positions in private companies in Europe	None	R	5	12.08.2024 9-10am	office	2

Appendix (12): Example of Building Data Acquisition

Screenshot 1: Example of data collection from Group III (Academic Managers) that flows into Guiding Questions for Group IV.

Contribution of Strategic Project to the Strategy	Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project	6.-1.2. Awareness of SP present, but not exactly clear 1.-1.3. Difference between projects and strategic projects not clear 2.-1.4. Lack of clarity about the existence of strategic projects 3.-1.2. Lack of clarity as to what exactly an SP is 3.-2.1. Lack of clarity between projects or project management 6.-1.1. Difficult to categorise OPM
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Screenshot 2: Guiding questions for Group IV (Staff Members).

<p>20240226 Conversation note, 09.00-11.30 Uhr / Room 11.17</p> <p>Meeting with Mr xx und Mr xx</p> <p>Guiding questions</p> <hr/> <p>Initiation Strategy (IS)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Who initiates the strategies or commissions them?2) Has the parent university strategy to be considered?3) What does the Business School strategy look like? How many types of strategy and sub-strategies are there?4) Is the strategy (or sub-strategies) fixed or is it evolving? <p>Strategic Planning (SP)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) What is the purpose of strategic planning?2) What roles are there (strategy makers and developers)?3) How do the strategic planners receive the initiation or orders for planning?4) Is strategic planning based on a framework? A specific model?5) Are feasibilities considered in strategic planning? <p>Strategy Implementation (SI)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) How exactly are the strategic plans handed over to the departments?
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Appendix (13): Example of Field Notes

Screenshot: Field notes were taken in a spreadsheet

Faculty of Business School (2) Strategy - Development of a new "xy Sub-Strategy":			
Descriptive Information		Reflective Information	
Activity	Comprehension of the strategy	Involvement of the key actors	Questions
<p>11 Wednesday, 7.2.24: Room xxx / 9am-12am Room: xxx - Board Room in building x - Horseshoe-shaped setting Activity: x Commission meeting - Mr x (strategy planner) presents the procedure for developing the x strategy in a PowerPoint presentation (A) - ca. 20min. - Members of the Commission form the project/working group under the leadership of the two strategy planners</p>	<p>R2-1.1.: Strategic Project - The development of the sub-strategy is not presented as a strategic project R2-1.2.: Education (Enlightenment) - The presentation outlines the strategic process as a whole, the embedding of sub-strategies and the planned approach. R2-1.3.: Formalism - The high formalism of the organisation becomes evident when setting up a functional strategy.</p>	<p>R2-1.: Overdue Sub-Strategy Development - xxx with its products and services has been an essential cornerstone of the Business School for decades as it makes an essential contribution to the financing of the organisation. However, a strategy for this performance mandate has not yet been developed, while other areas such as teaching or internationalisation have been in place for some time. R2-2.: Strategic Working Group xxx Commission - The agenda is steadily getting bigger and bigger with operational and administrative issues, so there is hardly any time left for strategic considerations.</p>	<p>A) see Powerpoint Presentation -> Why is it only now that a continuing education strategy is being developed for the first time in 2024? -> Why has the xxx Commission not divided into a strategic and an operational group as discussed several times? Would it have been easier to contribute to the strategy workshops?</p>
<p>21 Donnerstag, 21.3.24: 8.30-10.30am Room: xxx - Board Room in xxx - Horseshoe-shaped setting - Kick-off Working Group:</p>	<p>R2-2.1.1.: Strategy Moderation - only internal persons and specialists from middle management.</p>	<p>R2-3.: Disagreement on the procedure - The Staff Unit's strategic planners took the lead in developing the functional strategy and</p>	

Appendix (14a-b): Multi-stage Interview Journey

a) From Preparation Phase to Phase II (Feedback from G-I)

Preparation Phase					Phase I - Test Interview Design		Phase II - Initial Understanding		
Levels and Steps		First Draft Interview Questions derived from			G-I		Interview Questions for G-II and G-III (Adjustments and Additions)		
Level	Individual Steps	#	#	Interview Questions	I) Expert Review	II) Expert Review	Adjusted Interview Questions wording based on G-I	Corresponding Codes (adjusted)	Explanations
Level Strategy Strategic Management Process	Initiation Strategy (IS)	1	1-1	Could you tell me who determines the school and subordinate unit strategies and how they are developed in order to shape the organisation's future?	Question is not quite clear. Call back: Which strategy level is meant exactly?	Question is clearly formulated, but cannot be answered for the own working area.	1-1 Adjusted Could you tell me who determines the <u>school strategy/ies</u> and how they are developed in order to shape the organisation's future?	1-1 Adjusted Initiator	<u>Responsibility and Development</u> - HEIs not only pursue an overarching organisational strategy, but also extend their strategic capacities to subordinate levels which are referred to as multi-level strategies. - Multi-level strategies take into account the specific characteristics, assets and goals of the sub-units and serve as more thorough and operational outlines of the institutional strategy - The are different strategy perspectives such as "Strategy as design", "Strategy as experience" or "Strategy as ideas" (Lundin and Hällgren, 2014).
	Strategic Planning (SP)	2	1-2	Could you elaborate more on what kind of strategic initiatives are proven to generate strategic values and how the strategic governance framework look?	Question is clearly formulated, but cannot be answered for the own working area.	Question is not quite clear as a definition is missing. Not be aware of any strategic initiatives and governance framework. Proposed new wording: <i>Could you elaborate more on how the strategic governance framework look?</i>	1-2 Adjusted Could you elaborate more on <u>how the strategic governance framework</u> look if there is something in place?	1-2 Adjusted Strategic Governance Framework	<u>Strategic Initiatives and Governance Framework</u> - SP is a deliberate and disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation (or other entity) is, what it does and why. - SP has been demonstrated to be an effective tool for providing institutions with the framework they need to create and implement their strategy. - SP follows two conceptual principles: 1) It is initiative-based. A strategy describes a set of initiatives which, when combined, ensure that an institution's results are superior to those of its rivals. 2) It is a discernment process to identify initiatives that are proven to generate strategic value. - Initiatives with scalability and a focus on comparative advantages are referred to as having strategic value.
	Strategy Implementation (SI)	3	1-3	What types of strategies are distinguished and how are they grouped?	Question is not quite clear and can also not be answered for the own working area.	Question is not quite clear. Call back: What types? "We have a strategy in different dimensions: - Strategy that strives our school to more research oriented - Strategy becoming a better teaching school - more students - Strategy increasing ranking, accreditation etc."	1-3 Adjusted <u>Which different dimensions of strategies or strategy area are present?</u>	1-3 Adjusted Strategy Dimensions	<u>Strategy Implementation</u> - SI envisions how businesses might create and integrate their organisational cultures, day-to-day processes, control systems, and organisational structures in a way that leads them towards a predetermined strategy. - An organisation's ability to operationalise and institutionalise its plan into executable actions is a prerequisite for accurate implementation. - Usually HEIs choose not a uniform procedure for their strategy implementation, rather a mixture of different methods. - Well-known examples are for instance the strategy implementation framework from Okumus (2003), the McKinsey 7-S model (Waterman et al., 1980), the Galbraith Star model (Galbraith, 2011) or Balanced Scorecard.
	Strategy Execution Types/Tools (SET)	4	1-4	Which strategic execution types are carried out?	Question is clearly formulated, but cannot be answered for the own working area.		1-4 Adjusted <u>What kind of implementation concept is in place to ensure effective strategic implementation?</u>	1-4 Remain Type of implementation	<u>Types of strategic execution</u> - Execution choice therefore refers to the clear understanding of which type of strategic activity should be carried out with which implementation concept in order to achieve the goals and objectives. - The deliberate choice must consider a system that addresses the issues of uncertainty, risk and measurability of progress in order to fulfil the expected performance. - The decision-making mechanism for the type of implementation as well as the interface between the areas of operation and project management within the organisation are often unclear.

Level SPM Strategic Project Management	Strategic Project Choice	5	1-5	Could you say something about which strategies are executed as a project and which as an operational task and by whom?	Question is clearly formulated, but cannot be answered for the own working area.	Question is clearly formulated, but it is difficult to answer.	1-5 Remain Could you say something about which strategies are executed as a project and which as an operational task and by whom?	1-5 Remain Operational tasks vs project	See above 1-4
	Strategic Project Definition	6	1-6	How is a strategic project defined? See set of characteristics?	Question is clearly formulated. Proposal for the ten suggested criteria for SP in HEIs: - Mandatory - Important-to-have - Nice-to-have	Question is clearly formulated, but cannot be answered for the own working area.	1-6 Remain How is a strategic project defined at the school?	1-6 Remain Strategic Project Definition	Definition of a Strategic Project - SPM is defined as a series of practices, procedures, processes, tools and behaviours that define how organisations benefit from the interaction between PM and business practices - A project is considered strategic if it is related to a company's strategic objectives, aims to improve performance and is therefore crucial for the organisation's survival.
	Strategic Project Portfolio	7	1-7	Could you say something about how the P3 (portfolio-programme-project) grouping looks and how it is monitored?	Question is clearly formulated, but cannot be answered for the own working area.	Question leads to the other question: "Is the strategy focus defined in different fields?". Furthermore, it is not clear if it meant the unit-level or the entire school level.	1-7 Adjusted Could you say something about how the P3 (portfolio-programme-project) grouping looks and how it is monitored, either on school or unit-level?	1-7 Remain Strategic Project Portfolio	Concept of P3 (Grouping) - Project, programme and portfolio management (P3M) is the application of methods, procedures, techniques and competence to achieve a set of defined objectives. - The development of organisational capability maturity depends on a consistent P3 management strategy and the deployment of capable resources. An established organisation will consistently and predictably achieve its goals.
	Strategic Project Responsibilities	8	1-8	Who are the sponsor and the executor of the strategic project?	Question is formulated too generally and can hardly be answered as such. Therefore, this question will be omitted and a new one is formulated.		1-8 New How is success measured and how it is monitored?	1-8 Adjusted Project Measurement	Measurement - Performance indicators are needed to support the overall strategic management system and crucial to achieve strategic goals.
	Strategic Project Alignment	9	1-9	How are strategic projects aligned to the business school's strategic agenda?	Question is clearly formulated, but cannot be answered for the own area. Call back: Does the school has a strategic impact controlling?	Question is clearly formulated, but cannot be answered for the own area. "At our level we do not distinguished between strategic and non-strategic projects."	1-9 Remain How are strategic projects aligned to the business school's strategic agenda?	1-9 Remain Strategic Project Alignment	Strategic alignment - The link between an organisation's strategy and its corresponding organisational PM environment is seen as crucial. - The pursuit of the alignment is the process of reaching an agreement on strategic objectives, and during the pursuit, the procedure should be followed to complete the activities needed to meet those objectives.

Level OPM	OPM environment and conditions	10	2-1	In your view, how does the current organisational PM environment foster the execution of the strategic projects?	Question is clearly formulated and can be answered		2-1 Remain In your view, how does the current organisational PM environment foster the execution of the strategic projects?	2-1 Remain Embedment	- OPM recognises that structures are changing, and the important element is that they are linked together in a dynamic strategising and structuring process. - The perspective of OPM seeks to clarify how the PM function relates to other organisational functions such as human resources.
		11	2-2	In your opinion, what conditions are needed to further develop project management at the school?	Question is clearly formulated and can be answered		2-2 Remain In your opinion, what conditions are needed to further develop project management at the school?	2-2 Remain Conditions	
Academic Manager as Strategic Project Worker	Success and benefits criteria of strategic projects	12	3-1	What criteria are important to you when determining the success and benefits of your projects?	Question is clearly formulated and can be answered.		3-1 Remain What criteria are important to you when determining the success and benefits of your projects?	3-1 Remain Criteria	- The effectiveness of projects depends on the project manager and also counts for the implementation of strategies through projects. - Academic workforce with their actions and behaviours are human actors and HEIs' most precious resource. - A manager's capability to choose the best projects that align with strategy and to ensure the proper allocation of resources is critical to an organisation's success.
	Applied PM methodologies and principles	13	3-2	Could you elaborate more on which specific methodology, PM principles or best PM practice method you use to execute your projects?	Question is clearly formulated and can be answered.		3-2 Remain Could you elaborate more on which specific methodology, PM principles or best PM practice method you use to execute your projects?	3-2 Remain Methodology	
	Challenges in SP	14	3-3	Could you say something about what the greatest challenges are when preparing and executing your strategic projects?	Question is clearly formulated and can be answered.		3-3 Remain Could you say something about what the greatest challenges are when preparing and executing your strategic projects?	3-3 Remain Challenges	
	Changes in SP work	15	3-4	From your perspective, to what extent has the management of strategic project work changed and in what direction is it developing?	Question is clearly formulate but the time period should be specified.		3-4 Adjusted From your perspective, to what extent has the management of strategic project work changed in the last five years and in what direction is it developing?	3-4 Remain Changes	

Competencies in Delivering Strategies	Utilised PM competencies	16	4-1	In your view, what are the most utilised PM competencies for an academic manager to execute strategic projects?	Question is clearly formulated and can be answered.	Call back: Which competencies I use for my own projects? Counter-proposal: <i>What specific competencies would you regard that makes your project better?</i> There is a risk that this question will reveal an undesirable weakness about the interviewee.	4-1 Remain In your view, what are the most utilised PM competencies for an academic manager to execute strategic projects?	4-1 Remain Competencies	-Skills refers to the "WHAT" and describe the abilities a person needs to perform in a specific role or activity; this critical question focuses on the specific learned activities. - The "HOW" is attributed to behaviour and the transformation of the acquired skills into the job behaviour, such as how successfully a project manager conducts a project - Competence: An outcome-based approach referring to function with a focus on job action, performance and assessment (Jamil, 2015). - Competency: A mandatory set of individuals' behaviours, motivation and personal traits as an attribute-based approach (Cheng and Chang, 2010).
	Acquiring competencies	17	4-2	What do you believe is the most appropriate way of acquiring these competencies?	Question is clearly formulated and can be answered.		4-2 Remain What do you believe is the most appropriate way of acquiring these competencies?	4-2 Remain Acquisition	
	Self-learning process	18	4-3	How did you self-learn project management?	Question is clearly formulated and can be answered.		4-3 Remain How did you self-learn project management?	4-3 Remain Self-learning	

b) Phase III

Phase III: In-depth Understanding		
Recategorisation of Topics		
(a) Bulk Themes	(b) Domain	(c) Sub-Domain
1-Comprehension of the Organisational Strategic Concept	1.1. - Clarity of the Strategy	1.1.1. - Strategic Awareness/Thinking
		1.1.2. - Understanding of the Strategy
		1.1.3. - Communication
	1.2. - Strategic Fit	1.2.1. - Design Procedure of a (Functional-) strategy
		1.2.2. - Strategic Alignment
	1.3. - Strategy Decision-Making Processes	1.3.1. - Transition Hinge Strategy Design to Strategy Implementation
1.3.2. - Strategy Implementation Concept		
2-Comprehension of the Organisational Strategic Project Concept	2.1. - Contribution of Strategic Project to the Strategy	2.1.1. - Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project
		2.1.2. - Strategic Project Choice
		2.1.3. - Strategic Project Portfolio
		2.1.4. - Strategic Project Alignment
	2.2. - Strategic Project Work	2.2.1. - Involvement / Contribution in SP Work
		2.2.2. - Changes in SP Work
3-Comprehension of the Underlying System Dealing with the system	3.1. - Organisational Aspects	3.1.1. - Environment
		3.1.2. - Organisational Setting / Challenges
		3.1.3. - PM Setting / Embedment
		3.1.4. - Project Work Process
	3.2. - Individual Aspects within the System	3.2.1. - Competencies
		3.2.2. - Acquisition

1.1.1.	1	Strategic Awareness/Thinking How strong do you rate the current strategic awareness/thinking within the school? What significance does the current school strategy has for the further development of the organisation? Is there any connection between the current strategy and future challenges?
1.1.2.	2	Comprehension of the School Strategy What is the school trying to deliver? What are strategic driving forces of the school? To what extent is the comprehensibility of the current school strategy important for the employees?
1.1.3.	3	Communication of the School Strategy How should the school strategy better communicated internally and externally?
1.2.1.	4	Strategy Development and Types What different types of school strategies can be distinguished and how are they grouped? Does the observed endogeneity (inhouse) in the development of strategic topics has any disadvantage? Could an external consultant make a significant contribution to improving the quality of the strategy?
1.2.2.	5	Strategic Alignment Does the overarching school strategy need to be aligned at different levels such as "Abteilung", "Institut", "Fachstelle" etc. or shall it not be aligned with each other? Does a Strategic Project take place at all levels?
1.3.1.	6	Transition Hinge Strategy Design to Strategy Implementation How does the transition from the finalised strategy to the executing units/responsible parties take place?
1.3.2.	7	Strategy Implementation Concept To what extent are organisational structures and formalism an obstacle to strategy implementation? Which strategic implementation types are carried out?
2.1.1.	8	Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project How is the value and importance of a SP perceived in the organisation? How is SP defined in the organisation?
2.1.2.	9	Strategic Project Choice Where and how is it evident that a distinction is made between operational work and strategic project work?
2.1.3.	10	Strategic Project Portfolio How does the SP grouping looks like? What are the current strategic projects?
2.1.4.	11	Strategic Project Alignment How well is the SP alignment structured in the respective department and units?
2.2.1.	12	Involvement / contribution in SP Work Does the quality of the implementation of the Strategic Project depend on the field of any tension? Accordance of Contribution: Teaching, consulting and research (dealing with the performance mandates) vs Divergence (mini-tentities): Building on their academic profile (recognition)
2.2.2.	13	Changes in SP Work Is the school undergoing an organisational change or is being on the way to a transformation process? What influence/impact of change has the current school strategy on the strategic project work?
3.1.1.	14	Environment What are the main differences in managerialism between private industry and the school as an academic institution?
3.1.2. 3.1.3.	15	PM Setting Can strategic projects be carried out without an established PM?
3.2.1	16	Competencies What exactly is so difficult about the university system when it comes to organisational project work and dealing with structure, process and people?
3.2.2.	17	Acquisition Competencies What elements need to be taken into account when increasing individual PM competencies?

Phase II - Initial Understanding			Phase III: In-depth Understanding						
Interview Questions for G-II and G-III (Adjustments and Additions)			G-IV	Recategorisation of Topics			Interview Questions for G-V and G-VI		
Adjusted Interview Questions wording based on G-I	Corresponding Codes (adjusted)	Explanations	Comprehension questions	Bulk Themes	Domain	Sub-Domain	#	Questions for Clarification, Impact on Organisation, Reaction to the Issues and Industry Comparison	Corresponding Codes (adjusted)
1-1 Adjusted Could you tell me who determines the school strategy/ies and how they are developed in order to shape the organisation's future?	1-1 Adjusted Initiator	Responsibility and Development - HEs not only pursue an overarching organisational strategy, but also extend their strategic capacities to subordinate levels which are referred to as multi-level strategies. - Multi-level strategies take into account the specific characteristics, assets and goals of the sub-units and serve as more thorough and operational outlines of the institutional strategy - There are different strategy perspectives such as "Strategy as design", "Strategy as experience" or "Strategy as ideas" (Lundin and Hällgren, 2014).	Initiation Strategy 1) Who initiates the strategies or commissions them? 2) Has the parent university strategy to be considered? 3) What does the Business School strategy look like? How many types of strategy and sub-strategies are there? 4) Is the strategy (or sub-strategies) fixed or is it evolving?	1-Comprehension of the Organizational Strategic Concept	1.1-Clarity of the Strategy	1.1.1-Strategic Awareness/Thinking towards Strategy or Strategic Topics	1	Phase III: 1.1.1-Strategic Awareness/Thinking How strong do you rate the current strategic awareness/Thinking within the school? What significance does the current school strategy has for the further development of the organisation? Is there any connection between the current strategy and future challenges?	Strategic Awareness/ Thinking
1-2 Adjusted Could you elaborate more on how the strategic governance framework look if there is something in place?	1-2 Adjusted Strategic Governance Framework	Strategic Initiatives and Governance Frameworks - SP is a deliberate and disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation (or other entity) is, what it does and why. - SP has been demonstrated to be an effective tool for providing institutions with the framework they need to create and implement their strategy. - SP follows two conceptual principles: 1) It is initiative-based: A strategy describes a set of initiatives which, when combined, ensure that an institution's results are superior to those of its rivals. 2) It is a discernment process to identify initiatives that are proven to generate strategic value. - Initiatives with scalability and a focus on comparative advantages are referred to as having strategic value.	Strategic Planning 1) What is the purpose of strategic planning? 2) What roles are there (strategy makers and developers)? 3) How do the strategic planners receive the initiation or orders for planning? 4) Is strategic planning based on a framework? A specific model? 5) Are feasibility considered in strategic planning?			1.1.2-Understanding of the Strategy Strategic Intention and Purpose Values	2	Phase III: 1.1.2-Comprehension of the strategy What is the school trying to deliver? What are strategic driving forces of the school? To what extent is the comprehensibility of the current school strategy important for the employees?	Comprehension of the strategy
1-3 Adjusted Which different dimensions of strategies or strategy area are present?	1-3 Adjusted Strategy Dimensions	Strategy Implementation - SI envisions how businesses might create and integrate their organisational cultures, day-to-day processes, control systems, and organisational structures in a way that leads them towards a predetermined strategy. - An organisation's ability to operationalise and institutionalise its plan into executable actions is a prerequisite for accurate implementation. - Usually HEs choose not a uniform procedure for their strategy implementation, rather a mixture of different methods. - Well-known examples are for instance the strategy implementation framework from Okumus (2003), the McKinsey 7-S model (Waterman et al., 1980), the Galbraith Star model (Galbraith, 2011) or Balanced Scorecard.	Strategy Implementation 1) How exactly are the strategic plans handed over to the departments? 2) Are the strategy planners also inspiring partners for implementation? 3) Are there learning loops or feedback processes?		1.2-Strategic Fit	1.2.1-Design procedure of a (functional-) strategy	4	Phase III: 1.2.1-Design procedure of a (functional-) strategy / Strategy Development and Types What different types of school strategies can be distinguished and how are they grouped? Does the observed endogeneity (inhouse) in the development of strategic topics has any disadvantages? Could an external consultant make a significant contribution to improving the quality of the strategy?	Strategy Development and Types
1-4 Adjusted What kind of implementation concept is in place to ensure effective strategic implementation?	1-4 Remain Type of implementation	Types of strategic execution - Execution choice therefore refers to the clear understanding of which type of strategic activity should be carried out with which implementation concept in order to achieve the goals and objectives. - The deliberate choice must consider a system that addresses the issues of uncertainty, risk and measurability of progress in order to fulfil the expected performance. - The decision-making mechanism for the type of implementation as well as the interface between the areas of operation and project management within the organisational are often unclear.	Strategic Measures 1) How and what exactly is measured? 2) Why are certain targets or strategic projects not being implemented successfully? Improvement of Strategising Process 1)What could be improved? Where exactly does the shoe pinch?			1.2.2-Strategic Alignment	5	Phase III: 1.2.2-Strategic Alignment Does the overarching school strategy need to be aligned at organisational levels? Does a Strategic Project take place at all levels?	Strategic Alignment
						1.2.3-Strategic Drift		Phase III: 1.2.3-Strategic Drift	
					1.3-Strategy Decision-Making Processes	1.3.1-Transition Hinge Strategy Design to Strategy Implementation	6	Phase III: 1.3.1-Transition Hinge Strategy Design to Strategy Implementation How does the transition from the finalised strategy to the executing units/responsible parties take place?	Transition
						1.3.2-Strategy Implementation Concept	7	Phase III: 1.3.2-Strategy Implementation Concept To what extent are organisational structures and formalism an obstacle to strategy implementation? Which strategic implementation types are carried out?	Strategy Implementation

1-5 Remain Could you say something about which strategies are executed as a project and which as an operational task and by whom?	1-5 Remain Operational tasks vs project	See above 1-4		2-Comprehension of the Organisational Strategic Project Concept	2.1.- Contribution of Strategic Project to the Strategy	2.1.1.-Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project	8	Phase III: 2.1.1.-Understanding the Nature of a Strategic Project How is the value and importance of a SP perceived in the organisation? How is SP defined in the organisation?	Nature of a SP
1-6 Remain How is a strategic project defined at the school?	1-6 Remain Strategic Project Definition	<u>Definition of a Strategic Project</u> - SPM is defined as a series of practices, procedures, processes, tools and behaviours that define how organisations benefit from the interaction between PM and business practices - A project is considered strategic if it is related to a company's strategic objectives, aims to improve performance and is therefore crucial for the organisation's survival.	Strategic Project 1) Is SP an official part of strategy implementation? Which of the tasks in the O.P. are strategic projects? 2) Who defines strategic projects? 3) What does the execution of SP depend on?			2.1.2.-Strategic Project Choice	9	Phase III: 2.1.2.-Strategic Project Choice Where and how is it evident that a distinction is made between operational work and strategic project work?	Strategic Project Choice
1-7 Adjusted Could you say something about how the P3 (portfolio-programme-project) grouping looks and how it is monitored, either on school or unit-level?	1-7 Remain Strategic Project Portfolio	<u>Concept of P3 (Grouping)</u> - Project, programme and portfolio management (P3M) is the application of methods, procedures, techniques and competence to achieve a set of defined objectives. - The development of organisational capability maturity depends on a consistent P3 management strategy and the deployment of capable resources. An established organisation will consistently and predictably achieve its goals.				2.1.3.-Strategic Project Portfolio	10	Phase III: 2.1.3.-Strategic Project Portfolio How does the SP grouping look like? What are the current strategic projects?	Strategic Project Portfolio
1-8 New How is success measured and how it is monitored?	1-8 Adjusted Project Measurement	<u>Measurement</u> - Performance indicators are needed to support the overall strategic management system and crucial to achieve strategic goals.				2.1.4.-Strategic Project Alignment	11	Phase III: 2.1.4.-Strategic Project Alignment How well is the SP alignment structured in the respective department and units?	Strategic Project Alignment
1-9 Remain How are strategic projects aligned to the business school's strategic agenda?	1-9 Remain Strategic Project Alignment	<u>Strategic alignment</u> - The link between an organisation's strategy and its corresponding organisational PM environment is seen as crucial. - The pursuit of the alignment is the process of reaching an agreement on strategic objectives, and during the pursuit, the procedure should be followed to complete the activities needed to meet those objectives.			2.2-Strategic Project Work	2.2.1.-Involvement / Contribution in SP Work	12	Phase III: 2.2.1.- Involvement / contribution in SP Work Does the quality of the implementation of the Strategic Project depend on the field of any tension? Accordance of Contribution: Teaching, consulting and research (dealing with the performance mandates) vs Divergence (mini-tentacles): Building on their academic profiles (recognition)	Contribution SP Work
2-1 Remain In your view, how does the current organisational PM environment foster the execution of the strategic projects?	2-1 Remain Embedment	- OPM recognises that structures are changing, and the important element is that they are linked together in a dynamic strategising and structuring process. - The perspective of OPM seeks to clarify how the PM function relates to other organisational functions such as human resources.				2.2.2.-Changes in SP Work	13	Phase III: 2.2.2.-Changes in SP Work Is the school undergoing an organisational change or is being on the way to a transformation process? How well people are prepared for and contribute to the organisational change? What influence/impact of change has the current school strategy on the strategic project work?	Changes SP Work

2-2 Remain In your opinion, what conditions are needed to further develop project management at the school?	2-2 Remain Conditions			3-Comprehension of the Underlying System	3.1.- Organisational Aspects	3.1.1.-Environment	14	Phase III: 3.1.1. - Environment What are the main differences in managerialism between private industry and the school as an academic institution?	Environment
3-1 Remain What criteria are important to you when determining the success and benefits of your projects?	3-1 Remain Criteria	- The effectiveness of projects depends on the project manager and also counts for the implementation of strategies through projects. - Academic workforce with their actions and behaviours are human actors and HEIs' most precious resource. - A manager's capability to choose the best projects that align with strategy and to ensure the proper allocation of resources is critical to an organisation's success.		Dealing with the system		3.1.2.-Organisational Setting / Challenges	15	Phase III: 3.1.2.-Organisational Setting / Challenges 3.1.3.-PM Setting / Embedment Can strategic projects be carried out without an established PM?	PM Setting
3-2 Remain Could you elaborate more on which specific methodology, PM principles or best PM practice method you use to execute your projects?	3-2 Remain Methodology					3.1.3.-PM Setting / Embedment			
3-3 Remain Could you say something about what the greatest challenges are when preparing and executing your strategic projects?	3-3 Remain Challenges					3.1.4.-Project Work Process		Phase III: 3.1.4.-Project Work Process	
3-4 Adjusted From your perspective, to what extent has the management of strategic project work changed in the last five years and in what direction is it developing?	3-4 Remain Changes								
4-1 Remain In your view, what are the most utilised PM competencies for an academic manager to execute strategic projects?	4-1 Remain Competencies	- Skills refers to the "WHAT" and describe the abilities a person needs to perform in a specific role or activity; this critical question focuses on the specific learned activities. - The "HOW" is attributed to behaviour and the transformation of the acquired skills into the job behaviour, such as how successfully a project manager conducts a project - Competence: An outcome-based approach referring to function with a focus on job action, performance and assessment (Jamil, 2015). - Competency: A mandatory set of individuals' behaviours, motivation and personal traits as an attribute-based approach (Cheng and Cheng, 2010).			3.2-Individual Aspects within the system	3.2.1.-Competencies	16	Phase III: 3.2.1.-Competencies What exactly is so difficult about the university system when it comes to organisational project work and dealing with structure, process and people?	Competencies
4-2 Remain What do you believe is the most appropriate way of acquiring these competencies?	4-2 Remain Acquisition					3.2.2.-Acquisition	17	Phase III: 3.2.2.-Acquisition What elements need to be taken into account when increasing individual PM competencies?	Acquisition
4-3 Remain How did you self-learn project management?	4-3 Remain Self-learning								

Appendix (15): Example for Data Analysis in Spreadsheet

Screenshot 1: Example of the processing of the individual interview conversation for the 'Code 2-1, Embedment' (see Table 15 in the main text) of interview group III.

AF	AF
Summary Key Statements	G_II/2 (in German)
2.-1.1. Lack of clarity in the existing school strategy	G_II/2-18.12.2023
2.-1.1. Lack of clarity in the development of the strategy	2.-1.1. Fehlende Klarheit der bestehenden Strategie Wir haben zuerst die Frage, was ist unsere Strategie?
2.-1.1. Lack of clarity on how the school strategy will be implemented	2.-1.1. Fehlende Klarheit der Entwicklung der SML Strategie Die nächste Frage ist, wie wird diese Strategie entwickelt?
2.-1.1. Lack of clarity as to what exactly the school wants to achieve	2.-1.1. Fehlende Klarheit wie die Schul-Strategie umgesetzt wird Und dann kommt danach das dritte Punkt, wie wird diese Strategie umgesetzt? Klar gehören die Business School Strategien zur Universitätsstrategie. Wobei es schwierig ist, diesen roten Faden wiederzuerkennen. Weil transdisziplinär und so weiter diese Punkte müssen irgendwie dargestellt werden, auch dann bei uns es, ich habe gerade nochmals unseren Mission Statement durchgelesen in unserem Sitzungsraum heute Morgen.
2.-1.1. Proposal: questioning again strategy and strategic goals and make them transparent	2.-1.1. Fehlende Klarheit was die Schule genau erreichen will Und da ist es schwierig wiederzuerkennen, genau was wollen wir erreichen
2.-1.2. Proposal: Clarify contributions to performance through SP	2.-1.1. Fehlende Klarheit was strategischen SML Ziele sind Und ich rede nicht über operationelle Ziele, sondern wirklich strategische Ziele. Ein AACSB, ein SBI und ein EQUIS sind für mich Mittel zum Zweck. Und da müssen wir wissen, wenn es ein Mittel zum Zweck ist, was wollen wir dann damit erreicht auf einem Financial Science Ranking sind, ist wieder mal ein Mittel zum Zweck.
2.-1.3. Lack of clarity of the presence of the PM environment	2.-1.1. Vorschlag: Strategie und strategische Ziele zu hinterfragen und transparent zu gestalten Und das heißt, da gibt es dann vielleicht diese Möglichkeit, nochmals zu hinterfragen , wie kommen wir von unseren Visionen auf unsere Mission und dann nochmals heruntergebrochen auf der zugehörigen Ebene. Somit ist es einfacher, diesen akademischen Linienmanagern zu erklären, welchen Beiträgen werden die dazu leisten können und müssen. Aber in einer Sprache und einer Darstellung, wo jeder sieht sein oder ihr Beitrag dazu. Bei diesem Switch von der Ausformulierung auf der Umsetzung, muss man versuchen oder müsste man die Leute abholen. Somit sind man auch ohne große strategische und führungsmäßige Vorkenntnisse in der Lage, es umzusetzen.
2.-1.4. Lack of clarity about the existence of strategic projects	2.-1.2. Vorschlag: Beiträge der Leistung durch SP klären Aber ich glaube, das schafft man nur dadurch, dass jeder sieht sein oder ihr Beitrag in der Leistung . Und das fordert dann viel vom oberen und obersten Management, dass das Trickle-Down ist. Ganz wichtig. Ich bin froh, dass du das sagst. Das ist auch für mich ein wichtiger Punkt. Und wenn du mir leibst, gerade die erste Frage zu dem zu stellen, dass ich hier auch die Linie richtig habe. Eine Frage ist in your view, how does the current organization project management environment foster the execution of the strategic projects?
2.-1.5. Lack of clarity if	2.-1.3. Fehlende Klarheit das Vorhandensein der PM-Umgebung

Screenshot 2: Example of the aggregated statements of interview group III for 'Code 2-1, Embedment' (see Table 15 in the main text).

Categorisation based on key statements
1.-1.1. Origin Academic Manager
1.-1.2. Perception: PM with the processes in the organisation perceived as positive
1.-1.3. Difference between projects and strategic projects not clear
2.-1.1. Lack of clarity in the existing SML strategy
2.-1.1. Lack of clarity in the development of the strategy
2.-1.1. Lack of clarity on how the SML strategy will be implemented
2.-1.1. Lack of clarity as to what exactly the SML wants to achieve
2.-1.1. Proposal: questioning again strategy and strategic goals and make them transparent
2.-1.2. Proposal: Clarify contributions to performance through SP
2.-1.3. Lack of clarity of the presence of the PM environment
2.-1.4. Lack of clarity about the existence of strategic projects
2.-1.5. Lack of clarity if strategy is in connection with external financing and performance mandate with a focus on customers (students)
3.-1.1. Responsibility for strategic projects only with the staff
3.-1.2. Lack of clarity as to what exactly an SP is
4.-1.1. Lack of clarity about strategy and strategy alignment
4.-1.2. Lack of clarity in the consistency of the strategy hierarchies
4.-1.3. PM teaching material is recognised
4.-1.4. Organisational PM support is considered minimal
5.-1.1. Lack of clarity about strategy
5.-1.2. Lack of clarity regarding the contribution of projects to the strategy
5.-1.3. Lack of clarity of strategic alignment from SML to centre level
5.-1.4. OJP as objectives, but missing link to strategy and project
5.-1.5. On your own - support desirable
6.-1.1. Difficult to categorise OPM
6.-1.2. Awareness of SP present, but not exactly clear
6.-1.3. understanding of strategic alignment is key

Screenshot 3: Example of the aggregated findings of interview group III for “Code 2-1, Embedment” (see Table 15 in the main text).

Appendix (16): Key Principles in Research Ethics (author’s)

#	Ethical	Characteristics
1	Privacy and Anonymity	Protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants. Have the right to withdraw from the research.
2	Promises	Make appropriate promises to participants. Explain what the value is for them. Provide transparency in the aim and execution of the research.
3	Risk assessment	Explain to what extent participants would be put in danger and under stress. Ensure no harm.
4	Dignity	Respect people’s dignity at all times.
5	Confidentiality	Honour promises and keep research data confidential.
6	Informed consent	Clarify an appropriate formal consent.
7	Honesty and Transparency	Communicate with fairness, integrity, and transparency.
8	Data access and Storage	Ensure data access by the legitimate person and clarify the ownership of the data. Guarantee safe data storage.
9	Interest	Clarify affiliation, funding sources, and interest rights with respect to claims.
10	Misleading	Ensure no fraud or misleading through data and research findings.
11	Researcher health	Ensure that health is not affected during the research project.
12	Advice	Identify a confidant in case difficult ethical issues arise.
13	Culture, ethnicity and gender	Be aware of the national cultural values/beliefs, ethnicity, and gender.

Compiled from Grey (2004), Saunders et al. (2012) and Easterby-Smith (2013)

Appendix (17): Criteria for an HEI's Strategic Project (author's)

#	Criteria for an HEI's Strategic Project (SP)	
1	Fulfilment	SP is related to the company's strategic objective(s) and must fulfil it/them
2	Benefits	SP generates clear and visible benefits
3	Performance	SP aims to improve organisational performance
4	Criticalness	SP is seen as crucial for the organisation's survival
5	Impact	SP creates an impact on the organisation and/or triggers change(s)
6	Novelty	SP has a novelty level or factor (unique and not repetitive)
7	Resources	SP uses intensive resources
8	Opportunity costs	SP incurs internal opportunity costs (no external mandate)
9	Time / Pace	SP is time critical / has time constraints
10	Complexity	SP contains elements of structural, social and emergent complexity

Appendix (18): Overview of various PM guidelines and competence frameworks (author's)

Source	Elements	Topic area 1	Topic area 2	Topic area 3	Topic area 4	Topic area 5	Topic area 6	Topic area 7	Topic area 8	Topic area 9	Topic area 10	Topic area 11	Topic area 12
PM textbook	Project life cycles 4 phases MODeST Framework	D1: Define the project	D2: Designing the project process	D3: Deliver the project	D4: Develop the process								
		Mission	Organisation	Delivery	Stakeholders	Team							
IPMA Individual Competence Baseline v 4.0 - 2015 https://www.ipma.world/in/dividuals/standard/	29 elements	Perspective competences	People competences	Practice competences									
		5 elements	10 elements	14 elements									
GAPPS Guiding Framework for Project Controls v 0.02 - 2019 https://www.pmprofessionals.org/	79 elements	PC01: Appreciate the context for project control	PC02: Develop project control processes	PC03: Support development of integrated baseline	PC04: Implement control framework	PC05: Exercise professional and social responsibility	PC06: Manage the control team						
		10 elements	12 elements	16 elements	18 elements	10 elements	13 elements						
PMI PMBOK Guide Project Performance Domains 7th edition - 2021 https://www.pmi.org/pmbok-guide-	53 elements	Stakeholder Performance Domain	Team Performance Domain	Development Approach and Life Cycle Performance Domain	Planning Performance Domain	Project Work Performance Domain	Delivery Performance Domain	Measurement Performance Domain	Uncertainty Performance Domain				
		2 elements	6 elements	8 elements	10 elements	9 elements	5 elements	7 elements	6 elements				
APM Competence Framework 3rd edition - 2021 https://www.apm.org.uk/resources/industry-source/competence-	68 elements	1 - Life Cycle	2 - Governance arrangements	3 - Sustainability	4 - Financial management	5 - Business Case	6 - Portfolio shaping	7 - Procurement	8 - Reviews	9 - Assurance	10 - Capability development	11 - Transition management	12 - Benefits management
		5 elements	5 elements	5 elements	6 elements	5 elements	7 elements	7 elements	6 elements	5 elements	7 elements	7 elements	5 elements

Appendix (19): Proposed Audit Checklist for HEI's Project Managers (author's)

#	Profile	(Academic) Project Manager
0.0	Name	
0.1	Contact details	
0.2	Function / Title	
0.3	Department / Unit	
#	1- Institutional Framework and Organisational Conditions for Project Work	
1.1	Mastering complex challenges	What are the main challenges for the organisation from your point of view (3-5 points)?
1.2	Projectification as an emerging determinant	Is there a growing trend to carry out more projects at the organisation? If so, what types of projects can you observe?
1.3	Project Management at the organisation	How important is project management at your organisation?
1.4	Project management at the organisation	How well is project management being handled and how supportive are the project manager's framework conditions from your point of view?
1.5	Project management at the organisation	To what extent are the principles of PM aligned with the organisational requirements for the implementation of projects?
1.6	Project manager role	What are the main challenges for you as a project manager?
1.7	Project manager development	What kind of support do you receive from the organisation in your development as a project manager?
1.8	Academic Manager as project manager	What role do projects play in your work as an (academic) project manager?
1.9	Academic Manager as project manager	Which are the core competencies as an (academic) project manager?
1.10	Academic Manager as project manager	Is there a need for competencies improvement as an (academic) project manager?

#	2 - Preparation Phase	Aspects of Project Setting (Front-end loading / Conceptual Design)
2.1	Approach	A) Acquisition / triggering the project B) In the context of projectification
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.2	Justification and sensemaking	A) Drivers / reasons / rationale / background
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.3	Objectives and expected benefits per stakeholder	A) Intention to achieve and to impact B) Organisational contribution and embedment (strategy etc.)
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.4	Categorisation	A) Project type (scale, value, importance, urgency etc.) B) Project complexity (interaction and interdependency)
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.5	Main influence factors and constraints	A) Identification of crucial promoting or disturbing factors B) Main constraints
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.6	Organisational prerequisites	A) Required changes or adjustments: -> structural / technical / cultural / ethical / legal / facilities / personell
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.7	Lines of authority	A) Roles and responsible persons (responsibilities are confirmed) B) Project Structure (Steering Committee, involvement of other units etc.) C) Prescribed signing and approval authorities are fully understood, confirmed and applied D) Information required to control the project is defined, agreed and reviewed
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.8	Modelling and planning @ Way of scheduling (milestone, critical chain, WBS etc.)	A) Operating processes, breakdown structures and procedures are identified and confirmed B) Responsibilities for work packages are identified and confirmed C) Detail of deliverables and requirements for the overall project are verified
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.9	Principles, standards and regulations @ Way to following instructions	A) Principles and internal instructions B) Professional standards or norms
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.10	Finance and cost strategy @ Way of defining cost ceiling and funding	A) Cost and funding are integrated in the baseline establishment and defined
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	

2.11	Capability and resource strategy @ Way of managing capability, resources and buffers	A) Resource requirements are determined B) Limits of personal expertise are acknowledged C) Team roles and responsibilities are clarified, agreed, documented and communicated D) Performance criteria for each team member are clarified, negotiated and agreed
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.12	Stakeholder and communication strategy @ Way of approaching, managing and communicating with different stakeholders and their requirements	A) Stakeholders (understood and documented) are a) identified b) their expectations/interests c) their communication needs d) their strength of influence and e) the approach/influence to them B) Control requirements and of relevant stakeholders are understood and monitored C) Needs of a) communication b) formats c) frequencies are determined d) responsibilities for information provision are defined
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.13	Risk and uncertainty strategy @ Way of approaching risks and uncertainty	A) Uncertainty: Understanding of issues, events, paths to follow, or solutions to pursue B) Ambiguity: A state of being unclear, having difficulty in identifying the cause of events C) Complexity: A characteristic of a program or project or its environment that is difficult to manage due to human behaviour, system behavior, and ambiguity D) Risk: An uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or negative effect on one or more project objectives
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.14	Quality strategy @ Way of ensuring quality	A) Compliance with applicable industry standards is ensured B) Quality baselines are integrated C) Information is questioned for meaning, validity and reliability
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.15	Ethic strategy @ Way of ethic aspects	A) Values and ethics are defined and communicated B) Sensitivity to local cultural values, ethics and practices is demonstrated
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.16	Documentation and reporting strategy @ Way of preparing documenting and reporting	A) Information is stored, maintained, updated and utilised B) Reports content, formats and frequencies are determined C) Reports are issued in accordance with governance and control frameworks D) Approved response options are communicated and updated for implementation
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
2.17	Which are the core competencies in the preparation phase?	
2.18	Is there need for personal competencies improvement?	

#	3 - Execution Phase	Aspects of Project Practice, Process and Tools
3.1.	Time <i>Project Constraint and Process</i>	A) Original time targets B) Dealing with adjustments/changes C) Corresponding impacts of adjustments
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.2	Cost <i>Project Constraint and Process</i>	A) Original cost targets B) Dealing with adjustments/changes of budget and costs C) Corresponding impacts of adjustments
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.3	Capability and resources <i>Project Constraint and Process</i>	A) Original resource and buffer targets B) Dealing with adjustments/changes of resources and buffers C) Corresponding impacts of adjustments
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.4	Quality <i>Project Constraint and Process</i>	A) Original quality targets B) Dealing with adjustments/changes of quality requirements C) Corresponding impacts of adjustments
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.5	Safety and security <i>Project Constraint and Process</i>	A) Original safety and security targets B) Dealing with adjustments/changes of safety and security requirements C) Corresponding impacts of adjustments
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.6	Success/Failure identification <i>Project Constraint and Process</i>	A) Identification of ongoing insights
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.7	Internal documentation / Reporting <i>Project Constraint and Process</i>	@ Way of documenting and recording activities and occurrences (way of omission things)
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.8	External documentation / Reporting <i>Project Constraint and Process</i>	@ Way of reporting to stakeholders/management (e.g., frequency, volume, form) - Performance variances, trends and forecasts are analysed and conducted
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.9	Methods and techniques <i>Project Practice</i>	@ Way of applying appropriate project management methods
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.10	Tools and technology <i>Project Practice</i>	@ Way of applying technology and supporting tools
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.11	Support through codified knowledge <i>Project Practice</i>	@ Principles, handbook, guidelines, rules, process mappings etc. in formal systematic language
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.12	Support through tacit knowledge <i>Project Practice</i>	@ Way of instructing, supporting by experienced internal or external peers
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
3.13	Which are the core competencies in the execution phase?	
3.14	Is there need for personal competencies improvement?	

#	4 - Result and Control Phase	Aspects of Project Performance and Control
4.1	Control	A) Project and project control objectives are understood
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.2	Performance	A) Actual performance data is captured B) Impacts of change are analysed, approved and documented
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.3	Closing process	A) Per stakeholder
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.4	Handover	A) Handover to the customer/client
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.5	Achievement of objectives per stakeholder	A) Deviation target/actual B) Consequences in the event of a negative result
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.6	Effective output per stakeholder	A) Deviation target/actual B) Consequences in the event of a negative result
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.7	Effective outcome per stakeholder	A) Deviation target/actual B) Consequences in the event of a negative result
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.8	Effective benefits per stakeholder	A) Deviation target/actual B) Consequences in the event of a negative result
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.9	Out of scope results per stakeholder	A) Deviation target/actual expectations B) Consequences in the event of a negative result
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.10	Review evaluation	A) Lessons Learned B) Identification of mistakes / success factors C) Rethinking Process
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.11	Follow-up action	A) Improvements for future B) Changes for future
	Current situation	
	Need for improvement	
4.12	Which are the core competencies in the result and control phase?	
4.13	Is there need for personal competencies improvement?	

Conference Proceeding EurOMA2023 (peer-review)

Von: [EurOMA 2023 Organising Team](#)
An: [Graf Christian Olivier \(grac\)](#)
Cc: aqulla.yeong@ntu.ac.uk; j.israillidis@sheffield.ac.uk; graham.thomas@ntu.ac.uk
Betreff: EurOMA 2023 - notification letter
Datum: Dienstag, 21. Februar 2023 08:37:56

Dear Christian Olivier Graf,

The Scientific Committee of the EurOMA 2023 Conference (3-5 July 2023) has read your abstract with great interest.

Please find below the result of the evaluation:

CONTRIBUTION DETAILS

ID: 588

Title: The management of strategic projects within higher education institution – a case study of a business school

Decision of the Scientific Committee: Accepted

The Scientific Committee would like to thank you once again for submitting an abstract for the EurOMA 2023 Conference.

IMPORTANT: Please note that your submission will only be included in the conference program if:

(1) A full paper has been submitted by Wednesday, 19 April 2023.

- Papers submitted after the deadline will not be included in the conference program.
- If the authors of an accepted abstract do not submit a full paper, they will not be given the opportunity to present. Please, let us know as soon as possible if you do not intend to submit a full paper.
- All papers will be published in the proceedings book of the conference.
- The [Full Paper Template](#) and guidelines can be found [on the website](#).
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(2) The nominated presenting (co-)author registers and pays the registration fee for the conference by the author registration deadline of 30 April, 2023.

- Presentations of all unregistered presenters will be removed from the program after this date. This policy is meant to optimize the conference program and prevent empty sessions or speaking slots at the conference.
- In order to register your attendance for EurOMA 2023, please follow the [link](#).
- Note that the early bird rate is still applicable until 30 April, 2023.

Von: [EurOMA 2023 Organising Team](#)
An: [Graf Christian Olivier \(grac\)](#)
Betreff: EurOMA 2023 - Instructions for session chairs
Datum: Freitag, 23. Juni 2023 14:41:58

Dear Christian Olivier Graf

We are pleased to inform you that you were selected as **session chair of the following session(s)**:

Session "6.14. Project Management"

=====

Time : Wednesday, 05/July/2023: 11:00am - 12:30pm

Location: SW.02.05

https://www.conftool.pro/euroma2023/sessions.php?form_session=158

Since the start of the EurOMA conference is approaching, we would like to send you some **practical information regarding your task** as session chair.

Please read the instructions for session chairs carefully: [Instructions for chairs](#).

More information can also be found on the [conference website](#).

Thank you again for your collaboration to the success of the congress!

If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Your organisers of EurOMA 2023.

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2023 EurOMA Conference

3 - 5 July 2023

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The management of strategic projects within higher education institution – a case study of a business school

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Abstract

This paper addresses how strategy in higher education institutions (HEIs) is executed. As global forces impact the transformation of HEIs, their ability to survive depends on their strategic agendas. Although there is a wealth of literature on strategic management for such universities and colleges, little is known about their effective concept of strategy implementation. This conceptual paper aims to contribute to the current debate on whether the success of HEIs can be attributed to the execution form of strategic projects. A blueprint of an organisational strategising process is proposed which considers academic managers as key actors in the execution phase.

Keywords: strategic project management, business school, higher education institution

Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in the economic development of a country (Lane, 2012:3; Pinheiro and Pillay, 2016). The global higher education market continues to grow with a market size of roughly USD twenty billion and is expected to reach more than USD sixty billion over the next six years (Verified Market Research, 2021; IMARC, 2023). The move towards globalisation, digitalisation and ideologization offer enormous challenges to HEIs (Dameron and Duran, 2018; Callender et al., 2020). On the one hand, HEIs must be adaptable, flexible, modern, digital, global and receptive to the ongoing and brisk changes in the labour market and the global market economy (Posselt et al., 2019; Bouchrika, 2023). On the other hand, budget cuts and rising prices are affecting academia. As a result, academic institutions frequently need to make strategic choices to accomplish the necessary changes while managing financial constraints. There is also an increased competition faced by HEIs. For instance, private

providers in the field of custom learning and learning management systems are rapidly challenging them by providing own learning concepts and platforms (ELM Learning, 2022; eLearning Industry, 2023). Hence, the trend of emerging technologies will continue to change teaching, learning and collaboration (Pelletier et al., 2022).

To maintain its competitive advantages, HEIs need to strategically adapt its business processes to meet the industry service level and market requirements (Guillot and Mangematin, 2018; Mathies and Ferland, 2023:91), such as in the field of sustainability (Ramisio et al., 2019) or digital transformation (Hashim et al., 2022). Such changes might challenge their traditional organisational working environment to adapt a new way of working or new work content (Cassell, 2019; Ekstedt, 2019).

Project management (PM) has been advocated to lead, implement, and manage such business transformation towards achieving organisation's strategy (Kozak-Holland and Procter, 2019:110-111; Olivier and Schwella, 2018; Patanakul and Shenhar, 2012; Sabourin, 2015). This might be reflected in the growing trend of projectification and the increased emphasis on its alignment with organisation strategy (Jensen, 2016; Schoper et al., 2018). This strategic fit has also been explored through concepts such as organisational project management (OPM) (Müller et al., 2019).

However, various surveys and reports have indicated that the success rate of projects overall is still low (Audoin Consultants and Hays, 2015; KPMG, 2019; Chaos Report, 2022). Based on a survey conducted by PMI (2016) on more than 2'900 project managers, organisations worldwide waste an average of USD 122 million for every USD 1 billion spent on projects due to poor project management practices. However, little has been reported on the success rate of strategic projects. While research on strategy execution provides solutions either in the form of critical elements or success factors, attempt to arrive at an overarching framework is limited (Olivier and Schwella (2018). As PM research on HEIs is still nascent, the success rate of strategic projects in HEIs is still to be explored. There is also a lack of appropriate framework to support strategic projects in HEIs.

Research Aim and Objectives

Noticing the gap above, this research aims to understand the necessary enhancements in managing strategic projects for the fulfilment of HEI's strategic objectives and to identify ways and set interventions to solve emerging issues. To achieve this aim, the following research questions have been designed.

- RQ1: What role is assigned to a strategic project within the strategising process of HEIs?
- RQ2: What is the meaning of OPM in facilitating strategic project implementation?
- RQ3: What PM practices do academic managers adopt to handle challenges in strategic project work?
- RQ4: What are the most utilised PM competencies in successful strategic project delivery for an academic manager?

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. The literature will firstly focus on the strategic aspect of project: criteria of strategic projects and the strategic alignment. This is followed by the executional aspect: strategy execution framework, and methodologies/methods in PM. Research design/methodology, particularly the sampling strategy is highlighted before ending with the discussion on potential contribution of this research.

Criteria of Strategic Projects (SP)

A project is considered strategic if it is related to a company's strategic objectives, aims to improve performance and is therefore crucial for the organisation's survival. Strategic objectives are purpose statements defined by the business vision, and they set high-level goals

as support for an organisation achieving the desired outcome (Bora et al., 2017; Fuertes et al., 2020). This can be categorised according to financial, customer, internal processes, and people (learning and growth), which is often referred to as the Balanced Scorecard Concept (Fuertes et al., 2020). Patanakul and Shenhar (2012:7) define a project strategy as “*the project perspective, position, and guidelines for what to do and how to do it, to achieve the highest competitive advantage and the best value from the project*”. According to Martinsuo et al. (2020), strategic projects refer to single goal-oriented endeavours while strategic programmes are complex multi-project entities with several parallel or sequential efforts. The authors propose the following classification for strategic projects and programmes: (1) large-scale organisational change and transformation; (2) inter-organisational strategic projects and programmes, such as those that deal with mergers and acquisitions or other forms of inter-organisational relations; (3) new business ventures and radical innovations either within the organisation or through inter-organisational collaboration; and (4) major and megaprojects and alliances for creating new institutional or business infrastructures.

Based on the project typologies and their characteristics described above, the following criteria are proposed to identify strategic projects in HEIs. While they are ten criteria, it is proposed that the composition of each criterion defers in its significance according to the project types.

- (1) Fulfilment: SP is related to the company’s strategic objective(s) and must fulfil it/them;
- (2) Benefits: SP generates clear and visible benefits;
- (3) Performance: SP aims to improve organisational performance;
- (4) Criticalness: SP is seen as crucial for the organisation’s survival;
- (5) Impact: SP creates an impact on the organisation and/or triggers change(s);
- (6) Novelty: SP has a novelty level or factor (unique and not repetitive);
- (7) Resources: SP uses intensive resources;
- (8) Opportunity costs: SP incurs internal opportunity costs (no external mandate);
- (9) Time / Pace: SP is time critical / has time constraints;
- (10) Complexity: SP contains elements of structural, social and emergent complexity.

Strategic Project Alignment

While the importance of strategic PM is emphasised by scholars (Patanakul and Shenhar, 2012), the absent link between business strategy and PM strategy with its execution is noted (Aronson et al., 2013; Steinþórsson, 2014, p. 53). Van Der Waldt (2016) argues that project failure often occurs when organisations do not ensure that specific projects are aligned with their core strategies. He applies in his study the principles of interdisciplinarity, systems thinking and organisational integration. Scholars agree that in order to increase capabilities and success as well as minimising risk, the alignment of projects to strategy is favourable to organisations (Boston Consulting Group, 2016; Baptestone and Rabechini, 2018). In particular, risks such as unclear accountability, poor decision-making, slow response times, control issues and staff stress occur when working on unorganised bundles of projects (Steyn and Schnetler, 2015). The pursuit of the alignment is the process of reaching an agreement on strategic objectives, and during the pursuit, the procedure should be followed to complete the activities needed to meet those objectives (Van der Hooft and Whitty, 2017). Consequently, several aspects must be considered.

Scholars agree that the span from the strategic to operational level can be complex; this span also requires a level of communication, interpersonal, and negotiation skills (Baptestone and Rabechini, 2018). Marnewick (2018:27) contributes to the discussion that any kind of framework used to link strategy with projects is purposeless if a change in strategy is not communicated to those who are tasked with implementing the strategy through project activities. Furthermore, the author points out the issues many organisations have in deriving projects from business objectives due to an unstructured process. Mullaly (2014) notes that researchers share the view that the only way to improve alignment between strategy and

projects is to understand how decisions are made about and within project implementation. In doing so, the approach of best practices can provide help for the implementation and controlling of projects (Kerzner, 2014:23). Arguably, there are difficulties in integrating projects throughout the organisation when linked with weak governance for strategy implementation and poor communication. Some scholars therefore assert that careful pre-project planning can improve project strategic alignment and facilitate successful projects (Hoeger, 2013). However, governance, which includes monitoring and controlling projects within the alignment process, simultaneously has a meaningful impact on organisational performance (Bekker, 2014; Montes-Guerra et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that restraints occur in all phases of project execution and are related to time, cost, scope, quality, risks and resource availability (Parker et al., 2017). Lastly, Martinsuo (2013) emphasises that the behavioural and organisational viewpoints have received too little attention and should be considered for PPM success. Yet a universal framework for how projects are aligned to strategy (Young et al., 2012) and how a systematic approach should be developed is still absent (Srivannaboon, 2006; Atkins, 2019).

Strategy Execution Framework for HEIs

Strategising projects can be seen as a multi-level process which is reflected in *Figure 1* below.



Figure 1: Levels of Strategising Projects within HEIs (adapted from PMI, 2013:8)

The relationships between the levels according to strategy, project portfolio management and organisational processes are depicted in a pyramid format and mirror the alignment of the project delivery value with its strategic direction. The elements utilised to establish the organisation's performance goals and to construct the strategy are depicted at the top of the triangle under the headings "Vision", "Mission" and "Organisational Strategies and Objectives". The distinct efforts required to meet the organisation's performance goals are established in the triangle's centre, which includes "High-level Operations Planning and Management" and "Project Portfolio Planning and Management". The terms "Management of Ongoing Operations" and "Management of Authorized Programs and Projects" (found at the base of the triangle) refer to carrying out operational, programme, and project activities in order to achieve the organisation's performance goals. With the use of its portfolio of programmes and projects for the development and delivery of strategic business results, the organisational PM (OPM) synchronises the development of strategy with implementation as reflected in the last two levels of the pyramid (Bull et al., 2012). Based on this structure, the top-down process for strategic projects within HEIs will be illustrated and is shown to the right in *Figure 1*.

Methodologies and Methods in Managing Projects

Having explored the strategic aspect of project, this section attempts to explore the operational or execution aspect of projects by conducting a critical evaluation on the advantages and limitations of adopting a PM methodology, standards and methods. A PM methodology is defined as a set of methods, techniques, procedures, rules, templates and best practices used on a project (Špundak, 2014). According to Špundak (2014), it is typically based on a specific PM approach that outlines a set of principles and guidelines which define the way a project is managed. Currently, nearly 8,500 PM methodologies are estimated to have been proposed (Teamwork, 2022).

Numerous advantages and benefits are attributed to the application of traditional methodologies. For instance, the PM bodies APM, IPMA and PMI offer suitable approaches for larger complex projects (such as an overhaul or manufacturing) and agile methodologies/principles for IT projects such as scrum (Drob and Zichil, 2013; Jovanovic and Beric, 2018; McGrath and Whitty, 2020). In particular, the two PM associations: IPMA and PMI view themselves as practice-oriented providers of project implementation concepts, yet they differ in their approaches to the design of PM. With its “Project Management Body of Knowledge” (PMBOK), PMI (2022) follows a process-oriented approach which determines a precise procedure for the implementation of a project (Ruess and Voelpel, 2012; Abramov et al., 2015). These PM processes can be divided into five groups, namely initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and closing, in addition to the ten knowledge areas.

The IPMA (2022) approach has no process methodology; instead directs PM towards building project managers’ competencies in order to bring a project to completion with efficiency (Jovanovic and Beric, 2018). The IPMA “Individual Competence Baseline” (ICB) defines 29 competence elements (CEs), which are organised into three competence areas: “Perspective”, in which the CEs define the contextual competences that must be navigated within and across the broader environment; “Practice”, which consists of the CEs defining the technical aspects of PPP; and “people”, in which the CEs define the personal and interpersonal competences required to succeed in PPP (IPMA Standards, 2022).

Eberle et al. (2011) note that the two approaches of PMI and IPMA are compatible and can be integrated as they are not antagonists. This is an important insight for organisations that want to further develop their PM practices. However, opinions in the literature differ on the usefulness of PM methods, and scholars point out several shortcomings such as the methodologies being too abstract and high-level; ignoring the industry standards and best practices; lacking real integration into the business; and not considering the bureaucracy issues (Charvat, 2003:5; Dallasega et al., 2021). Similarly, Mir and Pinnington (2014) state that, despite the advancements in PM processes and tools, project success rates have not significantly improved. Furthermore, Pace (2019) concludes that PM methodology has a weak correlation with project success and this correlation is moderated by neither industry nor project manager experience.

In contrast, Joslin and Müller (2015) found in their study that the application of a PM methodology accounts for 22.3% of variation in project success. Overall, PM researchers as well as the PM associations attempt to mirror the rapidly evolving subjects in PM practice in their science contributions and proposed standard methodologies. Thus, the different methodologies can have an influence on the design of a company’s PM architecture, but only a few are publicly available. For instance, the PM manuals of NASA (2014) or the World Meteorological Organization (WMO, 2016) can be accessed and reveal elements such as rule-based procedures, similar to PMBOK. In Switzerland, for instance, the most important PM methodology for the government and the tendering of state contracts is HERMES (2022). In the Legislation Guide of the Federal Office of Justice (2019:44), the HERMES PM method is recommended for legislative projects; in the canton of Zurich, it is mandatory to use this method (Government Council of the Canton Zurich, 2017). This has an impact on the tendering process for all construction projects as the bidding construction companies must

deliver the project via HERMES (SITMAP, 2023) and they must train their employees specifically. The uniform application of the HERMES method aims to create a common understanding of the project among all project participants, which can lead to a reduction of failures. As Charvat states (2003, p. 6), project methodologies are only useful to companies when the tasks are appropriate and applicable.

Despite the diverse PM methodologies discussed in the literature and offered by various PM associations, adoption by HEIs has not been much reported. The discussion of a practical methodology in HEIs or even the development of a unified industry PM practice, as shown in the example of HERMES, is still modestly discussed by academics and professionals. The reason for this may be that the link between methodologies and success is not yet apparent to HEIs, which is in turn related to organisations' view on PM. Some scholars refer the projects-as-practice to the practice-based perspectives (Young, 2015; Song et al., 2022). This "practice-based examination" investigates the human actors, their actions and their behaviour. In contrast, the traditional "system-research examination" is mostly related to processes that can be mostly found in guidelines and handbooks. This is important because enterprises also have a different view and mindset of project deliverables, which is then reflected in their internal PM norms, standards and policies.

Chin and Spowage (2010) evaluate the methodologies by classifying them into five levels. This is adjutant for the representation of the different levels, although the authors give few examples of the levels. The first level is described as best practices, standards and guidelines such as PMBOK neglecting the organisational or sector-specific characteristics. It provides valuable sources of information for the development of a new PM methodology in an organisation. Level two refers to the sector of specific methodology as different industries require distinct variations in PM knowledge. Building on level one, sector-specific rules, regulations and best practices are added. In level three, the sector-specific methodology is adapted to meet the strategy, structure, nature of projects and needs of a specific organisation. An example of this is the Microsoft Solution Framework, a well-integrated methodology successfully designed and deployed by Microsoft. One of the few examples of HEIs is the University of Tasmania, which has introduced a consistent PM methodology for all university projects (University of Tasmania, 2023). At level four, the methodology should be scalable to cope with the nature and various project sizes within an organisation. Chin and Spowage (2010) stress that the key is to develop a methodology that is specifically made for the organisation and type of project, but is also dynamic, flexible and adaptive to facilitate easy tailoring to a given project. Lastly, level five describes the individualised methodology of a project, for instance stakeholder or specific deliverables. Although a sharp separation of the five levels in practical application is not further elaborated by the literature, it is helpful as a conceptual understanding for an organisation when introducing a self-developed methodology. This framework will therefore be considered in the case study. As the literature does not address whether a methodology can positively influence project success, the term "success" needs further clarification in the context of this study.

For this research, the "practice-based examination" is considered, with particular emphasis on academic managers. With reference to *Figure 1*, the aim of the proposed levels of strategising projects is to understand how strategy is executed by academic managers through projects. Therefore, six thematic topics are discussed in line with the PMI Framework in the context of HEIs' organisations.

Research Methodology/Design

To further explore the research questions, underpinned by the findings from literature review, a case study will be conducted on a business school, with particular focus on academic managers. Both primary and secondary data will be collected. Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, whereas secondary data consists of relevant archived organisation data. As there were no clear indications or documentary evidence regarding what

is understood as a strategic project in the case organisation, a sampling using multiple purposive technique will be used (Gray, 2022:239). This sampling strategy consists of three stages: (1) Purposive sampling, (2) Criterion sampling, (3) Chain sampling, will be adopted, as illustrated in *Figure 2*.

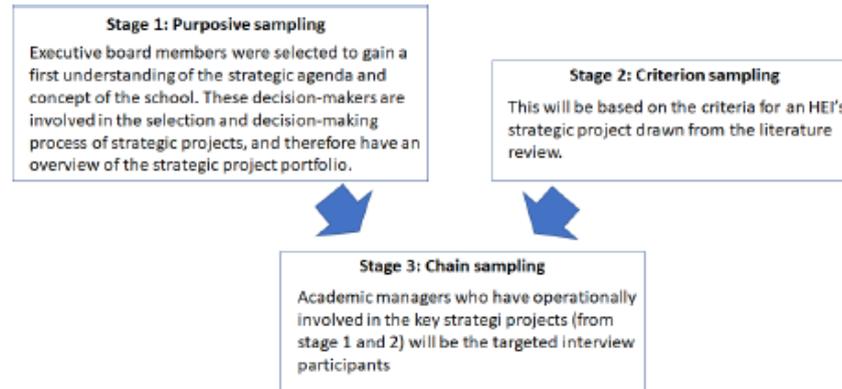


Figure 2: The three stages sampling strategy to be adopted in this research

Discussion/Contribution

Contribution to Project Management Comprehension in HEIs

In recent years, the PM literature has increasingly focused on industries beyond IT and construction and the assessment of organisational PM. But relatively few scholars are exploring PM in HEIs. This thesis seeks to clarify how PM is operationalised in HEIs. The use of empirical data will provide a better understanding of the PM context in that setting.

Contribution to HEIs' Project Strategic Alignment

PM theory examines the importance of projects to successfully implement strategic goals within an organisation. In the case of a business school, however, it is not clear how the link between strategic goals and operational implementation tasks is designed. This thesis will identify the different types of projects and their contribution to the strategic agenda. This is a further step towards developing a suitable strategic alignment concept for business schools.

Contribution of the Academic Manager as a Project Worker

Few scholars take the perspective of non-professional project managers to determine how they deal with the available PM system. Project managers in business schools are not to be considered generically as distinct professional types, but as individuals who, with their different personalities and behavioural patterns, influence the projects and the project landscape. This study attempts to create a new framework of PM working in a changing HEI landscape. The non-professional project worker is at the centre and is positioned as the key decision maker who interacts with organisational HEI systems.

Contribution to Research on PM Competencies in HEIs

PM literature and international PM associations identify a wide range of PM competencies. This thesis aims to create an understanding of the elements that make up a competence in the context of non-trained project workers. PM competencies are related to the behaviour of a person and express the transformation of the personal abilities and skills into the success of a project. Furthermore, the literature describes situation-specific competencies only for certain

industries. Accordingly, the identification of the necessary key competencies for an academic manager should broaden the discussion in the field of competence research. The thesis contributes additional findings on how systematic PM competence acquisition can be effectively organised in HEIs.

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