

Doctor of Business Administration Thesis

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

“How a private university manages leadership legacy during its first president succession planning”

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to understand how this private and non-profit higher education institution saw the relevance and impact of its first presidential succession, to then establish a succession model that could minimize the risk associated with this evolution beyond its owners and founding members. Groves (2007) declared that succession planning is *“a strategy employed by many organizations to be able to recruit and promote employees into leadership roles. This promotes retaining organizational memory, allows continuity in strategic direction, and reinforces organizational culture”*. In order to achieve the research objective, a participatory action methodology was utilized to generate qualitative data in the form of in-depth interviews, to then be analysed by an action team. At completion, this effort was responsible for the development of an integrated succession model for the institution, which included a mix of best practices from the literature using the data collected as the source to understand the specific context of this organisation. For this organisation, it was the first time this form of collaborative reflection took place to tackle such a complex problem, integrating information from private, small, non-profit, higher education types of organisations. Of particular note are the findings on the multiple parts and pieces that the organisation must institute, such as the need for a functional board of directors or the required alignment between middle and top management levels, not just to sail through the first presidential succession but also to set in place a structure that will provide long-term sustainability to the governance structure of the institution, beyond the lifetime of its founding members.

Declaration

I hereby certify that this Thesis constitutes my own work, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another. I declare that the Thesis describes original work that has not previously been presented for the award of any other degree of any institution.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Overview

The organisation at the centre of this research is a private non-profit higher education institution in Chile, which is among the first eight private institutions founded after the constitutional change of 1986, allowing private universities to enter the higher education sector in the country. Until then, the higher education industry was composed only of public and Catholic institutions; however, because of the desired boost to the economy and the demand for more skilled professionals, the government opened the door to this new alternative to increase the level of access for the population. The private institutions founded emerged from different backgrounds and ideals, including religious and private associations. Among this cluster, a specific group of people from the Ministry of Education with years of experience in the political and regulatory sides perceived an opportunity to realise their vision for higher education by founding their own institution. I currently serve as a vice-president of this university.

At its inception, this university was characterised by being a new institution focused on engineering and science, which was an anomaly for private universities because these were complex disciplines intensive in laboratories, something provided only by the traditional public and Catholic institutions. This robust attitude is an example of the institutional motto in the slogan *“for entrepreneurial spirits”*, something the founding members have preserved as part of the way to do business in this sector. Now, after over 30 years, the institution has grown into one of the most prestigious private universities in the country, with over twenty-two thousand students, three thousand employees, one thousand faculty members, forty-seven undergraduate degrees, forty graduate programs, six doctoral degrees and eighteen research centres in its twelve campuses. Institutional growth and reputation are expressed in its national and international accreditations, including over 350 international collaboration agreements and student exchange agreements. It is undeniable how this concept of an institution has evolved into a well-established and sophisticated higher education institution.

The founding members have been involved in the day to day operations since its inception— one of them as the acting president, and the other assuming different roles, including that of the vice-president of finance and administration, vice-president of development, and now as comptroller. The comptroller at this university is a function that oversees the operation and the compliance of internal and external policies and regulations. This person reports directly to the board of directors. Both founding members are approaching their retirement, and the organisation needs to question itself on how, when, and who should take over as the next president and top leader, what the founders would like to leave behind as their legacy, and what the organisation expects from the next leader: in other words, answer the question, **“How a private university manages Leadership Legacy during its first president succession planning.”**

1.2. Research Aims and Objectives

The action research goal is to co-develop a succession model that can minimise the possible negative impact of this first presidential succession while helping the organisation prepare itself to move into another phase of development beyond this succession. Through this research, the organisation will gain a better understanding of the precise questions needed to be asked and answered, missing protocols and structures, and the relevance of the context in using and adjusting best practices for this specific scenario. Meanwhile, as the research is performed, I will demonstrate my academic-practitioner research skills, providing the translation of the findings into applicable new knowledge for the benefit of this organisation.

Some questions that this research will attempt to answer are as follow:

1. What is the leadership legacy the founders wish to leave behind?
2. What is the current leadership model of the university?
3. Based on outside experiences reviewed from the literature, what are the recommendations about leadership models, structures and policies to establish an institutional succession model for the university?
4. What would be an effective process allowing the university to select its new leaders?

The proposed research aims to define a succession model of leadership that will adhere to the university founder's leadership values while simultaneously confronting the current and future challenges of the higher education system in Chile. For the purpose of this research Groves (2007) will be used as the working definition for succession planning "*a strategy employed by many organizations to be able to recruit and promote employees into leadership roles. This promotes retaining organizational memory, allows continuity in strategic direction, and reinforces organizational culture*". The research objective will be actionable and, therefore, part of the research process will be to define the implementation plan for this research-practitioner process. Ontologically, this research assumes relativism as its framework of action by embracing the possibility of different realities as described by different observers. These realities are the consequence of these observers' previous and current experiences, including those of the founding members and the current leaders in the different areas of the institution (Munn-Giddings & Winter, 2001).

From an epistemological perspective, I will consider the different views of reality and the social construct, as I strive to understand and define the rules distinguishing the organisational leadership in this institution from others in the Chilean higher education industry. By taking this position, I will explore the founders' subjective perspectives, the board, directors, middle managers, and staff members to describe their experiences in this community we call a university.

In following the social constructionist approach, I will be deeply involved in the research and, at the same time, be part of the system that will be studied. I must maintain awareness of this fact throughout the research to avoid possible biases. As stated above, this research aims to produce a transformational pathway the university can follow as it moves beyond the current leadership conditions of a founder-led organisation and transforms into an institution whose leadership model will empower it to confront change in the mid and long term.

The literature review is focused on the different succession perspectives, concentrating on the characteristics of this specific organisation. The thesis will explore the literature about succession for small businesses, private-owned companies, non-profits and universities, among

many other kinds of corporate structures. This review will provide insights into how others have managed successions, what other issues they have encountered in the process, and which best practices are applicable in this university's context.

1.3. Thesis Structure

This action research thesis included action cycles and reflection regarding all the insights and learning that occurred in the research process. During this highly reflective process of learning, the researcher will first have to understand from the theory the value and relevance of succession planning and the multiple alternatives and approaches depending on the context of the organisation, focusing on examples from literature that could serve as an excellent model for this specific organisation. The next step in the process is defining the methodology, thereby allowing the researcher to gain and generate practical insights for the university. The information generated through interviews and additional methods will be analysed and reflected upon as the initial data to be used by the action team in the following phase. The cycles of action performed will allow a deep reflection on how the literature, the data collected and the context inform the team while proposing a succession model for this institution. Finally, the researcher will reflect on his own experience, the organisation process and its readiness to move into action.

In summary, the thesis structure is as follows:

1. Introduction: This chapter introduces the issue explored, how it is addressed, and what is expected of the rest of the thesis.

2. Literature Review: The focus will be on the literature, comparing authors and ideas across different approaches to the succession process.

3. Methodology: This chapter explains the research methodology, including how it was performed and how the data was produced.

4. Interview Results and Findings: Here, the researcher will gain a direct insight into the issue in the form of in-depth interviews from a selected group of participants.

5. Cycles of Action and Reflection: Using the collected data and the literature, a subgroup of participants will engage in a deep reflection, as an action team, about the alternatives and approaches for presidential succession in this institution.

6. Conclusions, Organisation and Personal Reflection: Finally, the organisation, the team and the researcher will reflect on the research, the process and the outcomes of this action research, making recommendations for future steps.

Examples of the findings achieved as outcomes of the research are as follows:

- Established the key attributes that make this situation unique, including the ownership of founding members in a non-profit organisation with a highly regulated environment.
- Discovered the relevance of both founding members and their shared agreement in the institutional definition of a presidential succession, and the importance of and differences between their vision of legacy.
- Defined the structures and policies that need to be in place to assure continuity and support to establish a succession model.
- Declared the need to connect middle and top managements and to build up a pool of candidates and a pipeline for future successions.
- Understood the importance of timing in when the succession should materialise since the institution exists in a context where external factors could affect its sustainability.
- Introduced the action research methodology into the organisation, with the support of upper management, which was successfully accepted by the team and other relevant stakeholders as a suitable approach for analysing complex issues in the institution.
- Developed a succession model that considers all previous findings and outcomes to enable the organisation to propel into a new stage of development beyond the direct management of its founding members. Meanwhile, it maintains the vital attributes of the current culture and its legacy.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

The chapter will provide a deep understanding of how and why the literature review allows the establishment of a proper framework to engage in this action research thesis, always keeping in mind the practical applications that this research should offer for the organisation's specific need and context. Since the researcher serves as the vice-president, his role allows him to approach several top management positions to derive insight into how they affect and are affected by this research topic. This advantage should allow him to implement the results of this research in terms of policies and procedures to ensure a sustainable model of value for the university's long-term vision.

The research is trying to tackle the complexity behind the first change of principal leadership at a private non-profit university, an institution led by its founding members in the last thirty years, with a stable, exceptional leadership team. This Chilean private higher education institution was established after a constitutional amendment in 1986, which allowed private institutions to enter the sector under the condition of only being non-profit organisations. This kind of corporate structure is a fundamental characteristic of the Chilean educational system and is relevant to this research.

The search for new top leadership at the university is a consequence of internal and external factors, one of them being the senior leaders and founding members' current retirement phase. Examples of these factors are the new requirements confronting modern educational models' needs and the pressure from the government and social forces to have an explicitly meritocratic model to define the leadership structure of this private but socially oriented institution (Simbürger & Donoso, 2020). However, during the succession of some vice-presidents and director-level executives, the institution has experienced several failures to introduce new leaders. This failure has been a source of additional distress for the organisation, an updating process that started almost four years ago but still seems unsettled. This research focuses on the complexity behind the first presidential renewal, a transition expected to be a

more convoluted issue than a VPs or directors' succession. The current president is not just the top leader with managerial and political attributions but also a founding member, board member, and the only president (*i.e. rector*) that the institution has ever had. All these elements should be considered part of the context when the issue is analysed and compared against previous research around similar subjects.

The regulatory environment in the higher education sector has also changed dramatically in the last decade, transforming the model of how students access and finance their education, generating more public pressure for transparency from the universities and their leadership teams. These developments have increased the personal fiduciary responsibilities of the top management team. This stringent approach towards the upper management is a reaction to the sector's opening to public scrutiny, questioning how aligned and truthful each institution is to its vision and value proposition and how the universities utilise their resources to achieve their purposes and value declarations. Whoever assumes a top leadership role at a Chilean University must have a clear understanding of this public responsibility and the personal impact that the role brings with it, at many times beyond the scope of the duties in their job description.

This brief description provides only a first glimpse of the predominant characteristics of the complex issue tackled through this research, which aims to establish a model of succession planning focused on the first president's succession. The designed succession model could successfully allow this institution to transition to a more mature and stable model of management for its future. This research's applicable outcomes could translate into many forms of action research, engaging in cycles of reflection and allowing the university to confront this uncertainty through a constant cycle of learning and adapting.

By analysing this issue through the lens of the available literature, we can diversify the search into many different causes and at least as many different possible outcomes. This literature research provides a broad spectrum of alternatives and approaches to this leadership transition, all framed under the theme of succession planning. Exploring this issue from a practitioner's perspective allows us to define insights and inputs relevant to understanding the

context and identifying pertinent information sources for study. For example, an attribute relevant to this organisation is the founding members' history and aspirations for the future. These characteristics are infused in the institutional culture. The analysis should also include the internal perspective beyond the founding members' to uncover how decisions are made in this institution and for understanding the leaders' aspirations regarding leadership succession. This chapter will focus on scouring literature to provide a broad spectrum of knowledge about the subject of the study. The researcher will use this information to understand the current situation and the future desired phase for succession. Meanwhile, as the researcher reviews the literature, he should keep in mind the importance of the institution's collective truth and the requirements of this industry. The literature will provide a voice to what other researchers have defined as effective practices that could increase the possibility of success for this institution to ensure a smooth leadership transition and minimise possible risks for the organisation.

The literature review search included keywords that represent some attributes relevant to the complexity to be tackled. The keywords "legacy", "small business", "university", "college", "non-profit", "higher education", "leadership", "executives", "professional development" and "family-owned enterprises" are concepts connected with this organisation and its context. These concepts were also linked with the main subject of succession planning through the use of an additive term of search approach. The search was performed through the University of Liverpool Online Library, which collects information from all databases and e-resources available at the university. To narrow the search to useful, valid and current literature, filters of full text online, academic journals and publications dated from 2015 and onwards were used as initial parameters to select the most current and applicable literature. The review of each article included a broad perspective about the issue itself, progressing from the more general definitions around succession planning to selecting and analysing in detail the most appropriate and relevant sources of information. If the article had an additional reference beyond these search parameters and filters, and if it was considered suitable for the research, it was examined and included as part of this literature review. The search included classics and an ample spectrum of literature on the subject of succession planning and related topics to have

relevant documentation about the issue's multiple perspectives. The literature is contrasted in this chapter to build an overall opinion about the subject.

The chapter will subsequently discuss the findings of this literature review process; first, the concept of succession planning is described. Then, more specific applications based on this organisation's characteristics and the findings on the review will be reviewed, explaining and discussing these perspectives on the same topic, to then conclude with the generation of an opinion of its implications for this specific case study.

2.2 Understanding the Value of Succession Planning

Succession planning is a universal organisational process that can have different definitions depending on the author or the approach to be applied (Ostrowski, 1968; Grusky, 1960). Substantial variations can be found based on how the author and the researched organisation understand the principles of succession and how extensive its application could be across the vertical and horizontal levels of the organisation (Grusky, 1960; Ostrowski, 1968). The relevance of succession planning could be linked to the organisations' capacity to accomplish its long-term mission and objectives by transferring values and beliefs between current and future management (Ingoranelli, Dennis, & Schamberger, 2009). For the researched organisation, succession planning could be considered the next phase of development, as it was established over 30 years ago, and the founding members are in the retirement phase.

Observing the broad aspects of the literature around succession planning, authors such as Polk and Ballaro (2018), for example, make a clear statement about the relevance of succession planning as a need for organisations if they want to achieve long-term goals. This perspective of succession planning sees it as a model to develop internal talent through career development, a path on how to guide potential candidates to assume leadership positions and a relevant topic when the long-term viability of the organisation is the objective (Polk & Ballaro, 2018). The level of uncertainty and risk that the organisation must confront by generating these leadership nodes is correlated to how prepared the structure and the employees are to engage in current and future leadership roles (Adler, 2019). The development of these internal capacities could be challenging; the organisation is missing an established model to set this development course

(Adler, 2019). This model should be adequately communicated to gain internal support from employees who would like to chart that career path (Leland, Carman, & Swartz, 2012).

One specific model for succession proposed by Kesner and Seborá (1994) is planned from a top-to-bottom perspective. The authors discussed the importance of executive succession and the method of discovering possible sources of contingencies in the form of antecedents, events and consequences and recommend that these variables should be considered during a CEO succession (Kesner & Seborá, 1994). This model focuses on developing a succession approach built from the foundations and strongly correlated to the desire to fill up top management positions soon. They also denote the difference between CEO succession and any other kind of succession process since its complexity and impact are higher for the organisation (Kesner & Seborá, 1994). The CEO or president's role could be described as "*idiosyncratic, nonroutine, and unstructured*", which many times is combined with a board that will have a say in the final decisions (Kesner & Seborá, 1994, p. 329). A board composed of outsider directors that meets only a couple of times per year may be disconnected from the management needs of the organisation (Masli, Sherwood, & Srivastava, 2018). The relation between the organisation's need and the match with the right successor should consider variables such as the leader's qualities, shared interests between the leader and the organisation members and established patterns of authority (Grusky, 1960). The top leaders at this university are vital cogs in the organisation's decision-making wheel, sharing leadership through non-written agreements between them, a model that allows them a strong supervision over the operation.

After 30 years in business, no defined succession plan or mentoring model has been established for any leadership role at the researched institution. This lack of a defined model does not mean that successions do not occur; however, by not having defined paths and methodologies, the organisation faces an increased risk of failure during any transition, according to the relevant literature. Leadership succession should be a natural process for an established organisation, as it is expected that companies that can manage change should outlast their founders, owners or leaders (de Geus, 1998; Grusky, 1960; Ostrowski, 1968). Succession could be a traumatic process if it is not well-organised on time and in form, even if corporate longevity is the desired outcome (Davis, 2014). The President/CEO succession usually relies on

the board of directors (Hass & Pryor, 2005). The researched university has a board with two operational problems: (1) this governance unit meets only once a month to discuss very high-level topics so their actual knowledge about the university is minimal and (2) the founding members are also members of the board and active participants in the operation. However, it is important to acknowledge that the institution has been successful all these years even with this board structure, contradicting Hass and Pryor's (2015) statement regarding the board's relevance in the overall decision-making process and its deep contribution to the organisation.

2.2.1 A Strategic Decision

When thinking about succession planning, it is important to consider the whole spectrum of organisations and possibilities where this approach is useful, including family-owned, public and private companies that are entities planned to last beyond the current leadership structure (Peters-Hawkins, Reed, & Kingsberry, 2018). This means that there could be a variety of reasons for having a succession planning model (Peters-Hawkins, Reed, & Kingsberry, 2018).

Simultaneously, the final decision should consider the positive and negative implications that succession and the selection of the successor could have for the organisation (Peters-Hawkins, Reed, & Kingsberry, 2018). Many organisations fail to project the succession transitions (Peters-Hawkins, Reed, & Kingsberry, 2018).

Ip and Jacobs (2006, p. 327) described succession planning as a *“process through which companies plan for the future transfer of ownership and/or top management”*, where the model should contemplate several variables such as legal, financial, tax or physiological considerations about the person who should enter the organisation through this particular track. The right person for the job is much more than individual skills, knowledge, experience or performance, as the organisation must decide what is its best long-term strategy and objectives (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Ip & Jacobs, 2006). Succession planning also acts as a strategic tool to retain the talent that will be prepared to lead one day (Ali & Mehreen, 2019). There are additional considerations in the succession process, which could be highly subjective or dependent on the specific company's context (Ip & Jacobs, 2006). This additional aspect must be understood before the organisation moves into a selection process from a shortlist of

candidates because top management succession should be about not just the role and job description (Ip & Jacobs, 2006) but also a strategic decision.

Succession planning becomes an important strategic decision as it is strongly associated with the possibility of achieving the long-term goals defined by the organisation (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Peters-Hawkins, Reed, & Kingsberry, 2018). The vital importance of succession planning becomes even more evident since these future leaders' selections could be beyond the defined or required skills and professional experience in the field (Schell, de Groote, Moog, & Hack, 2019). Many attributes come into play in the decision process of who will assume a leadership role, and this decision becomes critical if the succession is for the top manager's post at the organisation (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Peters-Hawkins, Reed, & Kingsberry, 2018). These arguments are relevant in the context of this research as presidents in Chilean universities are individuals who have a social impact on society by exercising influence over public and private entities (Maldonado, 2015).

2.2.2 Competitive Effects of a Planned Succession Process

When an organisation plans the succession of a top leader, one of its core attributes for sustainable competitiveness, such as strong leadership, could be altered into an undesirable increase in its level of risk. From the theory of strategic management, a company's strategy is optimally deployed when its capacities and resources are aligned to the desired path to compete (Ferreira & Fernandes, 2017). From this point of view, resources can be acquired or purchased; however, capabilities are built over time (Freedman, 2012). At the centre of the organisational capacities is the alignment of human resources to conform to the strategic needs of the organisation (Ferreira & Fernandes, 2017). When this argument is harmonized with the concept of succession planning, it provides a deeper understanding of the possible negative implication that a poorly designed process of succession could cause to the long-term sustainability of the organisation (Ferreira & Fernandes, 2017; Fulmer & Conger, 2004). When a succession process lacks concordance with the vision, it could hamper an organisation's performance (Fulmer & Conger, 2004).

Research by the Department of Finance of NEOMA Business School at France provides insights about this connection between succession and performances, as it was able to establish a positive correlation between accounting performance, higher long-term stock returns and lower volatility, based on how the CEOs of several organisations were elected and how smooth their succession process was (Tao & Zhao, 2018). These are all general measures of good corporate performance linked with succession, the desirable outcomes of a top management-planned succession (Smith, 2015). The research by Tao and Zhao (2018) was also able to denote how the membership of the board becomes relevant but is not a final characteristic to be a candidate for promotion. Among all C-level executives, Tao and Zhao (2018) established how the chief financial officer (CFO) has the lowest probability in the sample to attain a possible promotion as it has tended to have a narrower perspective about the organisation's operations and performance. From the other C-level candidates, it seems that the COO could be the most suitable alternative based on extensive experience in operations. The turnover decision of who should lead, is also timing-related, as it will depend on when the selection of an internal or external agent as the possible successor will happen (Tao & Zhao, 2018). For a for-profit organisation, the relevance of the board in the final decision for CEO succession is dependent on the impact of economic returns for the board itself, manifested through the willingness to pay high-scale salaries based on the expected financial performance of the company (Jalal & Prezas, 2012).

2.2.3 Succession versus Replacement

It is essential to establish the difference between *Succession Planning* and *Replacement Planning*. Succession planning is a model set in place by the organisation as a measure to promote internal and external individuals to acquire new positions in the organisation when someone leaves, dies or is disabled from continuing in the job (Dalton & Kesner, 1983). This succession is a long-term commitment where the successor invests the required knowledge, skills, performance, and objective and subjective characteristics to manage the job, always concentrating on the future of the organisation (Dalton & Kesner, 1983). The successor designate has the implicit mission of maintaining the long-term continuity of the organisation's vision until succession is needed (Dalton & Kesner, 1983; Grusky, 1960; Ostrowski, 1968).

A different situation arises when the organisation must perform a replacement as the reaction to an emergency, conceived only as a backup (Rothwell, 2011; Burdett, 1993). The main difference between *Replacement* and *Succession* is in how the first model focuses on identifying who could take the job in case of an emergency, and how the second alternative contemplates the development of the talent who could assume roles or levels in the hierarchy more than any specific position (Rothwell, 2011; Burdett, 1993). This difference should be considered during the process of design for the institutional model succession to be implemented because both policies are relevant and complementary to the continuity of the organisation to have a complete overview of the possible challenges during the transition to a new leadership (Rothwell, 2011; Burdett, 1993; Freedman, 2012). Over time, the organisation should develop a plan that lays out both needs, defining these critical roles where backups are needed and the essential leadership roles from which the future organisation will evolve (Freedman, 2012).

The focus of this research is succession planning since the purpose is linked with a defined succession that should happen soon. Succession planning can be described as an instrument to support continuing adaptability and change, allowing to confirm not just the relevance and differences between replacement and succession but also, most importantly, its relevance for the long-term viability of the organisation (Rothwell, 2011; Burdett, 1993; Freedman, 2012; Grusky, 1960; Ostrowski, 1968). The objective of this research is to avoid an unwanted replacement just on account of not taking advance measures. It would be interesting to discover the reason behind this lack of procedures and protocols for replacement and succession. It could perhaps be attributed to either the founding members' tendency to remain in control even if they are aware of the consequent damage to the organisation or managerial negligence.

Section Discussion: Understanding the Value of Succession Planning

The researched university is a private organisation involved in a competitive industry in Chile (Fleet & Guzman-Concha, 2016). From the findings in the literature, the organisation should be concerned about how succession planning could be the cause of variations that could negatively affect its strategic position and competitive advantage in the market. The university

has a particular cultural understanding of how everything is articulated to accomplish the ultimate purpose of the organisation and, by changing a leadership role, there is a possibility of disrupting this attribute of differentiation and character that has allowed the organisation to be recognised in the market and preferred by some sectors. A well-planned succession model could be an alternative to enable internal candidates to build a path to promotion and, through it, maintain a certain level of internal stability, reducing the impact on the market recognition perspective (Freedman, 2012). However, today there is no established model to support this process or other risk management models as a replacement. The institution lacks training and development for the middle and lower leadership layers to enable them to become possible future successors. The literature also acknowledges how, initially, the absence of succession processes could be a probable reason for an external candidate being considered a feasible alternative; however, the impact on competitiveness is a reason why organisations tend to increase the effort towards an internal promotion. For this organisation, which has been managed by its founding members for the last 30 years, this characteristic has become a source of risk since both are in their retirement phase, and this succession proposal will, above all, try to avoid an undesirable urgent replacement.

Literature findings highlight that succession planning becomes a strategic decision not just because it could be a source of operational risk but also because this specific succession involves the retiring CEO in an organisation that has never experienced or planned for such a complex change of authority (Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Peters-Hawkins, Reed, & Kingsberry, 2018). Factors such as timing, structure, financial resources and preparation are relevant when defining a succession model (Tao & Zhao, 2018; Jalal & Prezas, 2012). The clock is ticking for the university, and a plan must be established before it becomes a matter of urgency and just an action to be taken arbitrarily.

2.3 Succession Planning and Leadership Development

When succession planning is discussed or searched through academic engines, different keywords show up as highly interconnected to the subject; however, leadership resounds as one of the most relevant topics to be included in the analysis. Succession planning most often

refers to the development of internal leaders through an established career development model (Gothard & Austin, 2013). The research has to address succession planning by building a leadership pipeline from the perspective of the top management roles, which could be defined as people whose decisions have a substantial impact on the organisation's future (Shirey, 2008). This hierarchical pyramid should include our current president who has led the organisation since the beginning and, in an initial phase, could also include the vice-president level of hierarchy based on the impact of the role and succession in the organisation.

2.3.1. Mentoring and Middle Management

In the literature, some authors have researched the interdependency of these two elements of leadership and succession planning, highlighting how companies lack possible candidates in the middle management structure, as the top management spends little to no time generating future candidates to assume future leadership roles (Groves, 2007). The missing link between the leadership role and the pipeline to develop future leaders is the result of universal resistance to generating a possible next rival (Groves, 2007). Research was undertaken by Conger and Fulmer (2003) to identify how the integration of leadership and career development can effectively overcome this challenge and generate a pool of possible candidates. Leadership development could include all the traditional methods of development such as training, specialised assessment, consulting and coaching (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Freedman, 2012). This training should involve mentoring for the development of the appropriate leadership skills to assume a future role at each organisation (Leland, Carman, & Swartz, 2012). Mentoring from managers for their direct reporting employees should be recognised as an essential duty (Leland, Carman, & Swartz, 2012). This direct transfer of knowledge could be one of the most meaningful experiences to be presented as a clear example of integration between succession and leadership development (Hall-Ellis, 2015).

Meanwhile, the manager also detects talent among the employees, a robust leadership development that integrates mentoring into its design is a program to provide a pipeline of future organisational leaders that can act upon and understand the organisation's way of doing things (Griffith, Baur, & Buckley, 2019; Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Freedman, 2012). This

integration reduces the possibility of negative impacts during a transition period, assuring a smooth process (Griffith, Baur, & Buckley, 2019).

2.3.2 Career Development in Higher Education

Leadership development and succession planning both contribute to overcoming skills and knowledge gaps that need to be filled for the needs of future roles and the organisation itself (Farthing, 2013; Hall-Ellis, 2015). This plan should include potential areas of development most suitable for them, linked with the strategic vision of the organisation, to develop skills based on the current and the future needs when these new leaders accept the top management roles (Farthing, 2013; Hall-Ellis, 2015). This pathway seems to be pertinent when the plan of career development is in place, and the organisation has a clear path for each position and role, which is far from the current condition at the university (Farthing, 2013). Now, this leadership development could take different forms depending on the maturity of each organisation, the context, and its evolution (Hall & Rowland, 2016). The definition of the best path for leadership succession is not simple (Clutterbuck, 1998). If there is an internal or external succession process, the selected person must exhibit some level of understanding of the organisation's culture and values to minimise the possible risk of starting to innovate with an intent to a fast-track organisational transformation.

When leadership and succession planning are addressed from the perspective of the educational industry, the model shares characteristics similar to a general business perspective (Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018). However, the authors declared how relevant it becomes for this kind of organisation to invest in leadership to execute a succession planning process and for talent retention (Rodhes, Brundrett, & Nevill, 2008; Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018). This declaration seems to be obvious, but the higher education industry has not set succession planning as a standard for its managerial roles, and the planning tends to be performed just as a reaction to an eventuality (Lovett, 2017; Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018). Even when a relevant attribute of an educational institution is the quality of its teaching, leadership becomes a vital aspect supporting this long-term vision beyond the lifespan of its leaders (Lovett, 2017; Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018). However, an established academic department in Chilean

universities, private and public, is usually governed by a model where every managerial role is allotted a specific duration, after which an election process determines who should assume that role (Zamorano-Ponce, 2008). Meanwhile, the previous academic manager reverts to a full-time academic responsibility in the department (Zamorano-Ponce, 2008). Some variations can be found in other countries (McMurray, et al., 2012), which makes the context and local academic culture relevant. The researched university is currently setting the basis for this kind of academic structure of management only at the department level, to build a model for managerial appointment based on academic merit and performance. However, it could still be an initial step in the incorporation of succession planning into the institutions' management model.

When leadership is aligned with succession planning, an integrated model of career development should be designed accordingly to achieve this objective (Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018; Rodhes, Brundrett, & Nevill, 2008). Even if this is an integrated model, the variable of career development does not imply an effective transition into a new role (Ishak & Kamil, 2016). This combined approach points to the generation of a constant pool of possible candidates who can assume future leadership roles; meanwhile, they also understand the mores and needs of the organisation (Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018; Rodhes, Brundrett, & Nevill, 2008; Ishak & Kamil, 2016). This approach could potentially help form an optimal succession planning model, which may not be appropriate to tackle the current and urgent contingency of the university. However, this pressure could be the opportunity to cultivate the roots of a structured model to promote a culture of career development aligned with leadership expectations.

Section Discussion: Succession Planning and Leadership Development

Many experts agree about the value of generating a succession plan, which is integrated with a career development plan in this tripartite arrangement that includes leadership as a sustainable model to internally create the skills and capacities to assume future roles of leadership in the organisation (Farthing, 2013; Freedman, 2012; Griffith, Baur, & Buckley, 2019; Hall-Ellis S. D., 2015; Farthing, 2013). This internal development approach could be the source of a circular

error as the organisation lacks an outside perspective and experience, and with that, miss the opportunity to innovate and change by transfusing fresh blood in the leadership structure (Liang, 2016). When succession is decided, it is more than just who will assume a future role, but the main question behind it is regarding the needs of the organisation to move into its next phase and the kind of leadership needed to reach that desired stage.

Since the institution does not have a well-established model for leadership development to boost middle management into the top layers of control of the organisation, this issue becomes an additional point of concern since the implementation of such a model requires time to mature. This leadership perspective also opens the question of how much informal mentoring has been done by the top-leaders, which could be accounted as direct training for succession planning purposes, even if it is not a systematic model. The recent academic hierarchy and this democratic approach to the appointment of faculty, including their institutional rank, could be of service in the development of future succession structures and protocols. The research must try to investigate if any formal or informal mentoring has been performed, from where to gather possible candidates for succession or at least the experience to be included in the succession model to be developed.

2.4 Succession Planning for Large, Small, Family-Owned Businesses

Managers need to understand that succession planning is not just essential but also strategic for an organisation (Ferreira & Fernandes, 2017). Since succession could have a distinguishable bottom-line impact, it is important to question how different its application and implications could be depending on the attributes of the organisations themselves (Petrova, 2015).

Depending on their organisational structure and goals, an organisation could make very different decisions and with different approaches (Petrova, 2015). The researched university is a large non-profit organisation, with a close and small business structure of leadership. The literature review now will focus on how organisations with these characteristics engage in succession planning.

2.4.1 Large Businesses

Practitioners who have developed many succession planning models for large enterprises declared how a succession planning structure should bear in mind the succession, progression and development of the workforce, which is also a continuous cycle to assure the quality of the model set in place (Sobol, Harkins, & Conley, 2008). Their observation points towards a structured model to manage succession planning, a model directing the employees into how the organisation promotes the development of internal leaders and projects them onto its long-term vision (Sobol, Harkins, & Conley, 2008). The succession model also acts as a source to generate a constant pool of possible candidates from where the organisation could pick leadership to renew, change, adapt and evolve (Journal of Sport Management, 1995). Friedman (1986) studied the impact of succession systems on the financial performance of large enterprises, finding a strong correlation in some of their models and the high or low consequential performance of the organisation. Some of Friedman's (1986) key findings are that high performance correlates with the CEO level of involvement, human resources' employee reviews, availability of supporting staff to execute succession planning, executive and career development and the level of interconnect between the business and the human resources strategy.

When a robust succession model is in place, in the context of this university, elements such as visibility and transparency become highly important to assure the support of the administrative and academic areas (Walumbwa, 2008; Barton, 2019; Birnbaum, 1989). People in the higher education industry are usually aware of their own and their peer's skills, attributes and knowledge as the result of constant comparison inside and outside the institution (Walumbwa, 2008; Zamorano-Ponce, 2008). For example, academics at the university, every certain number of years, are subjected to a process of hierarchy and performance evaluation, where all their academic progress is reviewed and set in a scale to decide whether they should progress on their academic path or not (Zamorano-Ponce, 2008; Barton, 2019). When succession planning is compared with this academic model of career development, it could be the source of internal resistance if the metrics used during the evaluation process are not well-defined, publicly available and well-communicated (Barton, 2019; Zamorano-Ponce, 2008; Birnbaum, 1989).

2.4.2 Closed Companies

Succession planning could also be analysed from the perspective of closed companies or partnership models, where beyond leadership, there is an organisational need to establish continuity in its operation. For example, closed companies are private organisations managed by a small group of participants. In this corporate structure fall many legal and accounting firms. Manthey and Balhoff (2002) build an argument around certified accounting professional (CPA) firms, where their structure of succession is built based on filling out these open positions when a partner withdraws, suddenly dies or is disabled. CPA firms might differ from a traditional university model of operation; however, they allow us to bolster the point that succession planning is not necessary only to confront planned change in leadership. This review was included because of the strong hierarchical and ownership perspective of the founding members.

Succession for closed companies is needed to face the unforeseen future of eventualities for the organisation and its employees, providing a path for a legacy beyond the founding members (Watson & Ripley, 2013). Succession planning could be used to control the high level of risks when leadership and decision-making are concentrated in a few people (Watson & Ripley, 2013; Martin, McKelvie, & Lumpkin, 2016). This kind of concentration is common in start-ups and small businesses as a result of specific knowledge and limited resources (Martin, McKelvie, & Lumpkin, 2016). When the organisation grows, and responsibility and authority spread among more people, these risks tend to reduce; however, the reduction must be one of the outcomes of a well-designed succession planning model (Watson & Ripley, 2013; Martin, McKelvie, & Lumpkin, 2016).

2.4.3 Succession Planning in Small and Family-Owned Businesses

The Chilean university where this research is performed has the characteristic of being young in comparison to the usually expected lifespan for a large higher education institution with over twenty thousand-plus students. A clear sign of this young age is its founding members still being active top managers, board members and leaders in the organisation and them being central to the high-level decision-making process. This young age attribute is vital for succession

planning to understand the organisational culture, structure and operation. The succession planning model should be in part responsible for a transition when these leaders retire from their roles. Studies on the impact of owners in the decision-making process could be divided depending on the influence of the owner and the reaction of the organisation itself to these interventions (De Vroey, 1975; Giarmarco, 2012; Ghee, Ibrahim, & Halim, 2015; Martin, McKelvie, & Lumpkin, 2016; Watson & Ripley, 2013). The researched university presents a duality of boasting of the size and revenue of a large organisation but a decision-making power concentration expected only in a small business.

Even if small businesses could adopt methodologies for succession similar to large organisations, George (2014) declares that a small business needs to be careful about the impact of these policies on the organisation. The organisation must bear in mind that there are fewer managers, and each one with a high stake in the decision-making process (George, 2014). The author mentions how *“in a small business environment, the succession effort falls somewhere in between replacement planning and succession planning.”* (George, 2014, p.23) This mix between both models is the effect of having too much organisational risk concentrated in a few people (George, 2014). This concern is not far from what happens in the researched university, where a few people possess the real authority to make decisions as opposed to the total number of managers. The concentration of power at the researched institution is one of the causes of vital decisions being postponed indefinitely if one of the founding members is not available to provide feedback on time. This strong dependency on the founding members sometimes is beyond what could be considered rational for the size of the institution and could have a detrimental impact on the organisation, a characteristic that could be usually found on small businesses. However, this small business approach also has other consequences, including on the behaviour of the organisation, which tends to create a more empathic environment between employees and with society (Bulloch, 1978) compared to what could be expected in a large organisation.

Small businesses must decide if their succession planning model should include the attribute of retaining ownership among family members or to ensure that the company is run by family members (Babikian, 2006) This definition will depend on the regulatory environment where a

family-related succession model could be unviable (Babikian, 2006). An alternative to this approach is the direct and personal mentoring of some individuals by the top management. This direct transfer of knowledge is a method of extending the legacy through these people (Corner, 2014). From the small business perspective, Ip and Jacobs (2006) denote the need for top management to have a clear understanding of the purpose of succession planning within the company. This organisation is projecting its future into the current administration and the future leaders, and this is where non-family related succession could diverge from the ideal of what the organisation should be in the future (Babikian, 2006; Baker & Wiseman, 1998). The challenge for this organisation from the small business and family-owned business perspective is to establish a succession model that will transfer not just the past legacy from the founding members but also the desired future of the organisation to the next leaders that will take over (Babikian, 2006; Baker & Wiseman, 1998).

The university has a strategic plan for its long-term vision. The plan is reviewed every five years with annual key performance indicators (KPIs) of how the institution should perform over a series of variables, covering the main areas of research, academy, management and outreach. The strategic plan is a document that could be used as a map of action to be linked to the successor's performance and assure alignment between the past and the future of the organisation (Schuman, 2011). The current strategic plan runs until 2021, and the presidential succession could define an early update or projected path beyond that period. The future leader should follow this new path in alignment with the main desires of the founding members' vision.

During the decision process of who should take over the top leadership role for a small business with strong family business interaction, Motwani, Levenburg, Schwarz, and Blankson (2006), established four main rules that candidates should possess beyond general qualifications, good performance and skills for the job. These conditions are closely connected to respect, harmony and the ability to get along with the family members; furthermore, people outside the family must also perceive the candidate as a leader fit for the organisation (Motwani, Levenburg, Schwarz, & Blankson, 2006). These criteria inform us how the future leader should be: someone who will assume responsibility with a certain level of internal validation by the organisation,

rather than just being handpicked by the founding members or the board (Motwani, Levenburg, Schwarz, & Blankson, 2006). This attribute becomes an additional complication to the process of selection because as is expected that some level of trust should exist between the owners and founding members and the candidate to assure that the top-level support will match the internal validation of the person for the role (Motwani, Levenburg, Schwarz, & Blankson, 2006).

The literature reviewed revealed a common scenario of a paucity of processes and policies pertaining to succession planning in small businesses (Manthey & Balhoff, 2002). These organisations are highly dependent on their founding members for the decision-making process, financing and vision, just as this institution performs its day-to-day activities, leaving succession planning postponed (Manthey & Balhoff, 2002). Some of the factors that Manthey and Balhoff (2002) described as trigger agents for succession planning at small businesses include retirement, withdrawal, disability, death, retirement benefits, capital pay-out and new partner recruitment when the organisation allows this kind of structure. The succession planning model must also respect the needs of the organisation, which could include variables such as retention rates, salary or career development as an attribute to engaging in a career development track (Gray, 2014). By comparing the principles of succession planning for small businesses in the context of the researched institution, it is possible to see how this large organisation (from revenue and number of employees' perspective) still shares some characteristics and behaviours with small businesses. The founding members are the pillars who support many of the relevant organisational decisions.

2.4.3.1 Small Business in Emergent Economies

So far, the implication of succession planning for a family or small businesses has been discussed; however, when the local context is added into the analysis, some additional considerations will start to take shape. Previously, it was declared how relevant for the organisation the connection between the person and the leader to be replaced could be to make this succession process as smooth as possible (Corner, 2014; Ip, Jacobs, 2006; Hall-Ellis S. D., 2015). However, when this process is set in the context of an emergent economy, the external impact of the selected person could become relevant too (Chi-Nein & Xiomei, 2013). A

study performed by Chi-Nein and Xiomei (2013) pointed to the effect that a well-connected person has on the organisation, with a focus on emergent economies. Decisions of succession and promotion should be strategically defined, since *“the social context may provide important contingencies determining whether and how leadership change affects performance”* (Chi-Nein and Xiomei, 2013, p.339). This observation points out that the person’s social characterisation and pre-existing social relations become relevant for the organisation when the business could be influenced based on subjective information and relationships, an issue commonly surfacing in emergent economies (Chi-Nein & Xiomei, 2013).

When the position of a higher education institution is set in the context of an emergent economy such as Latin America, the institution is much more than just an organisation that delivers content and offers degrees, because it carries a social responsibility (García de Fanelli & Jacinto, 2010). The university and its leaders are a point of reference for relevant public policies and debaters in the country (García de Fanelli & Jacinto, 2010). The top minds at this kind of organisation are usually connected with the public and private sector, becoming a pole of knowledge for these countries (Chmura, 1986). This social responsibility that is enlisted into the person that will assume a top management role at a university should be considered part of the set of skills and requirements for the job (Chmura, 1986; García de Fanelli & Jacinto, 2010).

2.4.3.2 The Family Business Challenge

It is expected that the founding members have the desire to transfer leadership to their family members with an intent to extend their legacy (Baker and Wiseman, 1998; Ghee, Ibrahim, and Halim, 2015). However, the educational regulation in Chile mandates that every university must be a non-profit organisation, including restrictions on how top managers are appointed (República de Chile, 2019). This legal consideration makes it unviable to establish a direct family business succession model (República de Chile, 2019). At the same time, the small business mindset of ownership and control could persist for a while as part of the culture, which will be a challenge for the successor.

Birley and MacMillan’s (1985) article explains some intrinsic attributes from small businesses that should not or cannot be transferred into a large organisational model, including the

concentration of power and authority, or the speed at which decisions are made in a more entrepreneurial environment. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), the decision of when to proceed with a top management succession is critical, and the manager to be succeeded in an SME has a significant stake in the final decision of how and when it should proceed (Birley & MacMillan, 1985). This condition could be even more complicated when the organisation is a family business (Motwani, Levenburg, Schwarz, & Blankson, 2006). There is a benefit to having an outside group of advisors beyond the direct management of the organisation, to assist or push the implementation of the succession model; this makes the university board of directors an element that should be included in the design process to overcome impediments and to continually improve the model (Motwani, Levenburg, Schwarz, & Blankson, 2006). For the researched university, this will pose an important challenge to overcome since the founding members are also part of the board, and this could be a source of conflict between the advisors and the leading team.

This family business perspective mixed with the concern about the legacy is focused on the distribution of the three main aspects that could be transferred to family members, which are ownership, management and taxes (Giarmarco, 2012). The third does not apply to the university since it is a non-profit institution. This analysis raises the possibility of separating the property from the leadership, which could be a path to continue the legacy through actions and a well-reasoned decision-making process and not just by authority. However, evidence is available on how outsider and insider successors outperform family successors in organisational performance indicators post-succession (Chi-Nein & Xiomei, 2013).

Section Discussion: Succession Planning in Large, Small, Family-Owned Businesses

When approaching the literature on succession through different kinds of organisational models and structures, this institution falls in a hybrid space with the revenue and operations of a large organisation, the culture and decision-making process of a small organisation, and the perspective of a family business. The characteristic of a culture not linked with the size or financial condition of the university suggests a succession model that should include career development as a path to connect legacy and vision. Meanwhile, the pool of candidates

narrows based on their capacity to establish a trusting relationship with the founders. The establishment of a succession model where the founding members can mentor an internal candidate becomes relevant from the small business and owner's legacy perspective and also for the capacity to build internal validation into the organisational structure with their current co-workers. It is possible to perceive how merit as a value comes to the fore to deliver a smooth succession in this specific scenario, and the value of the family business perspective in the context of this organisation. The constraints of the setting and industry should be part of the argument to establish a model that will accomplish the objective aligned with the legal and governmental requirements and restrictions.

2.5 Higher Education and Non-profit Perspectives

Universities need to extend their size and structure to be able to serve a larger student population and to engage in more complex academic activities such as research and outreach, making structural growth a natural part of the healthy development of a university (Benneworth, Fitjar, 2019; Tiron-Tudor, Nistor, Ștefănescu, 2019). Manthey and Balhoff (2002) argued that a researching institution should divide the level of responsibilities of top management and spread it through the organisational layers to provide a broad structure to support the diverse and complex activities in a mature University. The Chilean Ministry of Education and the National Accreditation Agency (CNA) established a model where an institution could be named and accredited as a *University* only if it could provide evidence of its quality in four main areas: teaching, academic management, outreach, and research (Comisión Nacional de Acreditación - Chile, 2019). This injunction and the authors make a clear distinction of what a university should be and the expectations on its level of complexity, which is also linked to the performance expectations of the leader of such an entity.

The literature review included some specific articles based on the status of researching institutions, including the legal and business structure as a non-profit member of the higher education sector. These attributes are relevant since the characterization points to a long-term vision and public value through education, which is designed to last longer than the lifespan of the founders. Mckee and Froelich (2016) declared that a non-profit CEO holds the responsibility

to not just achieve a good financial performance and sustainability but also to ensure that the operation is aligned to and assuring the legitimacy of the organisation with the public. Assuring the consistency of this alignment can be a source of additional corporate complexities many times (Peterburgsky, 2012), including the strong brand image association between the leader and the organisation. The reach of power of a CEO is enhanced by social networks but usually not correlated with the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of the organisation (Sheikh, 2019). The need for alignment between the individual and corporate social outreach could have implications at the moment of receiving applicants for the top management role if their aspirations are connected to pursuing personal power (Sheikh, 2019).

Even if the critical importance of succession planning is acknowledged for non-profits, only between 30% and 40% successions at non-profits are achieved through internal promotion (Leland, Carman, and Swartz, 2012). This reality denotes a missing link at non-profits such as the researched university, between the need to establish a funnel for internal candidates to assume leadership positions in the future and assure that the organisational mission will be protected. The missing pipeline of promotion could be related to the lack of training and mentoring that should be performed to generate a proper pool of candidates from where to select future leaders. In a non-profit, most of the CEO's time is spent acting as the external liaison of the organisation and the environment (Simon, 1981). For non-profit universities, the president functions as the equivalent of a CEO for the institution, being the top management leader but also a person with strong public and political reach. This double role is linked to the impact of universities on the economy and the communities served (Atwell, 2004). It must be kept in mind that this institution has about 3% of the country's total number of students currently at the undergraduate level (Ministerio de Educación, Chile, 2019).

2.5.1 Higher Education Missing the Point

The educational sector has displaced the role of succession planning by lacking what Fusarelli, Fusarelli, and Riddick (2018) called the iron triangle. The iron triangle is a mix of job training, job assignments and career advancement for the development of the required skills to shoulder a diversity of roles at the organisation (Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018). The same issue was

identified in religious higher education institutions, where the selection pool would be more limited, and there must be an alignment between the organisation and the leader beyond the nature of the industry (Barton, 2019). Mckee and Froelich (2016) declared, for non-profit organisations, it is highly desirable that the succession planning is done through the internal structure, to ensure that the vision and the ethos of the organisation is preserved. The need for succession also implies the need to develop these core competencies and the interviewing skills required when the succession is necessary (Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018; Mckee & Froelich, 2016).

Taking a closer look into a presidential succession for a private university, the role of the president of a college or university could be quite different than in the public sector. The president of an academic institution could be the equivalent of a chief executive officer (CEO) in the general business arena (Li-Ping Tang, Shin-Hsiung Tang, & Shin-Yi Tang, 2000). Merriam-Webster defines the CEO as someone that *“oversees the entire operation of a company or organisation. A CEO is responsible for coordinating effective operating, marketing, financial, cultural, and legal strategies that maximise shareholder value”*. Educational institutions could have a structure that divides the political and managerial authority of the organisation, and because colleges and universities have a relevant presence in the local communities and a strong influence this interaction demands considerable time from the top leader to understand the context and connect with the community (Melville-Ross, 2010). A study performed by Klein and Salk (2013) based on the presidential turnover of the higher education sector with a focus on private institutions at Wisconsin, USA, reported how this form of organisation lacks well-structured models of succession planning where the tradition of the industry is the source of resistance. The research also discovered the tendency of universities to search for candidates for the president’s role outside the institution (Klein & Salk, 2013). The lack of desire from the academic vice-president and second-in-command to step over into the president’s role is one of its main reasons (Klein & Salk, 2013). The search for candidates outside the organisation and the absent planning for career development reveals an apparent disconnect with what one would describe as best succession planning practices (Hall-Ellis, 2015).

Section Discussion: Higher Education and Non-profit Perspectives

The CEO/president in the higher education sector and many non-profits have a dual responsibility since they must fulfil the general management role as well as building a network and relationships that are part of the social interface of the university. This additional requirement could prove to be a challenge, which, based on the literature, does not directly contribute to the personal relations or branding of the individual in charge of this extensive responsibility (Li-Ping Tang, Shin-Hsiung Tang, & Shin-Yi Tang, 2000; Friedman, 1986; Atwell, 2004). Because this institution has not prepared the pathway for a successful transition for an internal succession of leadership, there is no clear definition of what the expectations of the role and the detailed job description are. These missing definitions could present an added challenge to overcome during the first presidential succession.

2.6 Concluding Thoughts

Succession planning was the keyword which was broadly searched; however, as noticed through this literature review, there is still little information about it in the context of higher education. It was interesting to discover that the consensus on the overall benefit of succession planning seems to be consistent between authors, with some minor modifications depending on the kind of organisation, size, industry and top leadership structure. Some of the models are discussed in the chapter and at some point they direct the attention toward the value of being able to transfer a long-term vision through a fully implemented model that includes training, mentoring, and openness to external sourcing. Context is another characteristic that should be included in every model to define the succession path for higher education institutions. A well-structured succession planning model requires external and environmental considerations for an organisation confronting a significant leadership change, such as the researched university.

The literature review initiate the discussion first by defining the concept of succession. For example, it demonstrated a clear difference between the concepts of replacement and succession planning as well as the need to define a model promoting succession planning from inside the organisation through a well-established and integrated system of career development that includes leadership as its centre piece. This duality in the context of this

specific research opens the possibility of developing a mixed model that can comprehend both organisational needs, firstly by allocating these critical roles and their direct replacements and secondly by generating a systematic process of promotion to draw from talent across the organisation. However, the focus of this initial phase is only to provide a model for the transition and succession of the current president as it seems the most pressing matter to be solved. During a second phase under the same initiative, the institution could require establishing a succession planning model allowing the management of future successions at any hierarchical level. This phasing strategy yields the opportunity to build the foundation of a long-term model for succession and replacement at the institution, and offers a competitive advantage.

The CEO/president succession was denoted by Kesner and Sebor (1994) as a critical and complex succession process at any organisation. For this process, the board of directors becomes another entity with an essential role during the transition. The board should be the hierarchical entity that supervises the performance of the president/CEO and has a strong say in the final decision of who assumes the role. This argument conflicts with the current reality of the researched institution as the current board operates in the form of an advisory board for the president, but not in a way that could affect the selection or decision process for any future CEO/President. This inadequately functional structure will be an issue that the organisation will probably be able to overcome for future transitions. Yet in the first president's succession, this will be part of the complexity that the model will have to handle. The interviews will have to ask about the real role of the board and the expectations of the founders on the role of the management unit, now and in the future.

Even with this general methodological agreement, there are challenges when the succession planning model is applied in the higher education context. Universities must confront many structural issues such as lack of policies and procedures regarding this topic, boards that are not established with this purpose, a missing pool of internal candidates, sources of resistance, or a disconnect between career development and the path to high management positions. This conflict necessitates a reflection about the reason behind this lack of perspective about the future in the higher education sector. This lag in the implementation of the instruments of

succession planning to project the institution beyond the current leadership is a sign of the absence of planning to support the long-term vision of the university. The mix of higher education and the non-profit corporate condition presents the challenge of selecting a successor that represents the academic and institutional values of the university and is closely connected with communities, businesses and the government. This dual role is not an easy balance to be achieved beyond the everyday managerial activities of a company leader. This duality should be an additional attribute to be included as part of the job description. It is possible to foresee that the search for the president's successor in a country such as Chile will have to handle the complexity of a small market size where there are few candidates from whom to pick the next leader.

The literature review has explored many of the principles behind a model of succession planning, which entails a series of questions about the researched organisation, to ensure that the final model provides a desirable outcome. There are many questions to be asked as part of the research process, and information that should be collected to ensure that the analysis can be compared to the compiled literature and defy all the dimensions discussed in the literature. One important consideration is the role of founding members and their vision for themselves in the future: what is the actual legacy they are planning for and how will the board of directors be set up when they leave the operation? Interviews with founding members, board members and leaders across the organisation will be the source of information to understand how this leadership development pathway to succession will unfold.

From the literature review, it is possible to state an initial frame to be tested through the research. Because this issue of succession is focused not just on the role but also in the person and legacy of the founding members, the problem probably will not be solved just through a human resource policy and protocol. There is a personal weight of the founding member in this decision, and this needs to be explored. A succession plan in this organisation relates to an intersection between the family business and legacy mindset described by Baker and Wiseman (1998), the vastness of the organisation from a revenue and size perspective, and the higher education non-profit approach of Manthey and Balhoff (2002). To this mix, it is possible to add the complexity of the non-profit CEO role, which Mckee and Froelich (2016), as well as Melville-

Ross (2010) lucidly described in the university context, because of the top leader in the physical and relational representation of the organisation to the society. For emerging economies such as Chile, the persona of the successor can have a great impact, as Chi-Nein and Xiomei (2013) declared. The sum of these findings allows us to frame this issue as first about legacy and then focus on the succession process itself. This specific succession is not just about planning for it but also about accepting this need for change and selecting the right candidate for the job.

This research provides the opportunity to establish the foundations for a long-term sustainable model that could entail succession and replacement through the development of missing policies and procedures at the university. This exploration should be considered a greenfield to fine tune the founding members' expectations with the desirable model of succession for a complex organisation. This research seems to be a multiphase initiative where the presidential succession is the urgency to be solved; however, the literature declares the need for a model with a set structure and policies to be established and set in place. The concept of legacy remains one of the main attributes of this transition, and the final model will require a series of internal structures, many not yet in place, to set a model and processes that will allow the organisation and its culture to understand succession planning as a natural part of an evolving organisation.

Succession planning is not a one-fits-all kind of methodology; it i's a model that should be designed to fulfil the purpose and long-term objectives of the organisation. The specific need and context should be combined with valid methodologies such as mentoring and training. This planned process provides the necessary alignment with the purpose of the future role to be filled. A mature organisation must try to generate a proper pool of candidates for the key strategic positions, from which the organisation can select depending on the demands of the leadership role and the urgency of this change. These are all elements that must be discussed and tested during the action research, to establish the level of readiness of the organisation and the proper model of succession planning, which will evolve in due time.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

As this is an academic-practitioner research, action research (AR) was selected as the research methodology since it can provide strong practical results, to then introduce a positive change into the organisation involved in the research process. This kind of applied research tries to solve specific problems through changes within the organisation to understand the dynamic forces embedded in it. This research has been defined to be conducted through a constructivist approach. The researcher himself, a top leader at the organisation, believes that the issue to be tackled could have different realities depending on the perspective of each member. A variety of personal histories, beliefs, and experiences reflect how each perceives the relevance and impact of the first presidential succession at this private higher education institution.

Action research is framed as a methodology of practical knowing (Coghlan & Shani, 2017). This description means that it should work around the everyday concerns of human life, the use of social information to construct the knowing, the uniqueness of each situation, and the relevance of ethics for the correct deployment of practical actions (Coghlan, 2016). The proposal phase of this thesis explored how to reach the profound truth about the different perspectives regarding the issue under study. This exploration was done integrating the different layers of leadership, and with the scholar-practitioner perspective to establish a succession model that could then allow the organisation to evolve and surpass this complex problem. By trying to understand how organisations behave and react towards changes, it is possible to recall the concept of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person relationships (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This concept describes how the truth must be approached by a dialogue that allows the researcher to hold a thoughtful point of view that includes these multiple perspectives.

Ontologically, this research follows a relativist approach as its framework of action by embracing the possibility of multiple realities shared in the same system called a university. This way of thinking relates to how the *“truth is reached through the discussion and agreement between the main protagonists”* (Easterby-Smith, 2012, p.19). In this case, it is a conversation

that should include the leadership roles involved in the decision-making and the ones affected by the decision of this succession. The epistemological approach must be consistent with the specific characteristics of this organisation, its history and culture; meanwhile, it can include the researcher itself as a direct participant in the research, making him part of what is being observed. These attributes make social constructionism the most suitable epistemological structure to engage in in the discovery of the truth behind the complex issue to be tackled. Knowledge is much more than just information as it must consider the social, oral and verbal interaction within this communication as a true form of generated knowledge (Cunliffe, 2004). The constant reflection and learning of the members of this organisation is what is forming the social understanding of their truth.

This research, using this relativism and social constructivist approach, will try to prepare the organisation for this transition by understanding its consequences on the first presidential succession. Meanwhile, it should be able to answer which kind of legacy the founding members are leaving behind and how the different layers of management currently perceive the leadership structure. The collaborative approach to construct this truth and the practitioner perspective to the research is fundamental to producing the learning experience and the fast adapting model the organisation will require (Lewin, 1973). The use of cycles of action learning will be a critical component of the introduction of this succession model, by including cycles of experiencing, reviewing, concluding and planning the next cycle (Honey & Mumford, 1992), to engage into a virtuous collective learning experience. These topics, as also many others included in this brief introduction, will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.2. Action Research and Action Learning

The value of using action research and action learning as approaches to engage in this practical research is in its connection to the empowerment of the organisation to promote a sustainable change supported by the collaboration and active participation of the same institution's stakeholders (Coughlan and Shani, 2017; Coughlan and Coughlan, 2008). This collaborative social construct of the truth and then the application of collaborative learning are expected to allow

the organisation to establish mechanisms to keep learning beyond the current problem to be tackled, preparing it for future actions (Raelin, 2001). The methodology of action research and, with special focus, the action learning piece relies upon asking the right questions and listening to what people have to say as a critical component of the research process, with the explicit purpose of promoting a positive organisational change to confront current and future complexities (Pedler & Revans, 2011).

Action research is conceived as a collaborative research process that requires a democratic and shared desire to find solutions, generating real applicable learning through co-generated knowledge and finding new potentialities (Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). In the context of this specific research, it has implications on how top leadership should be developed and selected to minimise the impact of these complex transitions, contemplating the needs and necessities of the different stakeholders involved in the decision process as well as in direct contact with the future leaders. This relationship between the researcher and the insider parties allows the organisation to become not just a piece of the researcher or an external observant of the process but also the lead player in its own learning experience, sustaining a strong scientific rigor, to assure the internal and external validity of the generated knowledge (Greenwood & Levin, 2006). From the perspective of action research, the only way to create and test new knowledge is through a collaborative insider action allowing the organisation to experience this knowledge and continue the learning curve (Coghlan D., 2011). For a university with a long-term vision, this continuous improvement and learning mindset is relevant to maintain its evolution beyond the current leaders and become part of the legacy of the founders.

Action research is an approach performed through a collaborative researcher and researched co-creation of knowledge. The output of action research will be, without doubt, an action to be tested. The use of action research and action learning as techniques to adopt an inquiring and reflecting management attitude and a way of management development (Raelin & Coghlan, 2006) is an attribute of this inside collaboration, allowing a direct transfer of knowledge to be experienced by its application. The social sciences and their methods of research have for years

been challenged about its credibility and validity from the most traditional research perspective, which mostly bases its research on quantitative methods and analysis of hard data (Easterby-Smith, 2012). Even in the social sciences field, action research is a method that has encountered detractors, because of the strong involvement of the researcher as part of the study (Zuber-Skerritt & Perry, 2002). However, this involvement and the possibility of applying the practical knowledge generated are the main reasons for selection of action research and action learning as the desired research methods. The selected methodology increases the need to strongly enforce the parameters to evaluate the qualitative measures of rigour including trustworthiness, credibility, auditability and transferability in what is called the TACT framework (Daniel, 2019).

When the inquiring through action research moves into an actionable initiative handled by the researcher with the collaboration of the insider group of participants, this is the transition into the action learning. This phase of the research and the method in which the co-generation of knowledge will be deployed and experienced by the organisation (Easterby-Smith, 2012) contributes to management development through experiential learning (Faith, 1994). The value of action learning extends far beyond the challenges that the organisation is currently confronting. Its outcome is the reflective learning process in a group of individuals, with the help of the researcher as a facilitator of the process. In many cases, this new organisational knowledge could even lead to strategic innovation (Kuhn & Marsick, 2005). This process described by Kuhn and Marsick (2005, p31) includes the stages of “*sensemaking, strategic thinking, critical thinking, divergent thinking, conceptual capacity, and malleable learning orientation,*”—all elements vital to generating this reflective mindset and cognitive experiential learning required to overcome a complex issue through innovative solutions.

Action learning should be considered an iterative cycle of learning where a team selected for this purpose and the true leaders of the learning experience engage in a multistep process, where the team’s learning characteristics are a relevant variable in the success of the overall process (Mumford, 1996). From the initial description of action learning (Revans, 1982) regarding the capacity of organisational learning as an equation that requires questioning

beyond programmed knowledge, there have been many discussions about its applicability and the relation between theory and practice in such a practitioner approach (Mumford, 2006). However, the basic structure of a learning process produced by adding the programmed knowledge and the questioning insight stay as the main characteristics of the model (Revans, 1988) which is described as the following equation:

$$L (\textit{learning}) = P (\textit{programmed knowledge}) + Q (\textit{questioning insight})$$

Chart 3-1: Revans' Learning Equation

Another perspective is the one promoted by Russ Vince (2012), who openly declared the relevance of action learning as a model to confront complex organisational problems. Yet he also mentions the effect of the organisation and its power relations in the final impact of the method. Vince implies that an additional variable should be added to Revans' (1988) equation, denoted as organising insight, which represents the potential for organisational learning. The researcher as a member and leader of the organisation where the research will be performed by awareness of the hierarchical structure and power relations aspects of the university must anticipate the kind of learning characteristics of the team and the learning potential to facilitate the learning process and hopefully its adoption. From Smith's (1997) perspective, the practitioner can introduce an additional variable because of the insider's knowledge of the organisation and the culture that comes with it. Smith calls, this variable the organisational insight, and through it, the researcher can impart context to the learning process. Smith's rationale will be relevant as the university's culture is highly dependent on the current president as one of the founding members and the only leader the organisation ever had.

After the literature review was completed, the scholar-practitioner engaged in the discovery of the multiple truths from top organisational leaders. The purpose was to receive direct insights about their desires about the continuity and legacy of the business. This first phase of this social constructivist approach used a narrative approach through in-depth interviews with the two founding members in blocks of expected one-hour sessions, to form a cohesive history about the leadership nature of the organisation and to understand how the founders' leadership

styles have influenced organisational development and culture (Mack, 2005; Morris, 2015). This understanding allowed appreciation of the founders' desires and expectations regarding the institution's future leadership model, vital pieces of the context, purpose, and even the construction of this research. The information collected will be an essential piece of information, as the founding members will stay connected with the organisation as stable board members.

The second phase of the research expanded the construction of this deep understanding of the leadership approach by in-depth interviewing of additional key decision-makers from different areas of the university, providing a 360-degree perspective of this presidential succession impact. The in-depth interviews were recorded, analysed, and then used for a thematic analysis (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Scharp & Sanders, 2019) to build an overall leadership interpretation of the organisational structure linked to the issue of presidential succession planning, and how this extended perspective relates to the legacy position of the founding members. The research had to recognise the past to confront the future, avoiding resistance by connecting with the university's culture and the values. The selected samples fell into the extreme and intensive sampling section, as they are stakeholders with strong opinions about the succession issue (Patton, 1990).

The third phase used all the insights gained through phases one and two, to engage in action learning cycles. This dynamic was used to start a process reflection and learning by moving from the understanding of the issue to the implementation through research cycles (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). Phase 3 is where the action learning cycle was deployed, been the first two stages, where the diagnosis and construction of the action research process took place. The following paragraphs will explain in detail how this third phase progressed.

3.2.1. Action Learning Cycle

An action learning cycle is a process that involves a group of individuals, selected and engaged in the resolution of complex problems by applying experiential learning to the development of possible solutions to be applied, who evaluate and proceed with another reflection process before entering a new loop (Paton, 2001). This reflection process is embedded in the finding of

the truth that will provide the most valuable output for the organisation, making it a never-ending process, as the question itself could be reshaped as part of the evolving and learning process. The number of participants of the learning group could vary; however, the recommendation is for four and six participants, to allow enough perspectives to enrich the dialogue and reflection (Revans, 2011). Each participant should have a stake in the succession issue itself, from an extreme condition of been directly affected by it to an intensive effect by being indirectly affected (Patton, 1990). Additional conditions of hierarchy, length of employment in the organisation and leadership role are part of the selection process.

There are multiple approaches to what it is and how the action learning cycle works, including how the reflection process allows the self-awareness of what is needed and how it could differ from the initial perspective regarding the complex issue that is tackled (Zimmer, 2001). This continuing cycle of learning digs deeper into the real issue behind the complexity, which are connected as hierarchical systems in a spiral of learning (Paton, 2001), moving away from a traditional problem-solution kind of approach. Action learning through its collaborative and learning experiential structure can induce organisational change because of the transformational experience that each member of the action learning team will have as part of this spiral (Chenhall & Chermack, 2010).

To give shape to the overall perspective of the institution regarding the first succession planning of the president, the action team should be able to provide this representation. The team members were selected as a subgroup from the stakeholders that participated in the in-depth interviews during the second phase of the research. This team engaged in the spiral of learning, where each one has a position and a stake in the problem itself. This characteristic was the source of a dialogue to promote experiential learning during each cycle by using the collective mind to establish the most appropriate way to solve the complexity having all previous data and information as assets of this learning process. The selection of the learning group was made after reviewing each one of their in-depth interviews and their level of involvement in the problem itself. Then they were ranked by their willingness to dedicate time to the solution of the issue to confirm that they had set enough time for this learning journey.

The researcher is part of this group, consisting of the facilitator and stakeholders, acting as the research-practitioner in the action research initiative (Kumar, 2013).

Each learning cycle is part of a learning loop that will take the previous experience and reflection as the baseline for the following sequence. The first loop will use all the information and data provided from the in-depth interviews as the primary source to initiate the cycle with the framing and reframing of the problem, to then move into the following steps of the process including interpretation, reflection and assessment of the loop, to then move back into the framing and reframing step. The objective is to promote a climate of inquiring and learning from error. This environment will allow learning through an open and honest discussion between the members of the team with the guidance of the researcher during each iteration (Watkins, Marsick, Wofford, & Ellinger, 2018). This climate of trust is highly relevant to producing the expected outcomes from an action learning process since the interaction between the members of the team is critical to creating a transformational learning experience (Ajoku, 2015) that will promote positive innovation, adaptability and change (Govindarajan & Trimble, 2005).

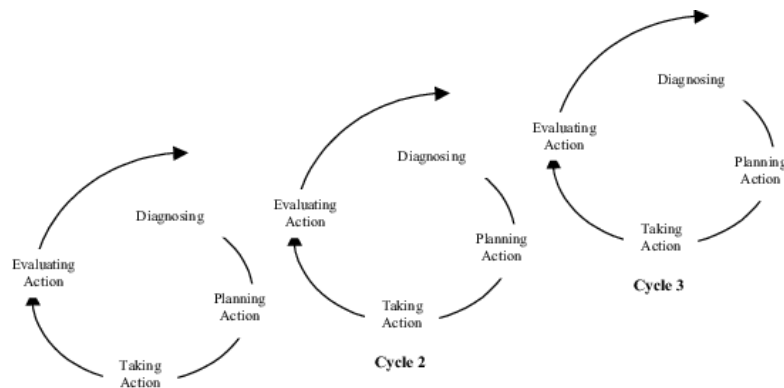


Chart 3-2, Spiral of Action Learning Cycles

Action learning results from spiral research cycles, starting with a process of identifying a problem area (Nunes & McPherson, 2002). The outcome of these cycles of active reflection and learning is steered by the researcher to keep establishing a relation between the issue to be

tackled, always keeping in mind the context of the organisation (Edmonstone, 2019). This specific issue has to deal not only with the complexity of the declared problem itself but also with the Latin American culture, and the perception of educational institutions in this society. The action group have their own perceptions and personal histories regarding the higher education industry, the role of universities, the characteristics of this institution and the president's management performance for the last 30 years, among many other personal points of view that will be part of the dialogue and reflection. When each learning loop is completed, the researcher must keep the focus directed to find a shared perspective about how to minimise the risk of succession of the first and only president that the institution ever had.

The use of action learning is intended to successfully establish a succession model that will be embraced by the organisation. This approach also generates the opportunity to promote an attitude of collaborative learning among them (Schiller, Jaffray, Ridley, & Du Plessis, 2018), creating in them a different mindset to confront future changes and actions. The research contemplates an exit interview with the team members to include their perceptions about the methodology and their connection with the method beyond the issue researched.

3.3. Qualitative Research

The selection of the researcher's epistemological and ontological approach, described as a relativism which will discover the truth through a social constructivist model, then must be practically arrived at using a specific methodology to perform the research itself. Action research is then the mechanism of interaction selected as the bridge between the researcher and the organisation to allow him to understand the information and data. The literature review and the broad themes needing to be explored were essential to clarify the process and techniques selected to find the truth behind the organisation's multiple perspectives. The model involves complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic (Creswell, 2012) and tries to answer the research question to allow the researcher to set a path in a scholar-practitioner proposal for a solution to tackle the selected complex issue.

The method of research selected to answer the fundamental questions around the subject of this research initiative, a qualitative methodology, is consistent with the needs of the study and the synthesis of these multiple perspectives into an agreed general truth. A qualitative approach is most valuable when the issue or phenomenon is unknown or there is little information available about the specific complexity (Cypress, 2019), which is consistent with the current condition of the organisation regarding this particular issue. This characteristic of finding the hidden shared and unshared realities requires the construction of the information and data, which must be achieved through the extraction of each partial truth directly from the source. This exercise could be performed in several different ways, depending on the question to be answered and the nature of the desired outcome of the process; however, it is usually performed through the use of language, observation or interaction, maybe, involving one or more of these modalities for qualitative research (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

Qualitative research has been subject to the challenge to its validity by traditional forms of scientific research. This confrontation is based on the philosophical assumptions of how the truth is tested and how there could be more than one valid truth (Donaldson, 2008). The challenge for researchers in the field of qualitative research or even mixed methods includes maintaining a constant awareness to assure that rigor, validity and relevance are always present throughout the research process (Shrivastava, 1987). A qualitative researcher must be able to explain each step of the process, avoid misleading information and biases, and answer clearly if there is a doubt around the soundness of the research process itself (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2012). Increasing changes in society and the acceleration of technology are generating new ways to approach qualitative research. The collected qualitative data represents the perception of the organisation, making qualitative research more relevant to understand a social or cultural phenomenon (Guercini, 2014). However, the fact that this is a research-practitioner approach increases the need to stay alert about documentation of the process and ensuring that declaration of possible biases and ethical considerations are clear between the researcher and the participants.

For this action research, which will be performed through a qualitative approach, trustworthiness is an important cornerstone. For this reason, the research has to be aware of the issues of credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and authenticity (Miles, Huberman, Huberman, & Huberman, 1994; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Connelly, 2016). To achieve credibility the systematic use of protocols, documentation, recordings, files, and well-established techniques used for this action research follow the most recommended standards including research requirements from the University of Liverpool. Dependability is guaranteed through consistency in the process of collecting the data and the acknowledgement from each participant of their consent and truthfulness in their responses. Confirmability is done by a rigorous process of audit trail performed through recordings, transcripts and the minutes approved by the action team, assuring the objectivity of the process. Transferability has been established by looking into the literature and confirming the lack of knowledge on this specific topic of first succession planning not just in the higher education context but also in the environment of small businesses evolving into large organisations. Through the literature review, different situations and contexts where succession planning is applied were explored to find commonalities and shared characteristics but also to be aware about the particular conditions of this organisation. The outcome will be transferable to other organisations that fit this hybrid scenario and requirements. Finally, authenticity is attained by adding the whole sequence of steps previously detailed to fully engage in this research to grasp the deep meaning of the issue. Authenticity was also checked during the action team phase by verifying the findings with the participants and testing if it was recognizable by them.

3.3.1. In-depth Interviews

This qualitative research was conducted through a series of phases of collection of data and information. This information was then mapped based on the perspectives behind the complex issue selected for the research. The information was used as the main material for reflection to explore an action learning approach to find the most suitable model for this organisation and its specific context. The success of this multistep process requires that the initial gathering of data provide insightful information to become building blocks of the collective portrayal of the issue.

When these insights concern people and their perceptions, the method is through the collection of natural language data, which uses in-depth interviews as the primary method to discover perceptions, views and opinions from managers, personnel or any other person connected to the researched issue (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2012).

Interviewing is one of the most-used methods to gain information about specific researched subject data (Holt, 2007), where the researcher can deploy different models to engage in the interview process itself. Interviews for this research are non-structured, recorded and guided to facilitate how the researcher must confront each interview situation. The interview objective was clearly defined, but the process for each interview was different depending on how the researcher and interviewed person interacted. This conversation happened face to face. The challenges and usual critique linked to interviews as a data-gathering method are mostly about the possible biases and false reading of truth that could be made by the researcher or provided by the interviewee (Holt, 2007; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2012). The generation of trust between the interviewee and the researchers is a critical aspect to engage in a conversation process that facilitates the expression of a truthful perspective. Easterby-Smith (2012) declares that the conditions of trust, social interaction, use of appropriate language, access to the person, location for the interview and interview recording method are the most relevant variables when the researcher conducts an interview.

This research included a series of in-depth interviews with people connected with the president's role and impacted by the succession of the president. The number of interviews was planned to be between seven to ten to allow gaining extreme and intensive perspectives (Patton, 1990) without tampering the methodology recommendation in relation to number of interviewees (Easterby-Smith, 2012). The final number was eight. This approach was able to provide a 360-degrees perspective of the issue and the perception of the organisation through its members. The interview process was designed as a semi-structured model to be guided by the researcher. Yet at the same time, it was open to exploring additional information that could be relevant for the research and needs to be shared by the interviewed directors, managers and personnel. The researcher established since the beginning a relationship of trust by

providing beforehand all the documentation required to inform the interviewees about the meeting's purpose. This documentation included the confidentiality statement about the information that would be provided and allowing the participants to request any additional information needed to confirm that the participant felt secure about the process and understood the value of his participation. Other characteristics of the interview process and details of how they were conducted are also described in this chapter.

3.3.2. Other Qualitative and Quantitative Data

The research process was supported by the data produced through the in-depth interviews; however, the interaction between researcher and participants, including the phase of action learning Cycles, generated additional interaction, providing other sources of quantitative data incorporated into the analysis. This extra data was produced by the observation and interaction (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2012) with members of the organisation, allowing the researcher to gain more insights about how the organisation behaves and this shared perception about the issue of study.

The review includes attributes as to how the data was collected, how representative the sample was, how the questions were constructed, and what kind of inference was done, among other variables. The use of qualitative and quantitative data in the model of a mixed-method approach is compatible with the action research methodology (Greenwood & Levin, 2007), always keeping in mind the collaborative nature and experiential process that should support the development of the research. However, for this research, no quantitative data was used or required.

3.4. Organisational Structure and Selection of Participants

This research required gaining a deep understanding of the desires and legacy perspective of the founding members. It also demanded that the researcher connect with the organisations' view about the president's role and their expectations of this first succession. The organisation's structure was used as the guide to define the most appropriate people from whom to gain these profound insights.

Because the institution is a non-profit university, instead of being owned by an organisation or a person, the top layer of decision making is through two foundations, which are managed by one founder member each. Each foundation has its internal structure, mostly composed of family members, and with the fundamental capacity to establish a specific number of members in the second rung of top management, the board of directors. The board is made up of five to eight members, including the two founding members, one also acting as the president and the other the comptroller. Meanwhile, each foundation can propose that up to three members sit by themselves; however, each sitting must be agreed upon by the counterpart. The board watches over the president and has the service of the comptroller to oversee the operation of the institution. This set of roles and relationships could be described as the higher-level structure of the university.

Below the president, the university is organised in two main areas, general directors depending on the president and a few vice-presidents governing key management fields. The groups of general directors are primary areas of the organisation that are closely linked to the political actions of the president and relevant for the public face of the organisation. These areas include admissions, student affairs, institutional outreach, and international affairs. The vice-presidents oversee the academic and administrative operations of the institution; these are divided into academic affairs, quality and planning, research, and management and development. The president himself selects leadership at the general director and vice-President level, declared in the university's constitution as strategic roles for the organisation. The vice-presidents as a collective are responsible for the institutional policies and procedures applied in every academic unit, from research centres to colleges, departments, and schools. The leading academic authority in each college is a dean and then each school has a director in charge of the operation and performance of the academic unit. Each administrative structure under a vice-president is also lead by a director level executive, who oversees the operation and is usually in command of a group of people, including coordinators and managers. This paragraph describes the structure that comprises the top management and academic leadership of the institution.

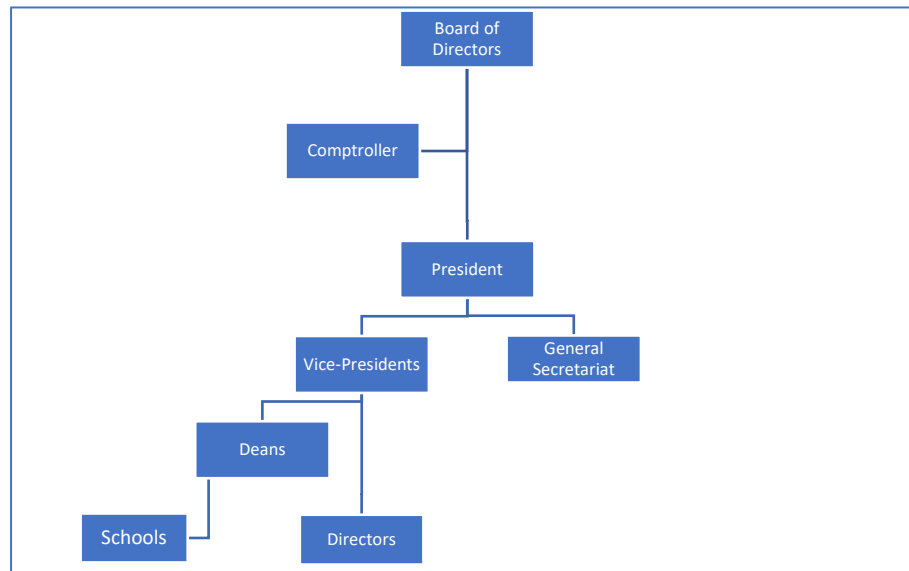


Chart 3-3: Current Organisational Structure

To obtain a complete perspective about the role of the president and the perceptions on the first succession to this leadership role, the researcher established a minimum number of participants and characteristics that can provide this representation. The ideal features involve participants with a direct stake in the succession process because they are part of the decision-making or due to the personal impact of this change on their jobs. The participants must understand the logic behind the organisation. This insight will be measured by the hierarchy level of their position and the number of years in their current role at the organisation. The role should be a director level at the minimum to be involved in decision-making and they must have been in that role for a minimum of five years, performing the current duties over the last strategic plan period. These attributes allow them to attain a certain level of maturity in the organisation and acquire an understanding of the underlying culture. The group of participants must also be a mix of people between administration and academics because they express different expectations about the president’s role and the manner in which the succession should be executed (Klein, Salk, 2013). Academics could not be interested in pursuing a top managerial and political position at a university since the private higher education sector in Latin America prefers political leaders, more than academics.

Based on this selection criteria, the researcher was able to interview the following eight participants; the comptroller and second founding member, a director of the board, the vice-

president of academic Affairs, the vice-president of research, the vice-president of quality and planning, the director of management and control who is also the son of the comptroller, the director of human resources, and of course the current president. It is important to mention that some of these people could not satisfy the criteria of five years in the role; however, they had spent more than five years in the institution overall. One aspect that this research tried to determine was what level of influence the future president was expected to have. This attribute will define the impact that the succession could have since a university is a complex social system where the presidential role is at some level determined by the social attribution (Birnbaum, 1989). The founding members and the board could have an important say about the job description of the future president and its divergence from the current role and functions of the founding member.

Each selected participant was invited directly through an email or by an initial phone call to be then followed by the standard email, briefly describing the primary purpose of the research and the general conditions of becoming a participant. The email contained the information sheet and the consent form as attachments, both documents approved by the ethics committee at the University of Liverpool, and then translated into Spanish by the researcher, as the native language of the researcher. The email also asserted the importance of reading the content and the attachments, the free will to reject this invitation, and the method of contacting the researcher before the interview date in case of doubts or questions regarding the research or their involvement as participants. This information package was submitted at least one week in advance of the proposed day and time for the interview.

To reach a better understanding about the possible outcomes during an in-depth interview process, including the generation of the trust between interviewee and interviewer and to discover the interview personality of the researcher (Holt, 2007), the researcher organised two preliminary interviews allowing him to experience the process of interviewing and piloting the possible outcomes. The people selected for these pilots, both included in the initial group of selected participants, were considered non-critical interviewees just to minimise the impact of an unsatisfactory performance interview. However, each meeting and dialogue provided

exciting insights about the issue explored, used not only as training but also as points of reference before engaging in the interview of more critical participants. This exercise was also an opportunity to test an interview outline which was constructed with the purpose of guiding the interview and trying to cover most of the relevant subjects, meanwhile balancing between the freedom that the participants should have and the need to explore some specific areas that must be discussed. The interview was designed in collaboration with the research supervisor, addressing the main topics of interest for the research and transiting from more broad subjects into specific details of the issue to be explored.

3.5. Interview Process and Questions

The interview was set in a location, day and time previously agreed with the participant. The location could be inside or outside the organisation. Yet it had to feel secure to establish this dialog, ideally a neutral site for both parties, so as to eliminate any feeling of authority just based on the location. This interview set was challenging with the president, the comptroller, and the board members since they are accustomed to meetings in their own offices and control the conversation. Each interview was expected to last between one and two hours, which was explained to the participants in the invitation letter as well as in the electronic calendar invitation sent to each one of them. The time was also a relevant aspect of the schedule because of the topics to be discussed and the level of concentration needed from the participants; the interviews ideally were planned for the morning.

The researcher after welcoming the participant and thanking him or her for accepting being part of this action initiative would request the filled out and signed consent form to confirm a clear understanding of the matter and the rights of the participant. Then it was asked once more if the participant had any questions before proceeding with the interview. Finally, the researcher let the participant know that the interview would be audio recorded only for the purpose of the research and that all information would be confidential as described on the information sheet. From that moment on, the formal interview process would begin.

The flow of the questions on the interview outline was essential to keep the participant connected with the researched topic (Healey-Etten & Sharp, 2010), avoiding a mixup between subjects that could create confusion about the direction of interview. For most of the participants, this was the first time that someone opened the door to discuss the possible succession of the president. Each interview had a different flow, but the central idea of an honest dialogue about the specific topic of research was broached consistently with each participant. The researcher also established limits of where the conversation could go and what was expected to be achieved through the conversation.

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and all this documentation was maintained in an individual electronic folder with the signed consent and any other relevant documentation that was produced for or from the interview. Each interview was planned as a meeting of maximum two hours; however the final duration was dependent on the tempo of the conversation and the level of engagement of the participant. The result was meetings between one and one-and-a-half hours; in every meeting the full outline was covered and transcripts ranged between six to ten pages in length with approximately 45 minutes of voice recording. The interview outline was also a living document that kept changing as the conversations went along, which included some adjustments depending on the person to be interviewed and the desired outcome. These documents were saved in the electronic file as evidence, and they are included in the Appendix section.

3.6. Ethics, Confidentiality and Anonymity of Research Participants

From the perspective of a researcher, there is an explicit duty to ensure the proper evaluation of ethical considerations arising from and because of the research to be performed. This ethical analysis must be completed before any kind of data is collected. The process requires a review from a committee, which will enquire and push questions beyond what the researcher could have thought of. This interaction not only ensures a clear understanding of the ethical implications but also constructs the right instruments to impart the same clarity to the participants when they are invited to participate in the research.

For social science research, and specifically, a managerial kind of research, there are guidelines regarding the ethical principles the researcher should follow to ensure the protection of the participant and the accuracy of the research itself (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). For a scholar-practitioner in the field of management, it becomes relevant to understand the ethical principles, being an insider. It could be challenging to deal with multiple known stakeholders and participants from the same organisation, avoiding possible personal biases at the same time. There is also an ethical risk about the findings that the research could uncover, and what the organisation and top-management may feel about them.

This research went through and passed the ethical committee process at the University of Liverpool, making sure that the researcher had a clear understanding of the ethical considerations in the research, but there was also an opportunity to discover additional concerns about the collaborative effort of this action research and action learning approach. The subject of this research does not imply any physical or direct harm to any of the participants. Yet, it must be considered the source of possible internal conflict and external repercussions depending on how the research process is managed and what the outcome of the research is. The top-management position of the researcher inside the organisation was also a point of concern because though it opens the possibility of moving freely across the organisation and setting the interviews, yet, it could be a source of bias during the interviews since the participants could feel pressurised or concerned about this disparity of power between the researcher and themselves. The same was true for the researcher when he had to confront the founding members and the directors of the board. The use of clear information and documentation about the research process, including recordings, and protocols, open dialog, and a safe environment are a crucial part of the procedures and tools used to mitigate the risk of biases.

Ethical considerations should include how the research process is performed, assuring that everyone has a clear understanding of the objectives, how they will participate, and how the privacy of their information will be maintained. Before each interview, the researcher contacted each participant to invite them to be part of this research, providing general

information about the purpose, process and action approach to the main research question. This information was also provided through email (including as attachments), the participant information sheet and the participant consent form. Both documents are relevant to provide detailed information to the participant about his or her rights, including the right not to participate. Between the delivery of the email and the date of the interview, the participant could contact the researcher at any time to express concerns and questions before confirming the desire to participate. The participant consent had to be marked, signed and delivered to the researcher before starting the formal interview. Finally, before the interview started and keeping recorded evidence of this process, the researcher proceeded to ask the participant if there was any additional question before they continued with the in-depth interview. The researcher also clarified the level of privacy of the information contained in the interviews, as well as the privacy of those who participated in the research. This scenario is different for those that moved into the Action Learning phase, they had access to a deeper level of information since they are part of the learning process for the development of the tools and instruments that will support the objective of this research.

During the research cycles, the researcher recorded the meetings, participants, learning process, and agreements of this reflection, which were relevant to building this shared knowledge about the organisation and the best way to confront the presidential succession. This record in the form of meeting minutes allowed the team to closely track their actions and the following steps, but also served as a place to declare any kind of ethical issues that could arise. Each minute was reviewed and agreed by the team, becoming part of the next cycle of learning and the opening piece of the following iteration. The selection process, its management, the kind of meeting, and the methodology applied with the action team will be explained in detail in chapter 5 because the in-depth interviews were critical to understanding the composition of the action team and the cycles performed.

3.7. Data Analysis

Individually and collectively, every interview was subject to a qualitative analysis using ATLAS.ti. The package version 9.0. ATLAS.ti is a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software

(CAQDAS) that enables the researcher to find patterns, concepts or themes among and between interviews, to gain additional insights about the participants. This software helps understand the interconnection between individual participant's beliefs and their shared ideas about this complex issue. Each interview transcript was uploaded into the platform to perform a thematic analysis in terms of keywords and phrases, to then create data visualizations as networks, word clouds and word lists, to illustrate these relations and reflect on their meaning for this specific research. This exploratory tool was used to gain additional obscure less insights from the data'.

To properly use this tool, after uploading each file into the platform, the researcher conducted a tagging of the documents based on the main topics, and organised and analysed the data based on the keywords and nodes detected by the tool and filtered by the researcher, until the graphical and statistical information could express certain outputs from the interviews and the interconnections among them. This process involves multiple steps, including familiarising with the content, coding, finding themes and producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To avoid pitfalls during the execution of the analysis, some methodologies could be applied based on the organisation's complexity and the information to be processed (Brooks, McCluskey, King, & Turley, 2015). For this research, the traditional thematic analysis organised and connected the qualitative data collected through the interviews, showing consistency between them. This qualitative analysis flow provided information that spanned the research as an iterative process to corroborate, link and then produce new insights to expand the reflection (Miles, Huberman, Huberman, and Huberman 1994). This iterative process and use of data allows expression of transparency in the use of the collected and analysed qualitative data to then engage in the action research reflection; this transparency approach includes brief examples of the process at the appendix level (Moravcsik, 2014).

3.8. Summary of Methodology

Due to the nature of the complex issue that this thesis wants to tackle and the characteristics of the organisation where this research was performed, this initiative was defined under a relativism approach and social constructivism perspective, which assumed the form of an action

research. To gather information from the organisation, the researcher did a series of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders from different management layers to then analyse and discover their shared reality about the president's role and their perception of the impact of his succession. This information was then transferred as the main data used by the action team, a selected subgroup from the interview participants, who will use this information and the literature through cycles of action. The team will diagnose, reflect, plan and implement actions to understand which could be the best approach to solve the complex issue in this specific organisation.

Chapter 4. Interview Results and Findings

4.1. Introduction

The following chapter will continue to expand the issue to be tackled through this research by connecting with the participants of the study who are key members of the organisation with a strong connection with the complex issue under observation. Each participant is in a decision-making position connected to the succession process of the top leader or will be directly affected by any action to be taken in relation to it. The methodology chapter was able to describe in detail the relevance of this phase of the research to gather inside information from the perspective of the main actors of this organisation. Then through a social constructivism approach, the intent was to understand and map the hope, beliefs, fears and more of what was underneath the social interaction and the unique culture of the institution.

For the research to access genuine insights from the participants, an in-depth interview process was set in a place and time along the recommended conditions for the researcher-participant interaction. Yet it was required to extend some of these interviews due to additional requests for information and for better perception. Meanwhile, the mapping of this social construction was taking shape, and ideas between interviews were confronted with challenging points of view and perceptions. Each interview had a reason as part of the data collection process, in an intent to obtain enough institutional representation from different top management individuals to address the issue and contrast the literature with the unique situation at the institution. Meanwhile, as the interview process progressed, questions were adapted from each previous experience, including adjusting the sequence of the interview process to provide as much exposure as possible before arriving at the most critical ones. The sequence of the interviews considered its relevance for the research or the complexity of access to the participant. Some of the interviews involved people with tight agendas and high reputations in the local context, adding complexity to the management of the schedule and meeting the desired deadlines. A second outcome of this chapter is the use of the interviews and data collected to proceed with a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis allows an objective evaluation of the data results to find hidden correlations, contradictions and insights from the data and corroborates some of

the findings from each interview. This sequence of analysing each interview and then advancing to the thematic analysis is evidence of the thorough reflection and doctoral analysis performed.

This phase of interviews fits into the research as the construction/diagnosis stage, which is critical to establish the input into the cycles of action learning that the researcher with some of the participants will continue. This chapter will be fundamental to the analysis of the collected data by being the first connection with the multiple perspectives of the organisation beyond personal beliefs. The researcher then will use this analysis in connection with the literature, to unpack an initial shared understanding to the action team, from where in each cycle of action, they will reflect on the findings, context and applicability to the specific situation of the organisation. This chapter not only allows the researcher to have first-hand contact with the qualitative data and connect the information with the organisation but also provides insightful information about each participant's experience and their position on the decision-making about how this challenge should be tackled in the future.

The institution, founding members, and key actors

To provide the reader an understanding of the organizational context and key participants of this research, the following paragraphs describe these characteristics. This information is the structure of knowledge and context that the researcher and the participants of the action team shared through this action research and action cycles, becoming part of the baseline of institutional information.

The organization is a non-profit Higher Education institution that was founded in Chile in 1988. This was the third private institution in the country after a constitutional change that allowed private entities to join the educational industry. These organizations are required to be non-profits. The university was founded by a couple of individuals who were experts in Higher Education, both ex-employees of the Chilean Ministry of Education. These founding members, both engineers, took different roles in the administration of the university, one becoming the first and only President and the other the first Vice-President of Finance and Administration and currently acting as the Comptroller. The institution was closely connected to policymakers from the end of the eighties and early nineties, many of them becoming part of the Board Directors

during the early years. The founding members are key stakeholders for this research, the President himself who is the center of the study and the impacts around his succession, and the Comptroller who has been the other business partner all this time.

The founding members decided to open their first undergraduate degrees in the areas of Engineering and Sciences, which was unknown for the new private institutions since the level of investment and technical expertise was higher than for the most traditional degrees. This is an example of the seal that the institution has placed for itself during the years, recognized as a first mover in the development of technological degrees, and taking risks in the development of new educational areas and degrees. Other examples of this risk-taking and first-mover spirit during the last three decades include the first private School of Dentistry and Medicine, the first Clinical Simulation and Genomics Centres in the country, and the first South American institution to be accredited by a U.S. Regional Accreditation body.

The organizational chart has a Board of Directors on top, followed by the support structure of the Comptroller unit. The main authority that comes after the Board of Directors is the President, and under this role is found five Vice-presidents including, Research, Academics, Planning and Quality, Development and Management, and Regional for the Campus in the south of the country. Four Deans depend on the Vice-president for Academic Affairs, and under them every School and College. Most administrative directions and units fall under the Vice-Presidency for Development and Management, who takes care of the back office, management, and generation of resources. This structure allows the organization to be able to operate the academic and administrative units and offer undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees, including perform high-quality research over 16 specialized Centres, and being an active participant from the public and private sector. The university has over twenty-three thousand students and eighteen thousand alumni.

The Higher Education context in Chile is rapidly changing, increasing regulations and complexity of the system. The introduction of Research as an obligatory area of accreditation and new fiduciary duties from Board Members and Top Management, makes that becoming a leader at a Chilean university a more challenging endeavor. These rules and regulations keep evolving and

meanwhile, this research takes place, the researched institution has decided to be included in the free-tuition programs, which allow low-income students to attend College for free by being fully supported by the government. This decision will dramatically change how the institution operates and serves its public engaging in a more social perspective of Higher Education.

These are some of the main characteristics and attributes of the institution and the local context of Higher Education. These conditions increase and support the need for an appropriate succession process for the top leader of the university, someone who will be able to connect with organizational culture, continue its legacy, and be an active participant in this evolving industry.

4.2. In-Depth Interview Approach

During the methodology chapter, the in-depth interview approach was detailed, including why it was selected for this research and what are the main guidelines on how the researcher should approach it. Now a brief description of the procedure, the main obstacles, and some additional considerations of how this interview phase was conducted will be provided.

Each participant was invited to the research through an email for a face-to-face conversation, which was supported with documentation and detailed information about the purpose of the study, as well as their right to accept, reject or withdraw from the research at any time. From the perspective of the people involved with a traditional Latin American university, they were amazed to see this level of detail and information for research in the social science field. To win their approval, it was also important to explain not just the purpose of the research and their role as a participant but also the difference in the nature of a Doctor in Business Administration versus a Ph.D. in Business Management, the meaning of action research, the purpose of the action cycle, and more. These questions were the expression of a lack of understanding of this research-practitioner approach; however, most of these conversations concluded with an agreement on how valuable it could be for the organisation to hold this kind of profound level of reflection to address many of the complex issues that the organisation must confront. This university has a strong focus on the health, biology and basic sciences side of research,

relegating social sciences to a secondary plane, which by itself was an additional challenge when the research was explained to some of the top authorities in the institution.

After everyone invited agreed to participate, the next milestone was the definition of when and where the interview would take place. Even if the in-depth interview recommendation is to have these interviews in a neutral space outside the office, this was almost impossible to achieve. The researcher had to deal with the constraints in the participants' schedules, and even some of the participants set the use of their office location as one of the conditions for conducting the interview. To set a more neutral environment, the researcher set some basic rules during the interview; some of them were verbalised and others just structures enforced during the interview process to facilitate a more open conversation between researcher and participant. Examples of these rules are turning off cell phones, asking their secretaries to block calls or any other disturbance during the meeting, moving the conversation to a round table or a similar space in each office to avoid the situation of a desk between participant and researcher, or starting with a more generic conversation on something that happened that day on the news just to break the ice before proceeding with the interview phase. Something to notice was the difference between the participants who were good public speakers and those in leading administrative positions. Public speakers were much more active in expressing their opinions with the risk of leading the conversation into topics beyond the intention of the researcher. Meanwhile, the other group required an additional push from the researcher to secure their active engagement in the dialog. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes, from the moment the researcher started recording the audio to when the recording stopped.

Participants were selected to cover the 360-degree perspectives about the complexity around the succession. The selection process included filters declared in the methodology chapter to ensure that the participants were well-versed with the issue and had enough knowledge to be good representatives of the organisation's voice. Selected participants included members of the board, vice-presidents, directors, founding members, and the president himself. Because of the findings during the interviews, the initial selection was expanded from seven participants to a final number of eight, to include people that could better represent the administrative perspective of the organisation beyond the top authorities and policymakers. The need for

additional representation during the interview phase could be a consequence of the highly hierarchical structure of the university, which caused a disconnect between the top management and the administrative and academic departments. The researcher tackled this issue by including representatives of the administrative and academic units, people who, because of their organisational role were responsible for policies, information and procedures across these structures, providing this mutual communication between top management and the lower echelons of the institution.

Finally, it is important to state that just during the interview phase, the institution and the country were afflicted by a strong and massive social movement in the country, which started on October 18, 2019, majorly disrupting the operations of the university. This social crisis not only necessitated re-scheduling of the interviews but, most importantly, was the source of multiple fears about the future of the country, the implications for the higher education sector, and the university itself. This change and uncertainty in the environment and higher education context by itself generated increased attention for this research and its value for the long-term sustenance of the institution beyond its foundational members.

4.3. In-Depth Interview Analysis

The following section will describe in detail each interview, the discussions and findings of the dialogue with the main actors surveyed for this presidential succession issue. To connect the dots through the process and to provide clear information to the reader and then proceed into a critical analysis of the compared collected data, the following subsections are structured based on the hierarchy at the organisation. This content division allows contrasting of perceptions between similar decision-making levels and across different functional areas of the university. The interviews were conducted and will be presented proceeding from the outermost to the inner layers of the organisation culminating in the remarks of the current president. This approach allowed the researcher and now the readers to have an overall description of the situation and the organisation before arriving at the specific role that is planned to be substituted in the future. In terms of structure, the interviews were laid out consistent with the hierarchical structure of the organisation, starting with the board of

directors, then the comptroller, the VPs, and finally, middle management. All this information will be collected and analysed before the final interview with the president, to gather the overall perspective from the participants before it is contrasted with the perspective of the role for which the succession will be planned. This approach to the interview process allowed the researcher to gain knowledge of the matter to be discussed during the interview with the president and confront these ideas with the personal perspective of the institutional leader and founder.

4.3.1. Top Management Perspective

The university has a set of bylaws describing the main management structures the institution has in place for the proper management and leadership of the organisation. At the top are the two founding members, one the current president, and the other the comptroller. Each one has a foundation is represented by members of their direct family who are responsible for the consistency of their beliefs and values throughout the selection of members of the board at the university, who will represent them. Since each foundation currently does not have a set of rules or procedures, being just a functional corporate structure, for this research, they will be represented only by the interviews performed with the founding members themselves.

The top management layer is the board of directors, which currently has six directors, plus the general secretariat, which acts as the legal advisor and record keeper of the board sessions. Both founding members are part of the board. The board has a direct connection with the president himself as the top leader of the organisation and the comptroller who strictly controls the direction and policies of the management as demanded by the board. The comptroller is not involved in the day-to-day management since he is just a unit that supervises and has the right to define if any of the actions of administration could compromise the organisation or go against the decisions of the Board.

Under the president are a series of vice-presidents, who represent the different functional areas of the university, including academics, management, quality and research. Each one of them and their attributions is defined in the bylaws. The vice-presidents are recommended by the president and approved by the board of directors. Finally, under the vice-presidents are

many directors are responsible for the operation of the institution in their corresponding areas. Under the scope of this research, they will be considered middle management because they will be the lowest management rank included though they are still capable of having an impact and being impacted by the presidential succession. The people selected as participants in the middle management level have specific characteristics that make them relevant for the analysis, as it will be described in the corresponding subsection. The research includes interviews with one board member, both founding members (the president and comptroller), two vice-presidents, and three directors.

4.3.1.1. Board of Directors

The board of directors is currently composed of six members; however, the total number that could be appointed is up to nine, plus the participation of the general secretariat. The bylaws describe the board of directors as the highest leadership and decision-making structure at the university. This structure is composed of an uneven number of members, between five and seven. Currently, the board is operating with five members, plus the general secretariat, to manage the minutes and track the meetings. Two of the board members are the founding members, actively participating in each session and in this dichotomy between operations and strategic oversight of the organisation. For this research, one of the board members, a non-founding member, was included as a participant.

Interview

The board member began our conversation by recalling how the institution was founded, which he remembers because of the government at that time and some specific policies generated to allow more students to join the higher education sector. He mentioned how the university level was exclusively for the elite of the country, with a small number of students supported by the public and catholic institutions. This history is part of the context of how the two founding members created the university *“to educate those students with interest in technology, a more scientific approach than the offer of the traditional universities”*. This approach was the key to the first degrees offered and the profile of the institution, then overtime expanding into different sectors of knowledge with a strong focus on health as a pillar of the educational

model. He described the quality of the institution as measured by the many professionals in the market who are well-established in highly competitive jobs.

This board member served as a lawyer for the founding members for many years before he received an invitation to become part of the board. This request was made by the president about three years ago. He believes that the board of a university must have a different approach than what could be expected for businesses, with similar fiduciary requirements and responsibilities. He declares that the role of this Board is to assure that the institution will preserve and increase the value of its reputation as perceived by the parents, students and academics. From the perspective of the administration, the goal is to instil a shared feeling of pride at being part of this university. He believes in the input and output connection about prestige, *“When an educational institution has a prestige, whatever comes out of it including its professionals, projects, education and researches will be prestigious because they come from the same institution.”*

The role of the board under this perspective of pushing reputation and prestige is to correct the path of the institution by providing what he called *“The Big Picture.”* This approach is an outside point of view without the constraints of the day-to-day operation. He mentioned how the board *“corrects or reinforces the path when it is taking a course that is not projecting the institution in terms of its mission and vision”*. The mission and vision is the representation of what he is trying to defend in his role as a board member.

When the conversation moved to the role of the president and his trajectory at the institution, he disclosed how this relationship between the founding member and the organisation is almost interdependent, becoming virtually one and the same person. He sees this complexity as the possible source of multiple traumas and problems for the organisation whenever the succession takes place. His proposal to minimise this source of risk is to establish a period of transition when the successor will be under the supervision of the current president, not as a co-leadership but mostly as a guidance process until the president leaves his role. The current president must understand that he is leaving the position and let the new person take over the

operation and decision-making, to assure a proper and smooth transition. During the search and selection process, the board must keep an active role in advising the best way to proceed.

Regarding the source of this possible successor, the board member expressed the need to have an *“open mind”*, because the most suitable candidate could emerge from different origins, inside or outside, as well as other industries. He sees the role of the president as the leader and guide not just for the organisation but also for the students and the families that decided to trust in this institution. During the same reflection, he directs his attention to academics and researchers by declaring how relevant it should be to the image of the president to inspire them and support the educational model of the university. About the control of this future leader and to cherish the long-term mission and vision of the institution, he believes that the organisation has set in place a series of filters and points of control, which will assure the consistency with the ideals of the organisation and its fundamental principles.

Finally, the dialogue was centred on the relationship between both founding members and the relevance of the comptroller in the succession of the president. The board member was clear in his appreciation that he completely separates the founding member aspect from the role of the person at the organisation, where everyone should be evaluated in terms of their competency for the job they are performing. He reinforces the relevance of the succession of the president and the need to take up this matter seriously with enough spare time to assure the most suitable transition for the organisation. He states, *“All things have their end date, and all people are replaceable, and therefore this process should not be extended unreasonably.”*

4.3.1.2. The Other Founding Member

It is important to emphasise that the institution was founded by two persons over 31 years ago, making them an important part of the history of the organisation and its culture. These founding members have been active participants of the operation, one always in the position of president, the main subject of this research, and the other one during the same period assumed various vice-presidential positions in the structure, mostly linked with administration, finances and development. Since 2017, this founding member graces the position of the comptroller.

Interview

At the very beginning of the interview, the participant defined himself as the comptroller, but mostly as a founding member of the university, recalling his relationship with the organisation even before it was conceived. The idea of the institution goes back to a period in the country where private higher education existed, but in an informal manner, which, based on his comment, seemed to be a significant market at that time. This environment, in his words, opened the need for a more structured and formal kind of model of higher education for the private sector because the government could not provide the financial support to expand the reach of the public institutions.

The participant clearly stated that this was the president' and his idea. He then described the university and its origins as the first technology- and science-oriented private institution in the country, declaring, *"I believe that we have been able to demonstrate that it is possible for private universities to take a stand in the area of technology and science."* He then described how this was also the reason some other private institutions later followed their steps.

When he was asked about his role in the organisation, he mentioned how since the creation of the university he had overseen the management of financial resources and the improvement of management first in the role of vice-president of administration and finances, then moving into a role of vice-President of development where he was in charge of keeping the university up-to-date with new and future trends, including the introduction of new technologies and institutional challenges. Now he is acting as the comptroller, where he states *"this (the new role as comptroller) has to be with preparing the university for a new era, for a new time when the founding members are not anymore in operation, in the daily management of the university, a time when the institution transcends its founding members and a new and different government takes their place, a different form without us, without the founding members."*

He then mentions how relevant this conversation and study could be for the organisation and its continuity keeping in mind the history behind the organisation, context, time and conditions that allowed its foundation. The conversation then focuses on his perspective of how this institution was and is a private entrepreneurship, which was very unusual in the country over

30 years ago. Most institutions were founded by philosophical, regional or religious groups, but there was not a genuinely private tradition in the higher education sector. The participant recalls how this was connected with a historical transformation in the country, where people such as him were inspired to become entrepreneurs in a complex and highly regulated industry, becoming a founding member of an organisation he does not own *“a mere administrator, a mere manager, not the owner of the assets, therefore, this is a very special particularity”*. This difference between the two founders becomes even more relevant for him since the idea was mooted by two people who are united only by the purpose of establishing this project, which they can't own.

When the conversation moves deeper into succession, he mentions the complexity behind the process because it does not entail the transfer of resources, assets or property, which is only the control of something. He defines it as the control of the ideals of what this University stands for. He believes that the mission and vision are what should be protected over time because the rest is only proper management of what an institution is to be. For him, this is not the succession of something material, but mostly the succession of an idea, a concept, a vision. In his view, the comptroller becomes relevant because it is the unit that aims to protect the government of the university, to guarantee that the fundamental decisions are being taken as agreed. He confesses how hard it can be to preserve the idea behind the institution. Meanwhile, he compares it with other institutions like the Church or the Masons and their educational institutions since the beliefs of these groups are more significant than the visions at the universities they manage.

Regarding the idea of the family business, he declares that having a family with one or a few minds that share a similar vision would be a *“happy causality”* because this is not something that can be prepared beforehand. He believes that if someone in the president's role wants to change the direction of the institution they are going to do it, where the only possibility to avoid this change of vision is to promote young talents that share the same ideals, people who at least for a while could keep this vision going. The idea of legacy, in his perspective, relates to the vision of the institution, because the rest is only the operation which could be managed or automatised with technology.

When the structure of governance is discussed, he mentions how the two foundations on top are in charge of selecting the members of the board and use the comptroller at the unit to oversee the operation. However, he states that this process of control and alignment of the strategic plan under the institutional vision and mission becomes simple because they, as founding members, are part of the day-to-day operations.

He thinks that the new president will be elected by the academic community in a democratic fashion. Yet his concern is how to maintain the vision and the good management of the organisation. From his perspective, the role of the president is secondary to the need for structures to assure that the vision is adhered to because a good manager will be able to move the organisation in the direction requested. The issue only arises if the new leader wants to take a different pathway. His desire is to perpetuate this vision of what a university is as his legacy.

4.3.1.3. Vice-presidents

The researcher, as part of his approach to the organisation's top management layer, was able to include two participants from the C-Level structure, the VP of research, and the VP of quality and planning. Both VPs are senior members over large structures at the organisation, administration and academics, with a long standing in the institution and a track record of success in different departments and units. Both VPs, based on the organisational chart, report directly to the president.

Interviews

The interviews of both VPs have similar descriptions of the lack of formal processes for a succession of any kind. They do not deny that they were examples of succession to a top management position. Yet at any level in their professional development at the institution, they had no idea what the next stop could be or when it could happen. One of them declared "*by mutual agreement, there is mobility*". Meanwhile, the other noticed how "*you are invited to participate in several projects*", recalling how this participation is usually how the founding members find people to assume different leadership roles. The VP of quality also reports the

importance of continuous learning and study if one aspires higher roles in this organisation; however, this learning process is not structured or set by the organisation.

The personal development path of each VP at the university was quite different. While the VP of quality made his career from coordinator to sub-director, school director and now VP, the VP of research was initially selected to become a strong leader in research before evolving into a VP when the university was ready to have that structure in the organisational chart. The VP of quality describes internal mobility as the result of a mix of *“skills, personal merit and professional development”*.

When we discussed the concept of mentorship, both agreed that they were subject to one or more mentors; however, this was completely informal and based on relationships more than any structured model of mentorship or transfer of knowledge. In both cases, the VPs referred to the top management as mentors, but not the president who seems more distant as a figure who leads but does not establish this connection with the management. There is a nostalgic mention of the previous VP of academic affairs who was part of the founding team as a good mentor, and he left the organisation about four years ago. The VP of quality mentioned how he learned from the president mostly by observing how close he was to the students as a way of understanding how the community was acting and reacting to his decisions. Both VPs described how the comptroller and founding member serve as the general manager of the organisation, looking for business opportunities and have this entrepreneurship mindset of projecting the university into the future.

The current role of the president seems to be harder to explain for the VPs. One of them declares *“he (The President) takes care of the academic matters and the relation with the environment”*. Meanwhile, the other one explains that the role of the president has changed overtime now falling back into the management of the university instead of dedicating his time to working on the politics of the higher education system in his public role. He links this change with the leaving of the VP of academic affairs and a specific need for academic direction and balance, *“now assuming more leadership and providing a balance between the power of both founding members”*. The relationship between founding members, president and comptroller,

is a topic relevant for the VPs since they have constant interaction with both, where they have very different perspectives. Yet, they complement each other in the leadership of the institution. The relationship balances the public figure and academic leadership of the president with the more entrepreneurial and business approach of the comptroller.

The board of directors was another topic discussed with the VPs. There is an agreement about this perception of it as just a unit that exists for structural reasons. Yet, it does not have any implications in the final decision-making process for the university. Before they faced the board, they had expectations of being challenged by a group of highly recognised professionals, but instead, they provide just general comments without final implications for the organisation. The board is not seen as an organisational unit that will guide the university. It is more of a sounding board for the founding members where they will have additional strength to push their ideas across the institution. There is a shared desire to have a more active board that can provide real advice for the management, to provoke reflection and change manifesting in new degree programs, operation modernization, technology transformation, and many other areas that the institution should be focused on. Regarding the subject of presidential succession, there is no expectation that the board will actively participate in the search or the selection.

Focusing on the topic of presidential succession, the VP has more international experience. He recalls processes in very established institutions in the U.S. where the succession occurs through a documented and public policy managed by the board of directors and everyone knows how and when it should occur. For the other VP, this is more of an unknown territory since all his higher education background was at this institution, and this seems to be an open question as to how the succession should happen. Even when both agree that it could be beneficial to have an internal candidate for the succession because he or she will understand the culture of the organisation, this lack of procedure in building this path of succession will be a tough challenge to find a candidate. Additionally, one of the VPs points out the internal conflict to get a new leader recognised by some members of the organisation, especially academic directors that have spent a long time in the institution and with a close relationship with the current president. There is also a challenge from the academic perspective since most current deans and VPs have had a brief academic trajectory. This characteristic was not

significant for the founding members because they were looking for management skills over academic reputation; however, in the search of new leaders, this could be a source of conflict.

The VP of quality also mentioned his relationship with the son of the president, since he was a student of the school of business under his management, and some mentorship he did to the son of the comptroller. He does not foresee any of them running as the future president of the institution. Beyond their skills and qualifications, in his view, they are not interested in continuing the legacy of the parents.

4.3.2. Middle Management Perspective

To reach a 360-degree perspective of the organisation, the interview process also included middle management members, which, based on the literature (Conger & Fulmer, 2003), should be one the most empowered layers of the organisation during a succession process such as the one proposed in this research. Each of the participants has a level of relationship with the president and the top management structure, to allow the researcher to have a better insight of the perceptions in the most operational side of the university. The participants include the director of communications, who directly manages the image and exposure of the president in the media; the director of human resources who oversees the employee operation for the whole organisation; and the director of management control, who is also the son of the comptroller and funding member. The following sections will cover these three interviews to compare and counter their comments to find their perspective of the truth at the middle management level.

Interview

The three participants each have a different relationship with the president, from being a job very closely related to him such as the director of communications who acts as his content editor to a strictly operational relationship such as the director of human resources to a family connection such as of the director of management control, who sees him almost as an uncle. They also have very different trajectories into the organisation, from a career outside the university into the corporate arena for the director of human Resources to the management of family businesses for the son of the comptroller, which form their perspectives about the

internal opportunities for professional growth and development far apart. The director of communications built most of her career at the institution and has been able not just to escalate in roles but also to become one of the trusted members for the president and the top-level committees, allowing her to be part of the strategic conversations.

From the perspective of the director of management control, to escalate into higher positions at the institution, this must be done through political interaction. This declaration conflicts with that of the other two participants, who point to a more meritocratic approach to select future leadership. However, all the participants concur that there is not any specific model, path or system to develop and establish future leaders at the university. They even mention the concept of "*cupula*" which in Spanish is used to define the organisation's top management but also entails the idea of a close and hierarchical administration. The president and the comptroller constitute this cupula, plus whoever is needed from the top management for a relevant institutional decision. One of the participants talks about this dual leadership between the president and the comptroller as "*one body with two heads*". There is also an agreement that this dual leadership works well. Beyond some minor issues, there is a tendency to perceive it as a benefit for the organisation to have this political and more managerial leadership divided between them.

When the participants are asked about a specific program to nurture internal leaders, only the HR director mentions the existence of a three-phase leadership program that has been running for a couple of years. The focus of the program is strictly at the operational level, "*we made this program towards a productivity objective*". He also notes "*we are planning to have a good work environment, where the people will be happy to work*". When the topic of mentorship is introduced, the HR director declares the lack of a system of mentorship. Yet all the participants recall specific examples where they have provided and received mentorship at the organisation, but always informally. Currently, the HR department is working on the first model of performance evaluation for the institution, beyond the current model of general competencies evaluation that the institution has performed for the last five years. The director of communications sees some significant differences in the models of leadership at the organisation as an issue because they do not represent the leadership characteristics of the

founding members. Meanwhile, the HR director points out that this is just the way the organisation functions, and it is dependent on the people in each management role.

Regarding the board of directors, each one has its own words to describe it. Yet there is a consensus about the strictly consultative role of the board, rather than being a decision-making instrument for the university. The final authority is the dual leadership of the president and the comptroller, as founding members and acting in concert with the VPs as their direct staff. One of the participants mentioned, *"I believe that decisions are made before, and they are just communicated to the board, and maybe they (the president and the comptroller) take some of their appreciation."* The Board is seen just as a bureaucratic necessity.

The role of the president was widely discussed with the participants, where there seems to be an agreement about the political role and the public presence that he must provide to represent the institution to the government and the media. They also declared this dichotomy of roles between the president and the comptroller, one in politics and the other in operation. There is also a lack of clarity about who is the backup for the president when he is on sick leave or vacations. Some participants point to the vice-president of academic Affairs, another the general secretariat depending on the purpose, but no one thought of the other founding member as backup. They complement each other rather than being redundant in their respective roles.

Succession is an unclear topic inside the organisation. Even the concept for the managers outside human resources seems vague; however, the agreement is on the fact that the institution currently does not have any kind of model in place for managing and promoting succession. Without understanding all the main concepts of a succession process, they tend to agree that it could be beneficial for the organisation to have someone from the inside taking on the future role of the president. *"It would be good to pick someone from the inside because the people will feel recognised."* At the same time, some of the managers express the need to find someone even if it has to come from the outside. The director of communications commented about the relevance of a transition period for the president's succession for the new person to gain control over the operation, but also *"a succession to someone that has the trust of the*

current leader". She thinks that a democratic election of the successor could be beneficial for the organisation by making the institutional community responsible and accountable for this shared decision.

4.3.3. The President's Perspective

The objective of this study is to understand the perceptions and implications on this complex issue of this specific leader of the organisation. During the previous interviews, it was possible to see how different layers of the organisation held different perspectives about this person and the role, including the impact of an eventual succession soon. Now the focus will be the interview with this leader and his perception about his role, characteristics, ambitions, desires and hopes for the organisation that he founded.

The President's Profile

The President who is professionally an Engineer, was part of the Ministry of Education for many years, mostly involved in the areas of education and student policy development. By 1984 was appointed as the Director of the Higher Education Division, a period when he participated in the improvement of the financial model to support students and institutions. He was also the initial promoter of the quality assurance models for the technical and college levels of education. During those years he generated the first policies for the transparency of the Higher Education system including admission, tuition, Board of Directors, and supervision guidelines.

In 1986 he joined the Ministry of International Relations as an advisor regarding the educational system, becoming the main supporter of connecting the Chilean Higher Education system with other countries and realities. By 1988 he joined a team to pursue the dream of generating the first scientific-oriented private university in the country.

The President has been involved in the generation of public policies around the Higher Education system, actively participating in multiple Boards and Committees. Some of these activities include the committees for establishing the Higher Education models of accreditation and quality, advisor for new centralized admission system, and board member at Universia which represents the efforts of Banco Santander to promote and support Higher Education

around the globe. In 2013 he represented the University and Chile in the U.S. as the spoke person at the American Council on Education annual meeting.

Has been selected and recognized by its peers and the media as one of the most relevant leaders of the sector, including the prestigious ranking “Monitor Empresarial de Reputacion Corporativa” published by the newspaper El Mercurio in 2011. He launched 2018 a book with his notes and opinions about new policies in the Higher Education industry, including the tuition-free model and its repercussion for the students, government finances, and institutions. He has served as President and active Board Member for this institution for over 30 years, becoming the longest term in the local industry.

Interview

The president began the interview with his presentation, declaring himself as the president (*Rector*) and founding member. He mentions the characteristic of the university as a private and non-profit higher education institution, which he declares as “*an entrepreneurship of two people that pretended to develop a different educational model from what was known at the country until then*”. He points out the difference in the level of investment required to establish a university with a focus on science and technology, which is related to the economic boom of those years and the need for highly trained professionals in these areas. He recalls the foundation as a national milestone, making several headlines in the local newspapers about this crazy idea of a private university with this specialization. He declares that this desire for change and constant exploration is “*an asset of this university*”.

When asked about his role as president and his 31 years in the job, he declares that initially, the organisational structure was thought of differently. He and the other founding member were able to establish the first board that brought together a set of recognised members of the community. However, when asked to select the first president for the university, they expected that he would take the role of president because he was the main reason they accepted to participate in this entrepreneurship. This change had significant implications for his personal and professional life since he did not appreciate what was involved in being the president of a university.

When describing the role of the president, he points out the importance of decision-making *“the day to day of a President is to be fully informed and help the adoption of the most reasonable decisions, and to provide directions for others to adopt these reasonable decisions for the University”*. He explains how a president should be in touch with the institution and its community and be close to the organisation and its people, which is why he likes to attend ceremonies, conferences or meetings with students and academics. The president is a role that must provide direction and guidance in alignment with the institutional mission. For the outside world, the president must relate to the economic, political and academic environment. He spends many hours in conversations with other presidents, political sectors, the government, and other relevant public and private entities. There is a personal reference about the impact that the university has accomplished with him as a public figure because of his strong opinion on specific topics of public policies for higher education.

Going back to the history of the institution, the president emphasises the relevance of the private model of governance as one of the attributes of this university, allowing more flexibility and agility than the traditional public institutions. He declares an understanding of this need for change for the future of the university. In this future, universities will stay relevant to help in the development of society. However, he explains how hard it is to try to project the future because of the speed of technology, but human interaction will stay valid and relevant.

Discussing the leadership characteristics of a university president, he declares its similarity to the management of a small town. He explains this model as because of the number of people and their diverse interactions. The president acts as the mayor of this town. *“We were delegated with the tremendous responsibility by the parents to educate their children.”* When the topic veered to the legacy concept, he stated that the idea of the legacy for him and in connection with the university as a founding member is about sticking to the mission and principles underlying the organisation. He trusts that the university bylaws and the organisational structure that has been set by the founding members should provide control over these fundamental variables.

When the conversation touched the topic of succession, he declared that no specific plan has been defined; however, he believes that for this kind of organisation, it could be beneficial to have insiders take on the leadership roles. This transition has transpired in several positions, but it was not planned. He talks positively about the U.S. model, where many presidents are even searched by head-hunters and post openings in the newspaper. The most important thing is to assure that the new leader will be capable and ready to continue the development of the organisation. He is open to having an internal succession or someone from the outside coming in with the right skillset. Yet he claims himself to be entirely against an internal democratic process for the selection of the next president. Under his words, this could be disastrous for the institution. He does not see anyone right now inside the university who could shoulder the challenge of being the next president.

4.4. Analysis and Discussion

The in-depth interview process was able to uncover several ideas and concepts that each participant expressed based on the main topic of the conversation. Many of the findings are the verbal confirmation of some physical and cultural characteristics of the organisation, the consistency between the walking and talking of the university. These interviews also uncovered some relevant differences between the perception of groups, layers, and even the founding members about the future of the organisation and the meaning of the first presidential succession. First, during the analysis, the following paragraphs will recapitulate some of the main findings by each layer of management and crossover between them to then proceed to the reflection on its meaning and the relevance of these insights for the research, before proceeding into the thematic analysis.

The Founding Essence and their Legacy

Every single interview had a concurrence, which was the relevance directed by the participants to the interdependency of both founding members for the institution, and how this complexity could affect this relationship. Each conversation at some point was directed into how this succession of the president could affect their harmonious relationship, which is a unique characteristic of this institution and has more than 30 years of history and success to support

this equation. The perception of the participants regarding this partnership between the founding members' changes depending on their intimacy to the persons behind the history, from the most interpersonal relationship to almost only the myth around them and this venture.

Moving from top-down, the point of view of the board member in the interview was clear when expressing his position about the founding members and their role at the organisation, establishing a complete separation between these two characteristics over the same person, because his main concern during succession was to select the best person for the role and not to just fill out the position. This view entirely varies from the perspective of the founding members themselves, the president and the comptroller, since they have formed a strong link between their role, their personality and the founding member concept, becoming a single interlinked idea. From their declarations, which are strongly consistent in the narrative, it is possible to identify a constant reference to the relevance of the founding member concept and the value of assuming this challenge, and how this spark relates to some unique attributes of the institution, including the entrepreneurial slogan of the university. This idea of how relevant the founding members are for the organisation and their direct decision-making corresponds to what was described by George (2014) regarding the small business mindset and the concentration of authority in a small group of individuals.

When the discussion of the founding members' role probes into the deeper layers of management at the university, there is a strong sense of the value of this legacy that at the VP level could be mainly a representation of their attributes. Yet at the middle management, this perception transforms into a myth about how they set out over 30 years ago to challenge all these difficulties and how they have achieved such great success until now. From top to bottom, the relevance of the founding member factor expands from just a milestone in the lifespan of the organisation to the living myth of the organisation and part of its culture. Another attribute that is consistent with this founding member story is the shared responsibility of the success. The organisation and the founding members recall it as a mutual responsibility between the president and the comptroller. This balance is also exhibited in the way they share the operation of the institution.

However, when the founding members are asked about their legacy, this shared reality changes and diverges. The comptroller has focused his legacy on the idea behind the institution, a conceptualization of what and why the organisation exists, and the reason it should continue beyond his lifetime. Meanwhile, the conversation of legacy with the president hinted at his perception of value and the preservation of his vision of the role and direction for the organisation, including the responsibility to the families of the students who believed in the promise and values supported by the institution. This difference could be challenging since they are directing their attention to two different approaches to construct the legacy. The concept of a legacy for the comptroller is entirely independent of the person who assumes the president's role in the future because the organisation should have points of control and protocols to assure that the main idea is transmitted beyond the person who takes over the role. For the president, his successor is highly relevant since it could be his re-incarnation becoming part of his legacy itself. This difference is even more glaring when the mechanism of succession is discussed. For example, the comptroller declares how the successor could even be picked through an internal democratic method, but the president stands against such a model for selection, marking it as a source of risk for the organisation. Even if the legacy is relevant, there is a shared understanding between founding members that breaks Babikian's (2006) idea of legacy through family members. The discussion on succession is closer to the model described by Ip and Jacobs (2006) of a long-term vision of success as a method to connect ownership and legacy.

During the first succession, the beliefs of the founding members should be considered part of the model, since this is more than just a search, selection and hiring process. This first succession is the physical representation of the transition to a new model of management beyond the founding members and the beginning of their legacy. Since their conceptualization of what their legacy means is divergent, the final model should assure that both founders feel confident about the continuity of the organisation and the way it represents them.

Small Business Perspective

From the conversation with the founding members and other participants, it was clear that the organization has evolved to become a large company which is manifested by the number of employees, graduates, revenue, campus, and overall complexity. From this perspective, the condition of small business becomes more of a mindset condition more than a real organizational feature, reason why it will not be included as an element for further discussion in the following chapters.

Family Business

The conversation with both founding members, President and Comptroller, was clear to establish their position concerning the concept of a family business. Even if in the past it could have been perceived as a family business, the local policies and regulations of the Higher Education sector do not allow this condition and it is no longer a viable alternative. The President did not make any reference to the family as an alternative for succession, meanwhile, the Comptroller declared that this was not an alternative. Grounded on these observations, the family business will not be considered as an alternative or a concern to be attended to as part of the succession plan.

Layers of Management and Succession

During the interview process, it was evident that the organisation has different management layers, each layer sharing asymmetric information about the president, his role, position on a possible succession and belief of how this first succession could unfold. This difference of information and perspectives was more evident between middle and top management, which was declared through the interviews as a significant gap in the organisation. Internally, this difference is described under the Spanish term "*cupula*", which could be translated as a dome that represents the higher structure in the organisation. Middle management mentioned this term as the representation of the group of people that makes decisions at the organisation, a group including the president, comptroller and vice-presidents.

What was interesting about this internal description is the clear separation between management layers so that it is not clear how someone could move up from the middle to top management. Participants agreed that there is no' clear path to professional development from middle to top management, no mentoring program or a succession model declared for any top management position at the university. When the vice-presidents were asked about how they got into their current jobs, their professional track seemed to be based on performance but without any specific or programmed progression. This progression for one of them even caused contractual issues since his contract and his actual job was continually changing based on the demand and invitation from the founding members to assume more responsibilities.

The HR director declared as part of the organisations' development plan a leadership training with several steps; however, this is just a standard and transversal model of training to improve middle management skills and not linked with any specific output. This lack of direction does not mean that the organisation does not have vertical or horizontal mobility. Yet, the actual pathway of how vertical mobility happens and how people are selected to move in this direction is indeterminate. The shared belief among the participants at the VP level, people who have experienced this internal development, is the relevance of the involvement of the founding members as sponsors for their internal progress into these positions. There is a sense of being picked for the job rather than selection through a transparent process from other candidates. These declarations made by the participants reveal the lack of policies and procedures to generate a funnel of leadership as described by Gothard and Austin (2013). This issue is closely linked with the career development approach and, as Confer and Fulmer (2003) describe it, a way to generate a pool of candidates to move into top management positions. Career development in alignment with succession planning could be an alternative to eliminate this middle and top management complexity.

Regarding the succession of the president, the literature (Ballaro and Polk, 2018) mentioned the importance of the board of directors as an entity involved in the decision-making on the future leader of a corporation. The interviews exposed the lack of authority of the current board, becoming in the own words of a board member mostly an advisory unit. For the top and middle management, the board serves as just a bureaucratic unit that the organisation needs,

but without a clear purpose or meaning in the leadership structure of the institution. For the long-term viability of a succession model, this could be a challenge to confront since now both founding members are involved at the foundation level, board and top management simultaneously, which could be the source of the board's missing authority.

Succession in Time and Place

The interviews and the participants stressed the importance of thinking about the succession of the president as a relevant milestone for the organisation. However, there was no definite timeframe. The board member explicitly voiced how important it is to plan and do it before it becomes an urgency to confront. The VPs and the middle management did not estimate any specific timeframe, leaving this decision to the president himself, something that he will decide when the time comes. Something similar happened when the founding members were interviewed because both see the need to start planning, but the when and how is still uncertain. Both founders are over the age of retirement, 65 years old for men in Chile, which could also be declared as a source of risk because of possible health conditions keeping in mind that the purpose is to prepare a succession to avoid an emergency replacement (Rothwell, 2011; Burdett, 1993).

Any plan of succession should take into consideration the timeframe required for an appropriate succession process, including any transition needed to assure consistency in the model of management and to transmit the ideals professed in the interviews by the founding members. Meanwhile, the organisation realises the importance of the succession and validates the successor. This lack of definitions and procedures seems to be the outcome of an uncomfortable topic to be discussed between founding members, something that they did not want to confront until now.

Characteristics of the Successor

The president's role was described in similar ways by most participants, with some indications about the importance of the network and interpersonal skills of the person assuming the job. Since this role is highly public, internally and externally, the successor should be able to accomplish this "*mayor role*", as it was described by the president in terms of its similitude to

the management of a small town. This description is consistent with the non-profit intersection with the higher education context, where people involved in this environment have to work with communities that share beliefs, becoming even more relevant to maintain a close sync with the purpose and the people (Melville-Ross, 2010).

It was clarified that both founding members are not thinking of continuing their legacy through their family members, even though they are open to including external candidates into the pool of possible successors. This openness to outsiders is consistent with the lack of internal candidates and the missing structure of succession for this purpose, harking back to the missing pathways for internal promotion in non-profits described by Leland, Carman and Swartz (2012). The successor should be able to navigate the complexity of representing the face of an organisation that has been led by its founding members, who are recognised as leaders and part of the internal mythology, but at the same time, both founding members expressed interest in staying close to the organisation when they move away from their current roles, which for any person taking on the primary leadership of the institution could be a challenge. The successor will have to deal with the leadership of the university, with all the considerations of a non-profit university in a small country, and the role has the caveat of maintaining a close relationship with the founding members to accurately represent their ideals.

Because of the uncovered relevance of this relationship of authority and shared leadership between both founding members, the successor's profile for the president should try to combine both perspectives and kinds of leadership, president and comptroller, to become the person in whom could be recognised the past and the projection to the future for the university. This profile is a mix between the political figure and the general manager, a person that should be able to manage both worlds and balance the operation with the exposure needs of the institution. The VPs and the middle management interviews dropped some hints about the requirements of this shared view of the future for the organisation, where the community will be more involved in the decision-making process, a sort of evolution into a mature organisation, jettisoning the highly hierarchical small business mindset of one body with two heads.

Raw Data and Coding

From the interviews, it was possible to achieve relevant insights, some of them highly concrete and direct, and others that required a more profound analysis to understand their depth and meaning. Each interview was uploaded into software that allowed the mark and coding of this information, a process that will be explained in detail in the Thematic Analysis piece of the chapter.

Examples of this analytical and reflexive process are for example how from the interview with the Comptroller he mentioned “this is the reflection of how a project of this nature perdures over time” and “this industry is like no other because an entrepreneurship of this nature doesn’t allow its founders to become the owners”. These quotes are highly relevant for the research, one pointing to the code of legacy and the other into entrepreneurship and legacy together, denoting the perception of the Comptroller about the characteristics of his role and the future of the organization. The same was done with the President’s interview as he mentioned “I am the founder of the university for over 31 years” which was coded under the concept of founding members, which allows acknowledging that he still sees himself as a founder even beyond the President role. Another relevant quote from the President was “legacy must be oriented to protect the principles and mission of the institution” declaring also “these values and principles should stay forever at the University”, information that was coded into legacy and vision.

The codes and groups evolved from the inductive process of reviewing, analysing to then select the proper codification itself, recognizing some patterns among the information provided and perspectives across the interviews. This was an evolving process of exploration and discovery. An example of a transcribed interview can be found in the Appendix 2 section, and table 4-1 shows the results of the code process through all interviews.

4.5. Thematic Analysis

The data in the form of transcripts were uploaded into the software Atlas.ti to be subject to a thematic analysis from the information provided in each interview. The first step was to familiarise oneself with each transcript and then code the most significant paragraphs from

each interview. This exercise was done over the eight interviews performed, generating a total of twenty-one codes. Codes ranged from topics such as the family business, board members, succession, vision, legacy and more concepts embedded into the interview’s designed questionnaire guidelines. The number of codes and their representativeness on each interview are shown in the following table, where “Gr” represents the total number of marked quotes from the interview:

	INTERVIEW								Totals
	Founder Son Gr=14	Communications Director Gr=23	Comptroller Gr=18	Board Member Gr=10	VP Quality Gr=19	VP Research Gr=17	President Gr=16	HR Director Gr=19	
○ Board Gr=12	1	2	0	2	1	2	2	2	12
● Career Development	5	2	0	0	6	4	1	1	19
○ Communication Gr=2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
○ Culture Gr=4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	4
● Cupula Gr=6	1	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	6
● Decision Making Gr=20	2	3	2	4	2	3	1	3	20
● Entrepreneurship Gr=5	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	5
○ External Sourcing Gr=5	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	5
● Family Business Gr=3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
● Founding Members	1	1	1	2	1	5	3	5	19
○ Internal Succession	0	3	0	0	2	5	3	2	15
● Leadership Gr=46	4	5	4	1	8	11	5	8	46
● Legacy Gr=21	0	0	12	1	1	2	4	1	21
○ Management Gr=8	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	8
○ Mentorship Gr=8	0	5	0	0	1	1	0	1	8
○ Merit Gr=1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
○ Politics Gr=16	1	2	0	0	3	3	5	2	16
○ Public Image Gr=11	0	2	0	1	2	3	2	1	11
○ Recruitment Gr=4	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
○ Timing Gr=2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
● Vision Gr=25	0	0	8	3	2	5	7	0	25
Totals	20	27	34	16	36	45	38	36	252

Table 4-1: Interview Coding

Theme analysis was performed from this coding structure to establish certain groups to perform a comparative and interrelationship analysis between the codes and areas detected in the literature as relevant characteristics of succession planning. Five groups were established to connect the multiple codes. These areas are president’s role, leadership structures, organisational development, management and culture, and succession. Leadership was unpacked into three meaningful sub-themes, which then are used along with the other two main themes. The following diagram provides the structure and interaction between groups and codes, where it is also possible to see some overlap between certain codes and groups.



Figure 4-1: Thematic Groups and Codes

The relationship between groups and codes is established through the input provided into the multiple quotes and their significance for this research. Through this cross of information, the data can establish the most relevant areas for each participant. The following table shows this analysis where the higher number and the corresponding dark green colour determine the most cited area by each participant. Note that “GS” is the size of the coding group.

		THEMES						
		Leadership Structures Gr=65; GS=3	Legacy Gr=47; GS=3	Management and Culture Gr=22; GS=6	Organizational Development Gr=76; GS=4	President Role Gr=56; GS=3	Succession Gr=30; GS=5	Totals
INTERVIEWS	Founder Son Gr=14	6	1	1	9	5	4	26
	Communications Director Gr=23	9	1	0	11	9	7	37
	Comptroller Gr=18	5	14	7	5	4	0	35
	Board Member Gr=10	5	5	0	5	2	2	19
	VP Quality Gr=19	9	4	5	14	10	3	45
	VP Research Gr=17	13	9	1	14	11	6	54
	President Gr=16	7	8	2	7	6	4	34
	HR Director Gr=19	11	5	6	11	9	4	46
	Totals	65	47	22	76	56	30	296

Table 4-2: Themes and Quotes

The theme with more quotes across the interviews is about organisational development, which was quoted mostly by directors and vice-presidents; however, it was not the main issue to be discussed for the president, the comptroller, or the board member. This analysis allows the recognition of a need for clarity from the organisation into how careers are developed and how someone moves into top management. Succession as a theme does not earn much attention in the conversation, but as detailed in the interviews, there seems to be a general comprehension about the lack of succession structures and procedures, which is identified as a need but maybe a long-term solution which is not currently well-defined. Succession is defined in different terms from the participants’ perspective, including internal succession, external sourcing, mentoring, or straight forward recruiting depending on the role and hierarchical level.

A commonality among the data that is interesting to mention is, for example, the expectations of leadership structure from the VP of research who is someone that came with an

international and outside perspective, which is consistent with the perspective of the HR director who is someone trying to follow best practices for the benefit of the organisation. These best practices include the HR director's strong opinion about the relevance of succession and its relationship with legacy. There is also a similar weight in the opinions from the VP and directors in most group codes and then some coherent weight to their professional disciplines. The founder's son has a perspective that differs in some degree from the other director level participants, with little participation in the groups of legacy and management and culture. This is crucial to notice, as a direct family member in a position of authority at the institution, does not spend much time talking about legacy and mostly directing his attention to the leadership model of both founding members as an attribute to be conserved.

The president exhibits an even quote participation on each theme, except for areas of management and culture or succession, where there is less information provided through the quotes. These areas do not seem to be of concern for him since, as he declared through the interview, he is willing to bring an outsider if the person can fulfil the requirements of the 'role. The comptroller as the other founding member is expressing how important legacy is as a theme, which is his main concern, as he declared that he is not strongly connected with the person accepting the president's role but more concerned about the control that he would be able to exert to maintain the long-term vision of the institution. The quotes from the president and comptroller bare their differences in opinion about legacy because the president connects the idea of legacy to the role and the persona, *"Legacy is an important part of the role and is transcendent because we are responsible for guiding the professional development of the students, a responsibility with them and the parents"*, while the comptroller talks *"about the legacy of a vision, which could be adjusted if needed"*. The comptroller is the only one that reflects on the family business aspect of the organisation but just to clarify that this is a topic that is not going to be part of the future for the organisation.

Other considerations that sprung from the thematic analysis are the consistency between the organisation's layers about the codes and relevant themes. The first group could be defined as the higher hierarchical management which includes the board member, president, and

comptroller, who share similar impressions but it is important to note how the board member includes a new code about timing, when and how this succession should happen before it becomes an emergency replacement. The second groups include both founding members and the vice-presidents, which for the organisation is defined as the “*cupula*”. It is interesting how the VP of quality, someone who built most of his career at the university, adds into the coding subjects as “*cupula*”, merit and culture, while the VP of Research who was hired because of his profile bears more similarities with the founding members in terms of his codes and themes of opinion. This alignment between the VP of quality and the founding members allow us to understand the micro-culture, expectations and in-the-work-training that someone from the inside must receive to be worthy of moving into top management positions. This second layer also exhibits more connection with the theme about the president’s role, which is also aligned with their responsibilities and level of interaction with the authority. Finally, the third group is the director level, which is compared with the founding members. They have a deeper interest in a managerial subject about leadership, decision-making and career development. The division of this complexity into layers provides insights about the questions and issues to be answered to each group so that the organisation could feel comfortable with the model or proposal for this first presidential succession.

Each interview was a conversation and self-reflection from the participants on their perceptions about the issue of a presidential succession, where the context and personal experiences at the institutions were represented in their quotes. One aspect that was ubiquitous in the reflections is the sense of institutionalism signified by the president of the university, including the political image and personality of the institution. This was also apparent through the word cloud created from the data collected through the interviews after a clean-up process to find the most relevant and repeated words. The most repeated words, which could be obvious from the questions asked at the interviews were “university”, followed by “believe”, “president”, “vision”, “leadership”, “decision”, “organisation”, “board”, and “succession”.



Figure 4-2: Word Cloud in Spanish

The thematic analysis has been able to confirm certain impressions from the interviews and the analysis performed based on the dialogue with the participants, but it also uncovered patterns in the information including topics, themes and interrelations between ideas expressed and the organisational structures. Leadership is established as the most relevant element of concern which is incorporated into multiple larger themes as the leadership structure, the president’s role and organisational development. The ideas expressed through the interview quotes do not contradict each other. On the contrary, they tend to complement the information and paint a richer portrait about the institution.

The participants at any level share the perspective of a current utilitarian board, which in the future could be critical for the operation, including to perpetuate the idea of legacy and vision from the comptroller. The President has a more pragmatic perspective about his role and the leadership for the institution, which is based on the distinct qualities that the person should possess to represent the institution, pointing to the possibility of inducting someone from the outside who could fulfil the role which he conceives as highly political. This complementarity between the founding members is then analysed top-down in terms of organisational layers, finding similarities between layers and differences in how a succession should be addressed and the certainties that should be provided to each group.

4.6. Concluding Remarks and Learning

When the issue of presidential succession was initially explored, one of the options was having a very straight forward kind of problem-solution strategy to be implemented. However, after

going through all the in-depth interview processes and having these insightful conversations with several stakeholders, including the president himself, it was possible to grasp the issue's magnitude and complexity. The thematic analysis was able to provide evidence based on qualitative data about certain characteristics of this organisation and the issues to be confronted. The founding members are at the centre of this complexity, and both of them will have to agree on any final decision to be made regarding the succession of the president, also making clear that the current board of directors structures will hold only an advisory position into how, when and who should be the successor. The action team faces the challenge of engaging in a deep reflection into how the organisation should proceed to establish a succession model in harmony with the founding members and their legacy. They must accommodate specific characteristics of this organisation and its governance structure and define the missing pieces to allow a smooth transition for the institution.

Chapter 5. Cycles of Action and Reflection

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will describe in detail the last phase for the action research thesis, which involves the cycles of action. action research, including the action learning piece, and is a methodology demanding time and dedication (Greenwood, 2006) to uncover the real perception of each individual and thrust that knowledge into reflection and analysis for the benefit of the organisation. Action research is more than just qualitative, quantitative or mixed sources of data. Action research is about the process beyond the collection of the data and the manner in which a group of individuals who are part of the organisation reflects about this information, to provide additional questions and possible solutions, but mostly learning about the complex situation itself and the possible outcomes of the issue explored.

The outcome of a doctoral action research initiative is to obtain what could be described as a workable solution, which in some ways could be just the declaration of a dead-ending, but this conclusion has to be arrived at with a proper doctoral methodology that can assure how reliable and valid the result of the research conducted is. When the process is undertaken as an action research, these attributes of workable, valid and reliable are critical to assure the adoption by stakeholders, since the output of the research will be valuable new knowledge for the organisation (Greenwood, 2006). For the researcher, who in this case is directly involved in the top management of the organisation, beyond obtaining a proposal for the first presidential succession, the outcome must prove to be a substantial contribution for the organisation, which is also consistent with the commitment of the researcher and what was expressed to each participant and stakeholder who contributed to this research.

The following lines will explore in depth how the cycles of action were deployed, considering what has been gleaned from the issue, the organisation and each participant during the in-depth interview phase.

5.2. Description of the Methodology

During the selection of the participants in the interview phase, each one of them was informed about the possibility of being invited to continue in the cycles of action phase of the research. Their selection was pending the result of the interviews, mostly about the findings of this interaction with the stakeholders. From the interview phase and specific quotes from the top and middle management, it was exposed how relevant it was to have different hierarchical levels of the organisation involved in the reflection of how this succession could be addressed in this specific organisation and context. The interviews also showed the importance of the relationship between both founding members for any succession process to be designed for this organisation. The findings also included the low impact of the board on the current decision-making beyond their direct advisory role for the founders, which was a valuable input when the final action team was defined.

Each interview participant was included in the table, searching for people who can provide a broad perspective for the organisation and limit the possible biases or conflicts of being involved in the reflection and learning phase of the research. The researcher included several comments based on the interviews performed before deciding how beneficial it was to invite a participant into the action team, also considering the possibility of each one of them joining the initiative.

To select the participants that moved into the action team, the researcher developed the following table by participant and attributes:

Participant	Main Characteristic	Pros and Cons	¿Selected?
President	Founding member	The main person affected by the reflection and future proposal. He must be the person receiving the final output of the reflection.	NO
Comptroller	Founding member	He is strongly connected with the president, probably coming to an agreed decision between founders how the succession should ensue. He will be a decision-maker and is not recommendable as part of the team	NO

		as he could push his perspective over what must be agreed between founding members.	
Board member	Well-connected with the founding members	Not very involved in the day-to-day activities of the organisation. He is experienced and is an advisor to the founding members, but he is not a clear representative of the organisation's perspective.	NO
VP of quality and planning	Top manager with a long history at the institution, including personal successions	This VP has been involved in the organisation for many years, related to both founding members and with personal experience in internal successions.	YES
VP of research	Top manager with a close relationship with the comptroller	A VP with a personal succession history, but his experience is extremely limited to the research area of the institution and not very connected with the president's role.	NO
Director of human resources	A manager that manages the HR policies at the organisation, mostly for middle management	This director has a good understanding of the current programs and roles in the middle management and the gap in projecting future internal leaders into top management positions. His insight could be valuable; however, he lacks a deep understanding of how the senior management and the board work.	YES
Director of communications	Manager with a close job relationship with the president	The director has a good understanding of the president's role and his day-to-day activities, which is valuable to understand the role and the impact of the succession. She lacks structural and political knowledge about the organisation.	YES
Director of management and control	Son of the comptroller	He is too close to one of the founding members, which also conflicts with the declaration from the president and the comptroller about not planning to continue their legacy through their direct family. His history at the institution also does	NO

		not provide information that could be valuable for the team.	
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Table 5-1: Selection Criteria for the Action Team

The final team selected constituted the VP of quality and planning, the director of human resources, and the director of communications, with the guidance of the researcher who is also a top manager at the organisation. This small group provides the right level of representation from the organisation, without generating conflict with the people directly affected by the result of this reflection, minimising possible biases from the team and yet representing the organisation’s perspective better. The selected team also provides a balance between their knowledge about the organisation and the president’s role, having practical, political, structural and historical information regarding the institution. Each selected participant was invited, and all of them agreed to be part of the action team. It is important to acknowledge that the board member was not included because of his dissociation with the institution, which makes his point of view objective but far from the reality of the organisation.

The ground rules for the action team were the agreement to participate in a series of undefined number of meetings, where each participant would have the same weight in the conversation and participation, ignoring any kind of relationship of authority from their day-to-day job, and providing a secure space for everyone. It was declared for them, in the same way that it was done during the interview phase that all information would be treated as confidential and the fact that this thesis has a deadline of five years which was agreed with the organisation at the time of receiving their approval for it. The meetings were held at different locations, all agreed with the participants, including meeting rooms at the institution, but also external facilities to promote the free exchange, dialogue and reflection between participants. Each meeting was conducted following a minute protocol, something that is a common practice at the organisation. This tool was beneficial to establish a schedule and a protocol to manage and keep track of the conversation. The minute was reviewed and approved by the team at the end of each meeting. The last-minute was the first item of discussion for the following session, to go over the reflection, lessons and any action that was agreed on or even additional questions

surfacing from the conversation and needing clarification from some of the participants from the interviews or external information that should be reviewed as complementary data.

The meetings were guided by the researcher, who also served as the secretary to compile the ideas and findings into the written minutes. The guiding process was mostly to limit the conversation to the complex issue to be tackled; meanwhile, thoughts and reflections of each participant were also included in the dialog. The researcher was also the one in charge of including some aspects from the literature and specific elements from the interviews into the conversation to ensure that all these findings were considered at the moment to establish some elements of reflection and define the learning and actions to be taken. The role of the researcher must switch between researcher, team member, guide and leader to bring out the best of each team member during this reflection phase. The insider action researcher must not just deal with possible biases but also *“act as a bridge between academic and the company”* (Williander & Styhre, 2006) merging the research and practical world with the objective of solving the complex issue defined. This assortment of roles for the researcher could prove confusing for the team and other members of the organisation, and it was an issue to be managed for this research, which was mostly solved through the use of direct communication with the participants, and strong support for the founding members as sponsors of this initiative.

Each cycle was considered an iteration from the previous reflection and agreements between the participants as actions to be taken, which was more than just a straight line of progress since the team had the right to go back into the previous issues discussed if there were any new points of view or additional information to be incorporated. The team was able to manage the pace and progress of the cycles; however, the researcher had the role of contributing to the reflection but also ensuring that each voice was heard and that the cycle was moving forward as the iteration took place. The periodicity of the cycles was agreed upon by the team members. It fluctuated based on their agenda, but also on the collection of external or additional information needed to be included as part of the analysis.

The following lines will describe each one of the cycles performed by the action team, the most relevant elements of discussion, the nature of the reflection, and the actions agreed from the dialogue between team members.

5.3. Cycle of Action

Meeting One

The first meeting occurred on December 31st of 2019, with the full participation of the action team, which until then, did not have information on who were the other participants selected to be involved in this next phase of the research. The participants knew each other, but they never had free space for collaboration where everyone had an equal position, voice and vote in how the discussion should proceed place. They all came from different areas of the organisation, responded to different internal structures, and even professionally, had very different backgrounds. The researcher first set the basic rules for the team, providing them with an explanation of what this kind of safe space is trying to achieve and an insight into the inquiring mindset required to explore complex issues with an open mind with the intent to gain new understanding from questioning the current conditions. For this highly hierarchical institution, this way of shared contribution was uncommon. For the same reason, it required an additional effort from the participants and the researcher to contribute freely to each meeting. The initial response from the team members to this new approach to teamwork was positive, but not without questions and uncertainty of how applicable it could be in the rigid organisational structure.

Because each one of them was involved in the interview phase, they all had the experience to be questioned about the first presidential succession issue that the research is exploring. This previous interaction and extracts of the literature, such as Polk and Ballaro (2018) and Adler (2019), surprisingly left them thinking about the relevance and impact of this complicated situation, including its relevance in the higher education context, some of them even declaring *“This is a complex issue that I had never thought of”* or *“The interview left me thinking about this issue and other situations that are not currently covered by our policies and procedures.”*

There was a general agreement about the relevance of questioning these matters that until now the organisation just treated as a given fact. The team all agreed about the significance of this specific complex problem for the university and the value of this conversation. The team, since the interview phase, had a different sense of awareness about these complex managerial issues that could critically impact the organisation. Yet, no one is working on them, or at least they do not know if they have been addressed by the founding members or any other strategic team at the institution. The initial dialogue also explained that all the participants shared a similar perception that the organisation was evolving into a more mature kind of institution, which required new policies, protocols and organisational structures to confront the future.

To provide a shared understanding of the research so far, including context, results of the interviews, literature reviewed and findings from the thematic analysis, the researcher made a presentation covering most of these topics, and he opened up the conversation to additional queries about the research and the information collected through the interviews. The information provided by the researcher included all the reflections made in chapter 4 after the interviews were completed, including the relationship between founding members, the role of the board of directors and the perception of middle and top management about the issue itself. From the literature review, information was shared regarding the studied organisational structures including small businesses, non-profits, universities and privately-owned companies, as well as the main characteristics of a succession process and the difference between succession and replacement, all information relevant to understanding the desired outcome of the process.

This introduction was supplemented by the team members who recalled some local examples of first successions or transfers of ownerships in higher education institutions in Chile, which happened as a result of the death of the owner who was also serving as president or because the organisation was sold to a third party, which brought their management onboard. This information was an interesting initial finding of the team since this institution was the only one of the first eight private universities founded after the constitutional change of 1988 (Cruz-Coke, 2004) that still has its owners overseeing the day-to-day operations and where one of them is the current president. The team agreed on how this data supports the idea behind the

research, and how this example demands declaration of an urgency about a succession model to be addressed soon and preparation of the organisation to move to a new structure of leadership that will stop relying on the founding members in such an intense way. The team also agreed to review some of these successions and replacements in detail, including reaching some of these organisations to see if there are some valuable lessons that could be included in this research and to present that information at a future session of the team. For example, the director of communications declared, *“It could be interesting to find out how they conducted their first presidential succession, internally and with the media.”* The researcher made clear that the information could add value; however, from the standpoint of the action research, this organisation has its context and reality, which makes it unique, so any comparison should be made carefully, making this external information more of an additional data than directly applicable information.

When the findings from the interviews were disclosed to the team members, some elements were common and shared among them; however, some other findings were new to the team. Because of the little relationship they have with the board of directors, they were able to confirm their suspicions about the role that this organisational unit has in this institution, beyond how it is described in books or on the webpage of the university. For the team, it came as a surprise that the founding members have not yet discussed the succession issue in depth and that some of their statements regarding the future of the institution are misaligned, one promoting the legacy of the vision and the other searching for personal legacy. From this point of shared understanding of the issue, the reflection took place into what could be described as a collaborative effort to collate all the accumulated internal and external knowledge about this complexity into a form that would be appropriate in the context of this institution.

Reflecting on the condition of the institution and recognising its past, the team agreed that the organisation has a strong culture that relates to both founding members. The founding members themselves have different attributes that are recognised by the institution and represented in the leadership coding made through thematic analysis, and the organisation perceives this complementarity as value, expecting an active political vision from the president while, the comptroller holds a more managerial position in the university. The difference of

opinion between them regarding the future of the university, one more open to a more democratic model of leadership selection, and their description of legacy is seen as a source of risk because any path to be taken regarding the succession will require both founder's involvement for success. Another critical element discussed was this internal definition of "*cupula*" when the middle management described the top management at the university. This term involves the unstructured model for organisation development between middle and top management and how strategic decisions are made.

This first meeting could be seen as an opening statement, using most of the time to get everyone on board, share information to set the same level of understanding about the issue and information gathered so far, and set expectations and basic rules regarding what an action team should be. This initial meeting was also the opportunity to examine the data and expose some of the ideas contained in the information to the reflection of the team before engaging in any formal idea or proposal. The team agreed to take some actions in the direction of collecting supplemental information from other institutions in the local context, since all the private universities that were established in the same period have already transitioned to new models of management beyond their foundational structures. There was a second action agreement after recognising this kind of complexity and all the history supporting the culture of the university that this succession should be treated as a multistep process, and it should be acknowledged that the objective is far beyond the succession of the first president. The goal should be to establish a model of succession that will help to preserve the institution beyond its founding members.

Initially, the research plan was to perform several full action research cycles; however, as it will be described in the rest of the chapter, the meetings concentrated around the steps of diagnosis and planning action with a strong focus on reflection. The main objective defined by the team was to create and establish a succession plan and not to perform minor actions. The team saw the implications and relevance of the implementation of a succession model that could permeate to the whole organisation, instead of the current condition of constant reaction to unwanted changes in the top management level. At the time of this thesis, two significant events happened in Chile, which is also the cause of additional time spent in this research, one

being the social crisis that initiated on October 18, 2019, the source of several changes in the country including the constitution itself. The second was the COVID-19 pandemic, which expanded from China to almost everywhere in the world, hitting Chile in March 2020. None of these events are a cause of concern for the future deployment of this action research. Yet, these events will probably imply a push back in time on any further action on this research, until the situation stabilises for the country and the university.

Meeting Two

This second meeting was held on January 6, 2020, and again had the active participation from the team members. The session started with the review of the last minutes, which confirmed the general agreements taken and allowed the team to speed up and focus their attention on the strong division that the organisation makes between middle and top management. This separation, once again the term “*cupula*”, seems to provide a wall of trust that the founding members have in place to keep close tabs on the operation of the institution and work out most of the strategic decisions within a small group of selected people. The team sees this structural division as a challenge to improve the overall succession model since the vertical mobility between these two layers happens mostly as a consequence of merit only if it is directly identified by one or both of the founding members; merit by itself does not provide this kind of growth opportunity. The HR director declares “*Internal mobility, I believe, is well established until the director level; however, how someone can move into a VP level is a black box to me.*” He made his comment since he does not have any clear definition about what is genuinely expected for these roles. This comment made sense from the perspective of the non-profit organisations, lacking structure for top management succession (Leland, Carman, and Swartz, 2012), and the results from the thematic analysis. The VP of quality and planning described how his process of succession happened “*It was a reaction to a need of the organisation, and the offer was made through a direct call from the president closing the deal before exposing the proposal to the board*”, which exemplifies the decision-making process at the university for this kind of role and the lack of participation of the board.

The team recalled multiple examples of internal succession and replacement, where the founding members took the final call on the individual assuming the strategic role at the top management level and the kind of filter that they have applied to select each individual. Something that emerged clearly from the discussion is how the first filter applied by the founding members to fill out a top management role is not based strictly on competencies and skills for the job but about the perception of how loyal and trustworthy the candidate is to assume the role. Then the selected candidates are assessed through a second filter, exclusively by the founding members, which is based on skills, competencies and internal recognition of the individual among their peers. These ideas follow what was described by (Motwani, Levenburg, Schwarz, & Blankson, 2006) as some attributes of the small business leadership and top management designation. The reflection made by the team included the analysis of some examples when the founding members fired members of this selective staff, and the common element was their independent decision-making, which could have been a risk for the founders. Observing the data from the interviews, both founding members clarified that they have the last word about who accedes to the top leadership role from the private model of governance, which the president declares as a significant attribute that allows flexibility and agility.

The team also reflected on the complexity of having the founding members also acting as owners and leading operators, since it is possible to recognise from the interviews how middle and top management see them as the physical representation of the organisational culture. For the successor of the president, if the founders stay too close to the operation, this could be the source of additional conflict, because people could try to contact them directly to avoid the authority of the new leader. The opposite could also happen, by having the founding members influence the operation of the institution, without discussing it with the new president. The action team declared that the succession process should consider the most suitable organisational position where to move the founding members, bearing in mind that the current board of directors does not seem to meet the criteria for being declared a fully functional decision-making unit. The team mentioned how *“the founding members keep a close balance of their relationship of power which could be seen in their interviews, and how they stay away from each other’s toes, is important to keep this balance after the succession happens”*. This

discussion opened the question to whether the founding members would be willing to shift out of the structure when the new president arrives, how involved in the operation they want to remain, and if they are planning to retire simultaneously when the time comes. The researcher agreed to discuss these questions with the founding members before the next meeting was scheduled.

Meeting Three

This third meeting on January 20, 2020, began with the review of the last minutes and by providing additional input from the agreed meeting between the researcher and the founding members. This conversation was the first official meeting with both founding members, where they received feedback about the research and the kind of concerns that the action team raised. The founding members were open to the ideas discussed so far, and they declared their will to move out of the operation simultaneously as soon as the new president takes over, understanding how important it would be for the successor to take over the operation without their direct or indirect interference. The comptroller commented, *"This could allow us to move into a holding functional structure,"* thinking about a higher layer of management above the university and a projection of their future beyond their current roles.

This information was relevant for the team since it allowed them to propose a structural organisation that will support their desires in terms of legacy, meanwhile providing the right level of governance for the future leader. This desire also sets the need to find a succession model that must fill out both roles and personalities, to avoid a sensation of lack of guidance when they leave the operation and the direct contact with management. The transmission of the founding members' values and aspirations should be achieved through a long period of mentoring, providing the successor with training and leadership development (Hall-Ellis, 2015). As explored in the data, the founders' descriptions of legacy are different, and any proposal should be able to cover the vision and the persona objective as part of their desire of organisational perpetuity.

Since the process has been declared as a multiphase model to establish a long-term model for presidential succession, during the dialogue between the team there was one role that came

across as an interesting piece in the organisational chart to explore, the role of the *prorector*. The *prorector* is a role declared on the institutional statutes at the university that serves as the right hand of the president and oversees the operation of the most strategical units of the university. For example, in other institutions in Chile and by using their webpages as a reference, under this role of *prorector*, they oversee areas such as strategic communications, international relations, planning, marketing, and human resources, all critical units outside the academic operation. Currently, this role is vacant in the structure and has never been filled; however, in practical terms, the comptroller as the other founding member has been the one acting somewhat in the role since the inception of the institution. For the team, this role could serve as the most appropriate position from where an internal succession for the president could happen to provide a transition for middle and top management.

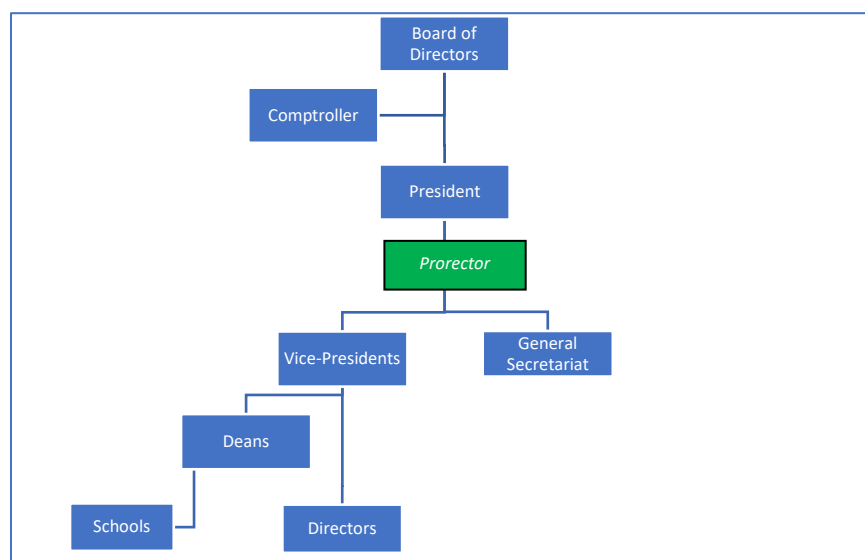


Figure 5-1: Organisational Structure including the *Prorector* unit

This idea of a *prorector* succeeding as the future president also connects with the proposal of the team and is also supported by the literature (Fusarelli, Fusarelli, and Riddick, 2018; Rodhes, Brundrett, and Nevill, 2008) regarding the benefit of having an internal successor to the role of future president. It is an expression of cultural continuity that is highly relevant for non-profit organisations and universities because of their strong connection with their mission and vision statements. The team sees the possibility of an internal role progression to recognise members of the organisation and establish a real path for growth into the top executive role at the

institution. However, beyond the positive side of this idea, this model requires that both founding members agree that the most suitable candidate for the job is already inside the organisation. This role is included in the proposed actions to be taken, as well as the need for a functional board of directors, that will provide guidance and a proper representation of the founders' ideals and objectives, something that should happen while they are still in their current roles and grooming the future leader to take over. This distance between the board and the institution is obvious in the quotes from the interviews, especially for middle management, and supported by the disconnect between the board and the organisational culture explicit in the data, becoming an entity that serves only the designated purpose of the founding members.

As the team was discussing the best path for an insider to assume a future leadership role at the institution, the issue of the family business and the feeling of ownership from the founding members came to the forefront. During the interviews, both founding members, one more energetic than the other, announced fact that no family member was expected to succeed to the presidential leadership of the institution shortly; at least, it was not planned that way. Currently, the role of the comptroller and his son, who is the second onboard under that structure, could be seen as the only conflict in terms of power and authority as a family connection. This conflict becomes more complicated since the comptroller is a unit that provides direct support to the board of directors and in this institution is above the role of the president. Because of the team's expectation that both founding members retire at the same time into a role above the board of directors, the comptroller and specifically the role of the son of one of them on that unit could engender a feeling of disparity between founding members. This possible source of conflict should be addressed right at the beginning so that they both agree on how they will balance their relationship of authority and legacy over the organisation, avoiding any kind of additional conflict during a difficult time such as the first presidential succession.

Finally, during this third meeting, the team agreed that the initial phase of preparation for the succession should be focussed on the founding members establishing relevant agreements and expectations, setting required structures of decision-making and mentorship, defining the

profile of the successor, and ensuring that they agree on the terms of how they will relinquish the operation providing the right balance of power. This balance could be supplied by including members of the family or selected participants in the future board of directors, always in parity, to assure the continuation of their shared legacy.

Meeting Four

The team already agreed to a multiphase model and the importance of the first station to reach definitions and agreements between founding members to ensure a smooth implementation. The meeting on January 29th, 2020, focused the discussion on the following phases of the succession process.

When the main agreements are finalised and the profile of the successor is ready, the question that will arise is who could fill this role. From the interviews, no participant was able to recognise inside the organisation someone who could succeed to the president's position. However, the team noticed that this could also be a consequence of missing definitions and internal structures to distribute this responsibility of selection and have clarity on the role of the new president. From the literature, it is possible to see how this is not an uncommon condition for non-profit and higher education institutions since they tend to have a gap in succession planning and talent development when it comes to the CEO/president role (Leland, Carman, and Swartz, 2012; Klein and Salk, 2013). When the time arrives, the founding members will have to agree if there is someone that could be mentored to assume the role or if they will have to import someone to take over in the future. In any case, whoever is selected must first step into the *prorector* role where they will receive direct mentorship from both founding members, while also being exposed to the organisation as a top leader overseeing several strategic units of the organisation—a sort of mentoring/training process that should last a couple of years to mature into the future role.

A new issue came across in the conversation with the team about the right timing for the succession. Because the university is an organisation with strong regulation from the government, there are specific processes that must be satisfied and complied with. One of the most important is to be accredited since it is linked with the financing of the students and the

representation of quality in the higher education system in Chile. The current accreditation process is a cycle of quality with a periodicity depending on the outcome of the report between 1 and 7 years. The university's last three accreditation processes were for equal periods of 5 years, and the next re-accreditation process will happen this 2020. The recommendation of the team is to try to avoid having a new president just on time for the following accreditation; this means that the succession should happen at least a year before or a year after the following accreditation process beyond 2020. The future president should be actively involved in the re-accreditation process; however, they must spend enough time in the role to minimise the impact of the succession in such a critical process.

The timing for implementation was also a relevant issue because both founding members are past the retirement age (+65 years old in Chile) meaning that any succession plan must consider their susceptibility to increasing health conditions or just their desire to retire, making urgent the need of establishing the succession model before it becomes a plan of replacement. The board member declared this as one of the relevant issues for this succession, establishing that it should happen before it is urgently needed. This argument was part of the team reflection when the topic of replacement versus succession was discussed (Dalton & Kesner, 1983; Grusky, 1960), with a shared agreement on the importance of guaranteeing that a planned succession takes place. When the succession is seen as a multiphase model with initial coaching for an agreement between the founding members, and then a mentorship for the selected successor, and finally moving to a new president who will be accountable to a reinforced and balanced board of directors, the period to establish an institutional succession process prolongs. It could become an issue because of the external and internal variables. Ideally, this first full loop of succession will include the second succession or re-election to allow founding members to adjust to the model and state the time definition for the presidential term, a cycle that should match the needs of the institution. Action at this meeting was defined as definitions in timing and sequence to set a model that will remain applicable overtime.

5.4. Planning and Action

When the team engaged in each meeting, the objective was to collectively use theory and data as the terrain and contribute by proposing actionable knowledge to help the organisation tackle the complex issue explored (Coughlan and Coughlan, 2002; Coughlan, 2003). The use of multiple sources of information, including literature and the insights from the in-depth interviews, the outcomes from the thematic analysis, and the contribution from everyone to the reflection allowed the team to structure the following proposal to establish a succession model for this specific organisation.

What was learned through the meetings and short cycles of diagnosis and planning is the importance of the active participation from both founding members during the whole process of succession and the organisation' preparation to face this challenge, to have a successful process. There is an agreement about their relevance for the organisation, including their self-perception as founding members and fundamental pieces of the organisation, in what seems a never-ending relationship with the institution. Because this is a private non-profit educational institution, many of the issues discussed by the action team were represented in the literature and confirmed by the interviews, including the lack of succession structures (Lovett, 2017), the possible benefits of an internal succession for organisational cultural reasons (Mckee and Froelich, 2016), the importance of the owners as decision-makers (De Vroey, 1975), or the relevance of the board for future successions (Klepczarek, 2017). The plan should address all these elements and more before it moves into action, something that will be described as a succession model for this specific institution.

Many things have been learned by the team so far, information that should be embedded in the proposal. The importance of the president and the second founding member in the political and decision-making structure of the organisation is a core characteristic. Both persons have closely balanced their roles and their interaction with the organisation and each other. Together, they act as a shared CEO leadership, which by itself increases the complexity in a CEO succession as described by Kesner and Sebora (1994). This balance is important for the future of the university, especially when there are signs of possible disagreements on issues to be

discussed, including the profile of the person who should become the future president. Another relevant topic is the lack of authority and structure of the current board of directors. This organisational unit will be highly relevant for the future of the institution and to protect the values and legacy of the founding members. For a succession plan across the organisation, the separation of layers between the top and middle management is another issue to be tackled, as the implementation plan must also propose some structural changes to set the right pathways in a well-established succession model across the organisation. The conceptualization of all these multiple insights, clusters and codes allowed the team to understand the situation through a collective action research approach, to then seek probable alternatives to tackle this complexity (Huxham, 2003).

The proposed succession model was envisioned as an integrated system that will provide a methodology beyond the issue of the first presidential succession, even if it is the most significant challenge that the model should surpass in the beginning. It was a model that could match Ingoranelli, Dennis and Schamberger's (2009) transfer of the organisational values and beliefs between current and future management to respond to the demand of the comptroller, while also responding to the CEO non-profit responsibilities (Mckee and Froelich, 2016) which are an important concern of the current president. Because the organisation lacks structures for a succession process for top leadership, currently leaving this decision-making process to the founding members, the model included several phases of development to allow the organisation to mature into a model embedded in the organisation's culture.

This specific proposal assumes that the start date for this transition will be during 2021 after the re-accreditation in 2020 and that the next accreditation process will happen in about five years from that date, allowing the new president to be in the role for at least one year before the institution is ready to undergo the next accreditation process. The succession model logically takes the following shape with four stages of development:

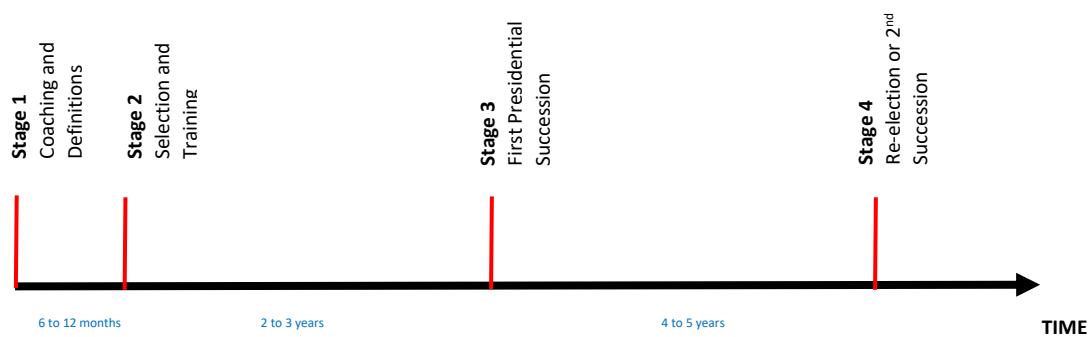


Figure 5-2: Integrated Succession Model

The model incorporates the proposed timeframes for each stage, which are just a proposal, and could vary depending on how the founders, the organisation and the environment react to this proposal. Their objective is to match the model against future accreditations for the university and minimise the impact of the succession in that process.

Stage 1 – Coaching and Definitions

This stage could be described as the most critical phase in the development of the succession model for this organisation. It is where both founding members should be able to establish a certain consensus about their expectations of the role, the kind of profile they are looking for, and the criteria to assure balance between them for the future of the organisation. This stage of definitions should also be the time to prepare both founding members to provide mentorship and guidance (Leland, Carman and Swartz, 2012) to the selected successor to confront this very complex unstructured role (Kesner and Seborá, 1994), something that has never been pursued at least systematically and visibly. The team recommends that this process should be supported by a consultant to help them methodologically and solve any discrepancy between founding members. The preparation for the role should include the intermediate role as *prorector* and the final role as president, assuring that each level will allow the successor to mature into the person they need to be to oversee the institution and their legacy. This approach will allow the establishment of a succession model for the long-term (Polk and Ballaro, 2018) while developing a respect for the organisational culture and idiosyncrasy (Clutterbuck, 1998; Maldonado, 2015) through a multistep approach.

During stage 1, the founders must also prepare the board of directors to assume their future responsibilities by transitioning from an advisory body into a decision-making piece of the organisation, forming an essential piece of the governance structure (Klepczarek, 2017). The need springs not only from the importance of the board in the current and future needs for top leadership recruitment but also from how it was clearly stated through the interviews that it is a weak link in the governance structure. This transformation should include the review of who they would like to be part of the board and how they will balance their relationship with power through them, establishing any missing guidelines and policies regarding their attribute and authority. The board of directors will become a vital piece of the organisational structure when they, as founding members, are not involved in the day-to-day operations anymore, becoming the unit of control over future CEOs (Kesner & Sebor, 1994). Founding members should also concentrate on discussing any additional source of conflict at this stage or in the foreseen future, which could be a risk of disagreement between them, and they are still being discussed. The team recommends including the discussion about the role of the comptroller and his unit beyond the founding member and the participation of their family members in the decision-making process for the institution. This family participation could be an unconscious intent of legacy extension through a family member (Baker and Wiseman, 1998), which is also restricted by the government (Republica de Chile, 2019).

Stage 2 – Selection and Training

The second stage of the model will focus the attention on the selection and training of the potential successor. The selection of the candidate must be confronted with the small business need of legacy (George, 2014; Schuman, 2011) and the large non-profit responsibilities of the CEO (Li-Ping Tang, Shin-Hsiung Tang, & Shin-Yi Tang, 2000). Depending on the profile created during stage one and additional agreements between founding members, this person could come from inside the organisation, which could be beneficial to minimise the impact from an outsider in terms of culture and internal values, which is consistent with Friedman's (2012) opinion. The person could also emerge from the outside, mainly through a headhunting or selection process directly managed by the founding members, that would be ideal for bringing into the organisation the attributes of innovation and change that Liang (2016) declared as the

added value of this approach. Independently of the person coming from inside or outside, the first role will be as *prorector* since it will be a safe place to learn from the organisation; meanwhile, it is a strategic role that maintains a close relationship with the founding members and top leadership. During this period, both founding members will provide guided mentorship to the selected successor, with the supervision of the consultant, to assure that the mentorship is done promptly and that they keep objective track of the progress of the successor and his readiness to assume the future role (Griffith, Baur, & Buckley, 2019). This period should be the time to define if the selected person is performing the role as expected or if any correction is needed before moving to the subsequent stage.

This stage is also the preparation for the founding members to assume their future role above the board of directors, where they will oversee the most strategic position of the organisation outside the day-today operations, and with the responsibility of preserving their legacy.

Because of this relevant change in their activities, this will require establishment of a protocol on how they will interact with the organisation, which hierarchically should be through the president of the board as their direct liaison with the institution, and how they should spread their vision to be transformed into operation. The comptroller will be a useful unit for the founding members, as it was described by one of them because it can provide a source of control for the board regarding how policies and protocols are followed and risks minimised.

Finally, during this stage, the organisation can establish a model of succession from where it can promote future leaders to the different layers of the organisation. This includes the selection of talent and the preparation through mentorship and training for the future roles (Groves, 2007). The team believes that the organisation needs to maintain a pool of candidates to assume future positions of leadership selected through a well-established model for internal succession. This succession strategy will be accompanied by the HR department and declared as a path of career development in the institution. By setting an internal model of succession with a career development alignment (Farthing, 2013), the team expects that the separation between middle and top management could be partially reduced.

Stage 3 – First Presidential Succession

After the successor has been mentored and trained, the board of directors has been reinforced and enhanced as an organisational unit, and the founding members feel convinced about proceeding to the next phase on their professional path, it will be time for the first presidential succession. The team described this succession as a multiple-stage process allowing the organisation to fill out all the leadership positions during this transition including the role of the *prorector*, which should be established as a standard position at the organisation. This role was recognised as the most appropriate position from where the board could select a future candidate for the president’s role.

The structure before and after the succession takes the following form:

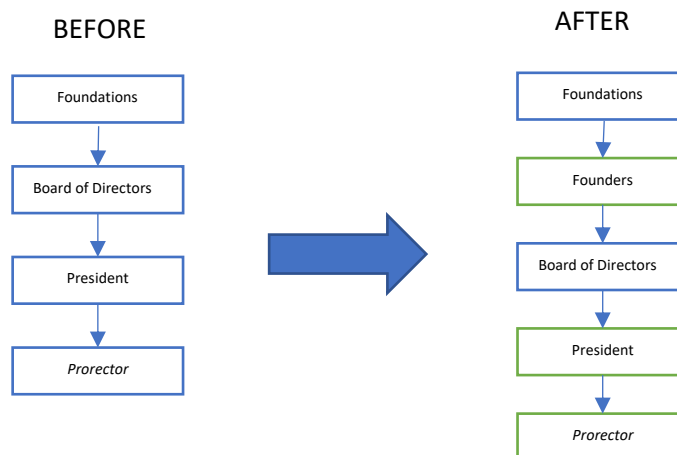


Figure 5-3: Succession Structures Before and After

The structure after the succession adds a new layer between the foundations and the board of directors. This unit is where the founders will meet and invite the president of the board and other officials as needed, to establish criteria about how the university should be run and what is expected of the performance of the board and the structure under it. The successor will assume the role of the president, and the *prorector* position should be assumed by the most appropriate vice-president, hoping to be trained to become the president in the future. The purpose of these sequential successions is to generate internal vertical mobility in the institution, assuming that movement into the top layer is commanded by the president and confirmed by the board of directors. The president is the only role at this level, which is

selected by the board with the confirmation of the founders and in the future by the foundations themselves. This transition of structures permits the founding members to stay close to the organisation but provides enough space for the new president to operate and establish a new model of management, delivering a clear message about the separation of roles and authority. This multiphase structure will be the introduction of a succession model into the organisation, which should keep evolving (Hall-Ellis, 2015).

The team expects this period to be a challenging time for the organisation because it will be the first time in over 30 years that it will be publicly led by someone other than the founding members. However, the smooth transition that has been planned and laid out should minimise the impact of this evolution as the organisation adjusts to this new form of management. The transition period of the new president and the establishment of the *prorector* as a second-in-command who will come from the inside provides support for the organisation meanwhile preparing for its new reality. When the current president sheds his role, the other founding member should do the same, which leaves open the question of who will assume the position of comptroller. This question will be open until both founding members agree on a plan to balance the structures and their family participation in the organisation.

Stage 4 – Re-election or 2nd Presidential Succession

This final stage works only as the confirmation of the established model, where after a period agreed by the founding members and the board of directors, the term of the president should be finalised. Depending on the protocols approved by founding members, this could be a time for re-election or moving into a 2nd presidential succession, which at this time should be something for which the organisation and its board is already prepared. This phase ends a period that could last between 6 and 9 years since the moment the founder members initiate the transition to the future structure of leadership.

5.4. Output and Conclusions

The multiples cycles of reflection and learning performed by the team were able to understand the issue and the possible implications for the organisation, making clear that several pieces should be set in place to assure a successful transition for the organisation into its first

presidential succession. Using context and data, the action team realised how important it was to establish specific structures and protocols as part of the action phase, before the actual succession takes place, to set a model that will benefit the organisation beyond the current need of change. This transition as it was described above implies a multistage model that could run for an extended period, to assure those founding members as well as the middle and top management that the environment can assimilate and value the future president, providing the successor a structure and support that will allow them to perform the role.

From the action standpoint, the learning provided by the team clarified how this integrated succession methodology should continue its cycles of action and learning as it develops, supporting the organisation and its founding members to develop it into the mature institution they want it to become. For this thesis and its timeframe, the resolution of the complexity will be left at the level of this proposal, which carefully incorporates all previous learnings, relevant literature and data collected through the process.

Chapter 6. Conclusions, Organisation and Personal Reflection

6.1. Final Meeting with the Founding Members and Readiness

From all the observations during the interviews and the conversation with the action team, it became evident that the founding members are critical pieces to establishing a useful and effective succession model. Until now, they acted as owners and main leaders of the organisation, wielding full authority to decide how this transition into new leadership must happen. From this discovery, it was decided that a final meeting between the researcher and the founding members should occur. The objective of this meeting was to share with them the principal findings and the proposed plan of succession, and from this dialog, seek their perception about this information and their level of readiness to move forward with an initiative of this magnitude. Because of agenda constraints, this interview was done with each founding member individually through an unstructured interview process, mostly as a conversation to ask deep questions about their perceptions, concerns and readiness to move from planning into implementation.

The first meeting was with the current president, with whom the primary insights were shared in detail, mostly covering the work done by the action team during the sessions and the structure of the action plan developed by the group. Topics including the internal definition of the *“cupula”* and this structural separation between middle and upper management demand the attention of the President, who also recognised the truth about these statements, declaring *“I know that this is true, but I also used this structure to make sure that a circle of trust was developed”*, making this an attribute of the management model that the university has and one of the reasons they can engage in strategically fast decision making. The president also made clear the importance of loyalty and trust as a characteristic of the people who they, as founding members, pick to move into the upper management level. From the proposal, which he saw as an efficient structure to set a long-term solution for the organisation, he concentrated his observations on the *prorector* role in the plan. He agreed that mentorship from both founding members was needed to ensure a good transition; however, he was even open to becoming

prorector to continue the mentorship while the new person took on the role of president, an alternative that was not considered by the team. Finally, he agreed on the profound need to sit with his business partner and co-founder, to discuss and establish all the needed agreements between them before the succession process commences, including the profile of the successor, the structure of the future board, and other issues known by them.

The co-founder and current comptroller took a very favourable position on the study and the recommendations provided in the implementation plan. He declared how beneficial it would be for the organisation to establish a long-term perspective about succession, where the whole organisation could be included, setting a path from the middle management to the top management. The centre of his concern was in the initial period where major agreements between founding members should be reached and on the importance of the board and the foundations as elements to control their legacy. He sees the timing as an issue because he does not see himself waiting so long to leave the organisation for a secondary role. He even mentioned the possibility of moving away as comptroller in the short term because he understands that it could be a point of conflict with the future president and a sort of imbalance with his partner in business. His declarations should be considered in the importance of kickstarting the implementation component of the action research and gaining time to reach each milestone declared in the plan.

From both of the conversations with the decision-makers at the university, it was approved to move forward with the implementation phase of the research and to continue the action cycle. The next phase of implementation is where the reflection and action iterations will change and adjust this initial plan into what is the most suitable and valuable structure for this organisation and its context. The founding members are now aware of how this process will continue and the what the importance of today's decisions in the future and legacy of the university is.

6.2. Final Meeting with the Action Team and Team Reflection

The action team met a final time to close this phase of the action cycle. The team saw for the first time the whole report, the progress achieved after all the previous meetings, and the outcome of that reflection. They also received feedback from the founding members. It was

inspiring for each team member as they saw how every conversation that we had was documented and how each reflection related to another piece of the research, including literature and interviews. From the feedback of the president and the comptroller, they were pleased to hear that both founding members appreciated the value of the process, and they also declared their willingness to move ahead into implementation. The team also discussed the observations of both founding members and the inclusion of this new information in the implementation plan. Yet, the general agreement was to initiate the implementation, and through the action cycles, evaluate the development of the plan, and from those reflections, decide if any adjustment should be made.

The VP of quality mentioned how pertinent this exercise was so far. The director of communications declared, *“This methodology should be used more frequently at the university to solve issues that need to be addressed”*, making also the point that she understands that it cannot be applied to every problem, but currently there are issues that need this depth of analysis. From the perspective of the director of human resources, he sees this research as an opportunity to establish a succession model across the organisation, and the use of this methodology he believes will bring a solution to many other complex issues that need to be addressed. They all shared their willingness not just to continue with this research as the action team but to contribute to future initiatives that require them to be involved.

They all agreed that this had been a relevant learning experience for them, and they would like to know more about it or even have the chance to conduct their own research in the future. They saw it also as an opportunity for them to grow as professionals and share it with their units and teams. Additionally, they affirmed that this process had been an opportunity to connect with other members and areas of the organisation and explore an issue relevant for all of them, sharing ideas and points of view independently of their position or role and generating an open field for discussion, which was much appreciated. There was a shared feeling of purpose in the room and the motivation to expand this approach beyond this specific research.

6.3. Personal Reflection

First Person

The journey of this research and thesis has been an exploration of my understanding of the research process, the complex issue undertaken for study, and a new perspective about how my organisation behaves, organises, acts and reacts to challenges. From the initial idea and analysis of the issue to the final reflections of the action team, keeping in mind the shared truth revealed during the interview process and the rich literature regarding the importance and types of succession processes, I realised how this specific organisation has established an internal model of governance and organisation centred around the founding members.

Before taking over this research, for me, it was almost logical that a large organisation such as this one should be mindful of these critical considerations for the future, and it was expected that the top authorities had held deep conversations about such relevant issues. What I realised was how little time the organisation and its founding members spent in deep reflection about its future, which also includes the predetermined decision to avoid uncomfortable topics until too late. Sometimes we as managers take the operation of the organisation for granted, which seems to be related to the distance from the decision-making level, assuming that the plan has been set and the proper form of reflection done. The governance of this specific institution is closely linked to the beliefs, perception and ways of operation of the founding members, as well as consistent with their actions, and this is why it is so relevant to have them deeply involved with this succession plan if the model is expected to be successfully implemented.

Due to its history and development, the organisation has a strong dependency on both founding members, making the decision of presidential succession more than just the selection of the most qualified candidate. This organisation needs a shared agreement between founding members about how, when and who should be the person for the job because it is more than just a role and responsibility but their legacy that they are leaving behind. The social and emotional variables will be essential for the future development of this succession, more than just the logical decision to be made.

During this reflection, I came to realise how theory and practices interconnect in this doctoral practitioner study as the mix of the literature and their recommendations allowed the team to deliver a proposal befitting the organisation with strong research to support it. The interviews themselves were a learning and re-learning process since each participant provided valuable insights about their perceptions and understanding of the organisation, the role of the president, and the impact of a future succession. This information was then processed by me and transferred to the action team as the main content from which the team reflected about the most suitable strategy to establish a succession model that would be practical and useful for this specific context and organisation.

Now with a better factual understanding of action research and the development of the whole process, I learned how I could distinguish what kind of complex issue could be tackled with this kind of scholar-practitioner approach and when this methodology would not be as suitable. The information gathered from the literature and the organisation, as well as the selection of the action team, are important parameters to assess if action research would be appropriate and feasible. This doctoral experience has also affected my approach to complex issues. It added to my portfolio toolkit the possibility of a methodology when an issue needs in-depth analysis beyond my routine and allowed me to establish a pause for the complex problems selected.

I am impressed with the impact of an action research initiative because beyond the academic rigour that this kind of study requires, the value comes from the highly applicable knowledge provided to the organisation. When research of this depth is performed, the researcher needs not only to find a complex problem that requires his attention but also to assess the readiness of the organisation. The preparation involves truly understanding the issue and readiness to act and measure each step in the iterative cycles of action learning, to then continue the reflection and learning to infuse new knowledge into the organisation. Even if in this research, the scope was limited to allow full cycles of action research, it is clear to me that beyond the proposal and the assessment performed, the initiative should continue into several cycles of research, which will contribute to measuring and re-aligning each step of the process, based on data and evidence for reflection.

Even if my role at the organisation has not changed, the perceptions of the founding members and the people around me are different. Because I acted as the principal researcher for this initiative, I was able to expose a side of myself that was new for the organisation. From the founding members, I received consent to let me explore other issues through this scholar-practitioner approach, and from my colleagues, a new sense of professional respect and their desire to learn more about action research. This combination of researcher and manager makes me a complete professional, someone who can confront high levels of organisational complexity by keeping this balance in the scholar and practitioner worlds. After this research experience, I can see a change in my process of thinking and reflection, a transformation in how I think about complex issues. My professional and academic development until this research was primarily in the application of gained knowledge, mostly to provide fast decision-making in a general problem-solving situation. However, now I can see how this deep reflection process could be beneficial to tackle many unmanaged issues beyond the reach of a fast approach. These are issues that need another process to handle them where action research can open additional layers unknown to the problem before it was explored through collaborative reflection. Deep reflection is not something to be used in every single problem to be solved. It demands enough complexity and time to dedicate to the issue itself. Starting from my initial beliefs about the succession issue, much more came to light during the research process: first, by reaching into the literature, then exploring the problem from a methodology standpoint, then proceeding to collect data and finally reflecting on the issue itself, but most notably regarding the reasons for this complicated situation. My new scholar-practitioner perspective will allow me to search for answers beyond the obvious solution, tackle complex issues from their roots, and promote real learning and transformation for the organisation.

Second Person

From the perspective of the organisation, a change in attitude was noticed regarding the idea of future internal scholar-practitioner initiatives. This change is more notable in the people directly involved in the research, as action team members and participants. However, because most of them are top leaders, the impact has been even more significant across the organisation. For example, the founding members have expressed their desire to explore other

kinds of complex issues through a scholar-practitioner approach, and the vice-president of research who was always reluctant about qualitative social sciences studies acknowledged the importance of this research for the institution. For an organisation that generates, promotes and disseminates knowledge, very little was done about researching its complex issues. This acceptance by the top leaders opens the opportunity to explore broader and more in-depth questions to be researched and problems to be tackled.

This research outcome will be fundamental to ensuring that the willingness of the organisation is sustainable. The continuity of the research will be critical, too, establishing a scholar-practitioner mindset in the organisation. This acceptance of the approach would also be the time to build additional capacities inside the organisation so that more people could be involved in this kind of initiative. Some capacities are already existent though not in use by the university. The final conversation with the founding members included the topic of allowing people in the academic departments at the university to study issues inside the organisation, those who are already prepared to perform research.

There are two elements of concern about the future assimilation of the practitioner-research approach in the university. First, the organisation must understand that the outcome of research may not be the desired outcome for the organisation or the people involved in the process. This fact could be challenging, knowing that the traditional operation at the university is based on projects and that they have more linear structures and measurable results. The second element is about the selection of the initiatives to go through the research. It will be critical that the proper selection process is in place to ensure that only complex problems receive this kind of attention. Even with these concerns, the positive response of the leaders and the organisation to the research and the value of the process allows us to dream about the establishment of the scholar-practitioner approach beyond this specific research exercise.

Through this research, the organisation has learned about the criticality the succession issue has acquired and its relevance for the future. Founding members, participants and mostly the action team had the opportunity to engage in the discussion, which made them reflect on the consequences of the missing succession plan and its impact on the organisation in case of an

emergency, which could necessitate an unpleasant replacement. The top management has thought about the issue before; however, they never initiated steps to tackle the problem to avoid a possible conflict between the two leaders. Now the organisation has realised that time has elapsed, and now this plan should be set in place, using the time left to allow a smooth transition that will honour the desires of both founding members and align with the needs of the institution. This sense of urgency is expressed through the strong support from the founding members to continue the research.

Third Person

Looking back at the several milestones during the process of this research, from the initial discussion with the research supervisor about the complex issue to be explored to the actual deployment inside the organisation, this has been a journey replete with learning and discoveries beyond any initial expectation. There was much more than a linear research process to be executed, which is part of the iterations needed for the generation of applicable new knowledge. From a DBA perspective, every issue and research will be unique because it is performed in a specific organisation and context; however, this characteristic requires the researcher to define paths of action that will accommodate the methodology to the needs of the organisation. For example, during the exploration of similar issues in the literature, it was necessary to divide the characteristics and context of this organisation to be able to find relevant data from which I could relate to my research. This organisation is not only a university with academic culture but also a non-profit and a small business, which is managed by its founding members. This intersection throws up diverse literature about succession planning, including the small business considerations declared by George (2014) and Babikian (2016) and the non-profit perspective in higher education, which is well-detailed by Mckee and Froelich (2016), and all intersected with the family business and legacy proposal from authors such as Baker and Wiseman (1998) and Ibrahim and Halim (2015). All these ingredients needed to be explored to have a rich source of information to reflect on and learn, and as a scholar-practitioner, to find nodes to connect these multiple theories and approaches, keeping the context and culture of this organisation in the centre. This specific succession issue involves

more than the succession of a CEO; the problem is an organisation evolving into a large and mature non-profit university.

This experience demonstrates how during a scholar-practitioner research, the literature review phase is critical to finding parts and pieces of relevant data that will be used when your data is gathered to make sense of it and learn from previous experiences about what is going on in your organisation. The members of the action team shared the same opinion. They experienced first-hand how the research process allowed them to set a structure of thinking to engage in such complex situations for now and the future. This new knowledge gained for the team included the practical use of the research methodology and a more profound understanding of the value of succession and the several elements required to be in place for a successful implementation. Depending on the level of participation, the learnings were different. The founding members, as sponsors of the research, have the unique opportunity to initiate a pending dialogue about the future of the institution, including their differences about the issue. For the founding members, it was also a way to acknowledge the importance of the board of directors for the future of the organisation, an idea well-supported by the literature (Motwani, Levenburg, Schwarz, & Blankson, 2006; Kesner & Sebor, 1994) but until now it has not been fully implemented, which could be an issue to study, from the perspective of the founding members and their resistance to leaving the organisation. The participants now know more about their perceptions on succession planning, its relevance, the risks and restrictions, and the untold but agreed balance of power between both of them. The action team learned about succession planning, the organisation and the value of action research as a methodology beyond this specific research. This research was a valuable experience because the participants, the researcher and even the founding members were pushed to discuss a relevant but uncomfortable topic for the benefit of the organisation. Action research makes the organisations move outside their comfort zone to work towards resolving important problems that may be just sitting there because they require more than the traditional tools of management to handle them.

Succession planning was the main topic of this research and the focus of attention; however, the process explored the multiple layers around the issue. This expansion into other topics was a demonstration for this organisation and any other faced with the challenge to confront its future without a clear path for leadership succession on how tangled this problem could be. The first presidential or CEO succession for a privately-owned organisation is not just based on a practical or technical decision but is about legacy, loyalty, relations, personal interests and beliefs, and the long-term sustainability of the organisation. This practical research was able to express the desires and fears of the founding members, who see the organisation as an extension of themselves. This ownership feeling is present even in a non-profit organisation such as this university; in some way, ownership is much more than stocks and assets and about the connection between the person and the organisation. This unbreakable connection between founding members and organisation is also perceived by the members of the organisation in their multiple layers, expressing their concern about the possible vacuum when the founder members abdicate. Therefore, the importance of legacy and a smooth transition became primary elements of the discussion, to assure that the organisational culture is not destroyed during the succession. Succession planning for the president or CEO is not just the decision of who takes a future role of leadership but most importantly about the process that the whole organisation must confront, aligning needs, expectations and timing to minimise risks and look at the future of the organisation.

For organisations with foundational teams, this means that more than one person is involved in the main initial definitions of what the organisation is and what it is trying to become; this research and its learning could also be a relevant asset. During the research, the issue of several pending conversations between the founding members was discovered, constituting an additional source of risk for this transformation phase. Even though this is a succession plan, we always should bear in mind that death or another condition could interrupt the continuity of the day-to-day operations. Founding members must spend time establishing agreements to protect the organisation from planned and unplanned changes. Small businesses, and probably also many large corporations, expend most of their time thinking about the current operation and new ways to increase productivity, but there must be time also allocated to consider the

future and to plan to reach there. Like succession planning, other transformational events could be planned with a proper risk analysis and by having the right people on board discussing these issues in advance. This planning period is a valuable time that should be invested by top leaders at any organisation to avoid foreseeable complex problems in the future. The risk of over-relying on the founding members as leaders and decision-makers without a clear path for their succession has been shown during this research to be a relevant risk for the university. It was the shared responsibility of the founding members and the organisation, not to leave these important conversations pending and allow this co-dependent relationship to drift too far for 30 years. Researchers and organisations reviewing this work must question themselves regarding how far in the timeline they are, what actions should be taken, and how prepared is the organisation to usher in a new model of management beyond its founding members.

This research and its outcome will be a contribution for organisations such as this university, those challenged by their maturity timeline, which is pushing the implementation of models, policies and rules necessary to survive beyond the people who were responsible for the ignition spark of the organisation. The applicability of this knowledge is to higher education institutions in young countries and their educational systems, which are challenged by similar phases of transition, where founding members or owners will have to leave the operation and become part of the organisation's history. However, because of the similarities between universities and non-profits, stemming from their strong connection with their foundational leaders and their mission, the findings of this research and the proposed methodology could also be extrapolated to that kind of organisational structure. Universities and non-profits at some point in their lifespan will have to decide how to continue beyond their foundational leaders, define their future, preserve their legacy or not.

6.4. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the initial question on **how a private university manages its leadership legacy during its first presidential succession planning** many things have been learned through this research process. Some of the lessons include how the organisation perceives the issue, and how critical the participation of the other founding member is to accomplish a successful transition. The

research also discovered many different aspects that must be solved to assure success when the first succession eventuates, including the need to generate a structure that will support succession beyond that point. Until now, the study has been able to establish an action plan to be implemented, which seems to resound with the culture, the context, the characteristics of the leaders and the findings in the literature. This research is still a work in progress that has been able to answer some of the questions, mostly about conditions, readiness and planning. There is still a long road ahead in terms of the implementation of the model and the several cycles of action.

This research has been able to confirm certain attributes of non-profits and higher education institutions found in the literature, such as their lack of procedures for top leaders' succession and the relevance of a declaration of purpose to describe the legacy (Lovett, 2017). The research has unearthed how in this specific organisation, this lack of procedures is also linked to pending conversations between the founding members with an intent to avoid a source of conflict. From the organisation perspective, there is a sense of need for definitions, but like other higher education institutions, career advancement does not tend to be a priority (Fusarelli, Fusarelli and Riddick, 2018). At the same time, the study has been able to complement previous research about succession by combining it with the perspective of small and family businesses, where foundational leaders have a strong say in the decision-making, and their characteristics become part of the organisational culture, leaving the organisation without procedures and policies for a future without them (Manthey and Balhoff, 2002). This idea of small and family business also relates to the need to evolve into a board of directors that can establish a path to top leadership and make decisions without the intervention from the founding members (Klepczarek, 2017). The organisation, because of its history, culture and leadership is in its transition from a private non-profit family-owned university, forced because of their aged founding leaders, to a mature non-profit, large higher education institution. This transition succession planning works as a methodology to introduce structures and practices for the benefit of the long-term viability of the organisation. This need for change is a transformation that includes the combination of solid leadership, top-down defined paths of career development and succession, and conversations held by the founding members to

define their legacy. This research has contributed, and it will continue its contribution to the space where organisations need to transform inside out before moving from being successful privately managed organisations to being large and mature long-standing institutions—a sort of intersection between multiple succession theories, which are confronted with the strong institutional culture, and the dual leadership model that holds the organisation together.

There is a space in succession planning where this new knowledge about the organisation itself assists in understanding the complexity behind a decision of this magnitude where founding members are still active in operation with a decisive say in decision-making. This characteristic is also a challenge for organisations pressured by their founding members being close to the age of retirement, where there is an urgency to define a long-term model. However, there are still many lacunae to be addressed and conversations to be had. Succession planning is much more than a declaration of good practices or a model to be copied to be successful; the model must be integrated and have the appropriate structure in place to be operational.

From the experience until this point, it will be important to keep the pace and drive ahead. The founding members and the team are ready, but it is impossible to deny that the effects of the current social crisis in Chile and now the COVID19 pandemic could hurt the speed and timing of the actions planned. The next phase of this research is to move into implementation and allow the action cycles to define how each reflection and learning process will happen, but it is irrefutable that time is a scarce resource. The team should monitor this issue closely and maintain constant contact with the founding members to measure the level of urgency. The action team is ready to take over this responsibility, and both founding members agreed to actuate the first stage of the plan, which includes initiating the pending conversations and making decisions, establishing the profile of the candidate, and preparing to coach the future president when it is time. The future of the organisation and the legacy of the founders is on the line, and they know it.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview Structure

General Questionnaire of In-depth Interview

¿Do you have any specific question or concern about the purpose of this interview before we proceed?

Just to confirm that the person to be interviewed expresses a clear understanding of the purpose, and clears all doubts before we proceed.

¿Can you please tell me the day, month, year, your name, age and role, and how long have you been part of the university?

To have a clear description of the interviewee and to also leave a track in the recording system, beyond my notes, to then be transcribed.

¿What is your role or your relationship, if any, with the president of the university?

To clearly understand the co-dependency of the role and their shared view of the relationship.

¿Could you please describe the selection or recruitment process of leadership for the university?

To explore the internal narrative if there is or is not a leadership path inside the organisation beyond the role that each person was hired for.

¿Could you please tell me what is your perception of the process of leadership selection or recruitment at the university?

To obtain a deeper insight into the reality of how we are doing things today and what people feel about it.

¿Do you feel encouraged to move into a leadership role?

To gauge the level of motivation and projection that people have inside the organisation to move into leadership roles.

¿Is there any program in place to build leaders from inside the organisation?

To know how each interviewee perceives the leadership pathway inside the institution.

¿Do you mentor anyone? ¿Has this mentoring been declared by you or someone else to the person or the organisation?

To be aware of any kind of mentoring, even if not documented by Human Resources.

¿What is the main purpose of the board of directors? ¿Could you describe how it operates? ¿Do you know how it is selected?

To obtain a multiple-perspective approach to the role of the board: what it does, how people are promoted to it internally, and how it is perceived by the employees.

¿Can you tell me the role of the president?

To find a leadership description of the role and to find if there is consistency about the knowledge of its role across the different bodies of the organisation.

¿Who is the backup of the president when he is out on vacation or on a business trip? ¿Who do you think it should be and why?

To assess if there is a general agreement about who should be the natural replacement, or even succession, for the president, comparing between how the replacement is done and what are people's expectations about how it should happen.

¿When you first arrived at the organisation, were you told anything about the leadership model or succession process or given any kind of information regarding the professional development inside the organisation? ¿Could you please explain in detail?

To acquire a general understanding of the onboarding process and the expectations versus the reality of professional development.

¿Do you know what is a succession? ¿Have you ever experienced a succession process at the university?

To see if there is an understanding of what a succession process is and if the organisation has ever proceeded with such a kind of transition.

**¿What do you expect when a new leader arrives into an important role in the organisation?
¿Has anything like this happened before?**

To fathom the expectations of leadership transition and to learn from people's previous experiences.

¿How would you describe the university in terms of management and leadership? ¿Does this model work similarly in every unit?

To understand what the beliefs about how decisions are made are and how the authorities work.

¿How are relevant decisions made at the organisation? ¿How do you receive information about any strategic decision?

To understand based on the description how the formal and informal process of decision-making relates to the structure, for the strategic decisions across the organisation.

Appendix 2: Example of Interview Transcripts (Extract)

Transcripción VP de Investigación

Duración audio: 00:36:26

00:02 **Entrevistador:** Hola buenas, estoy aquí con XX, vice rector de investigación de la Universidad ¿me podrías confirmar que esa información es correcta?

00:11 **Respuesta:** Sí, yo soy XX, vice rector de investigación.

00:15 **Entrevistador:** Y hoy día estamos a 6 de noviembre del 2019.

00:20 **Respuesta:** Exacto.

00:21 **Entrevistador:** Primero agradecerte la participación en esta entrevista y antes de inicial solamente quisiera estar, quisiera preguntarte si estás de acuerdo con participar en la entrevista, participar en el estudio y si tienes alguna pregunta previa a que iniciemos esta ronda de.

00:39 **Respuesta:** Totalmente de acuerdo en participar y no tengo ninguna pregunta.

00:42 **Entrevistador:** Perfecto, entonces lo primero quería preguntarte para dar contexto ¿cuál es tu rol en la institución y tu relación con el cargo de presidente o rector de esta institución?

01:01 **Respuesta:** Yo soy vice rector de investigación, estoy a cargo de todo el desarrollo de políticas de investigación, administración de centros de investigación y todo lo que tiene que ver con la investigación en la universidad, y me reporto directamente al rector. De forma formal a través de los concejos que existen en la universidad y de forma informal cuando el rector lo requiere o hay que tomar decisiones estratégicas que involucran investigación.

01:30 **Entrevistador:** ¿Hace cuánto estás en ese cargo?

01:36 **Respuesta:** Hace tres años.

01:36 **Entrevistador:** Perfecto ¿y podrías describir cuál fue tu evolución de liderazgo dentro de la organización hasta llegar a este cargo?

01:44 **Respuesta:** Claro, yo llegué a la universidad el 2010 como profesor de la carrera de biotecnología, pero además como el primer investigador contratado por la universidad, el segundo en realidad. Después, y a los tres o cuatro meses de estar en la universidad creamos en Centro de Investigación, que fue el primer centro formal de investigación básica en la universidad, que era el Centro de Genómica*02:11 del cual yo fui el director, y después de eso continué siendo profesor y tres años después me nombraron decano de la facultad de ciencias, fui el primer decano de la facultad de ciencias, que coincidió con la creación de la facultad de

ciencias que no existía en ese minuto. Y el 2016 me pidieron que asumieran el cargo de vice rector de investigación.

02:33 Entrevistador: Perfecto ¿y en ese proceso de crecimiento dentro de la organización, tú cuando ingresaste lo viste como algo planificado, viste como alguna proyección?

02:45 Respuesta: No, yo creo que en realidad dos cosas me llamaron la atención en la universidad. una, que la estructura de toma de decisiones era bastante corta digamos, o sea, no habían muchas capas de complejidad en eso. Y lo segundo era que realmente la investigación estaba partiendo en la universidad, entonces no había una expertise en la universidad sobre cómo desarrollar la investigación. O sea, no hay que olvidarse que la universidad contrata a dos investigadores, uno en el área planta que era Víctor y uno en el área de medicina que soy yo, y con eso damos el check list de okay de que hacemos investigación.

Entonces conforme la universidad fue creciendo, el centro de investigación que yo lideraba se tornó bastante relevante a nivel nacional adjudicándose proyectos y qué sé yo, y eso nos permitió ir creciendo en investigación, pero fue un proceso de crecimiento orgánico en el sentido de que la universidad tenía la idea de la transición a la complejidad. Pero inorgánico porque en realidad no existía la... no existían las herramientas para construir esta transición, no teníamos vice rectoría de investigación, no teníamos una dirección de transferencia tecnológica, no teníamos programas de doctorado, la política de investigación que había en ese minuto era más bien dicho muy muy simple, no teníamos mecanismo administrativo de cómo administrar los fondos, el departamento legal de la universidad no conocía muy bien cómo eran los convenios que se firmaban cuando uno se adjudicaba proyectos, etc. etc. Y por lo tanto, yo creo que la universidad en el minuto tenía claridad de que quería convertirse en una universidad compleja y eso involucraba desarrollar investigación, pero no tenía claridad en realidad cómo era ese proceso. Y ese proceso lo fuimos construyendo en el camino.

04:48 Entrevistador: Perfecto, ahora cuando te contrataron a ti o tú contratas a alguien a nivel institucionalmente ¿se denota o se declara que hay un potencial desarrollo profesional dentro del organismo organización?

05:07 Respuesta: Yo creo que, yo creo que eso no está muy claro, por ejemplo, si uno lo compara con una universidad tradicional, uno imaginaría que siendo un académico en la universidad uno eventualmente podría ser, podría llegar a ser decano o director de departamento, o eventualmente vice rector, o inclusive rector si uno lo compara con las universidades emblemáticas públicas emblemáticas. Por lo tanto, aquí yo creo que uno de los grandes desafíos es que existe una cierta sensación de inamovilidad en el cargo ¿no cierto? o sea, de hecho, a mi me contrataron como académico de biotecnología, después me cambiaron el contrato y el contrato decía "para servir como director del centro de Genómica".

Después me cambiaron el contrato que decía "para ser decano de ciencias" y me cambiaron finalmente para ser vice rector. Entonces en la práctica parecía que ese era mi cargo forever, o

sea decano de ciencias hasta que la universidad no... por mutuo acuerdo no nos queramos más, digamos.

06:36 Entrevistador: Claro, entonces hay una sensación de inamovilidad que después hay movilidad, pero de nuevo queda como...

06:42 Respuesta: Claro, porque en el camino tradicional digamos de una universidad pública, uno parte como profe y eventualmente puede ir siendo director de departamento o qué sé yo, eventualmente llega a ser decano, eventualmente llegar a ser director de escuela, vice rector y eventualmente rector digamos, pero acá no da esa sensación.

07:04 Entrevistador: ahora, ¿tú me podrías describir el rol del rector?

07:13 Respuesta: ¿Actualmente?

07:13 Entrevistador: sí, o como, como tú lo ves el rol, cómo lo describirías.

07:20 Yo creo que, yo creo que un rector ideal, un rector idealmente tiene que ser un, una persona que articule digamos los diferentes estamentos de la universidad, de tal forma que uno pueda conseguir cumplir la visión inicial que tiene una universidad ¿no cierto? O sea, yo lo veo más que nada como un articulador, un gran articulador, y además es la cara visible de la universidad ¿no cierto? el interlocutor con la sociedad es el interlocutor válido con la sociedad en sus diferentes niveles. Y yo creo un poco que lo que esa visión que yo tengo se cumple hoy en día digamos, yo creo que nuestro rector es la cara visible con la universidad, con el mundo externo digamos, con el entorno académico, social, profesional, laboral. Y por otro lado creo que también él tiene que ver, él actúa como el articulador digamos de todos los estamentos universitarios.

Yo creo que es parte también de la misión que tiene un rector es, yo creo que llevar adelante la reflexión sobre la visión y misión que la universidad tiene, permearla a los estamentos de la universidad, y una vez que esto está cuajado en todo el mundo y estamos todos en la misma página, llevarlo hacia adelante digamos, así lo veo yo por lo menos.

08:55 Entrevistador: Ahora, esta universidad nació hace 30 años y tiene dos fundadores, ¿tú cómo describirías la relación de estos dos fundadores que permanecen desde sus inicios?

09:12 Respuesta: Claro, yo creo que es evidente digamos de que cada uno juega un rol diferente dentro de la universidad digamos, o sea, yo creo que nuestro rector digamos es, se hace cargo de los temas académicos, y la relación de la universidad con el entorno y nuestro contralor yo creo que cumple fundamentalmente las funciones que tienen que ver con el desarrollo de la institución, con el pensar la universidad del siglo XXI, o sea, cómo va a ser esta universidad, qué carreras van a tener, vamos a acortar los programas, los vamos... un poco es el desarrollador digamos, o sea yo creo que lo veo así.

En el modelo americano yo creo que Erich tiene la función y en cierta forma yo creo que tú también la tienes, de probos, que es el gallo que hace el oversee global, porque al final del día yo como vice rector de investigación igual dependo de tú decisión porque, que está bien digamos, porque somos una universidad privada, entonces acá hay temas que tienen que ver con recursos, con prioridades institucionales y todo lo demás. Y los probos tienen esa habilidad ¿no cierto? en el modelo americano que a mí me gusta mucho, digamos, esa idea de que tú hacer el oversee global de la operación ¿cachay? o sea tú dices, yo me acuerdo cuando estaba en Virginia... Virginia pa mi fue un ejemplo súper bueno, primero porque el rector nuestro tenía como misión de que la universidad fuera la primera, la primera universidad para aquellos estudiantes que llegaban por primera vez a la universidad. First generation in college, y eso tenía un costo político pa la universidad que era tremendo, porque en la práctica nos iba mal en los rankings, qué sé yo.

11:29 Entrevistador: No el mejor capital.

11:30 Respuesta: No éramos Harvard reclutando el mejor talento. Y por lo tanto había que compensarlo con investigación, entonces esa era la lógica, pero esa visión se mantuvo hasta el final, o sea, el tipo tuvo esa visión y esa visión impregnó en todo el mundo por un lado, pero además él tenía un pobos que era Tom Huff que en el fondo Tom que era un historiados, pensó que el futuro era el Life Science, y porque leyó, porque fue, vio conferencias, qué sé yo, conversó con mucha gente, y comenzó a direccionar toda la universidad hacia el Life Science, y dejamos de ser la universidad que éramos número me parece en escultura y no sé qué otras cosas, pa ser una universidad de las ciencias de la vida. Entonces los vice rectores se le reportaban a él y todo el mundo porque él era el que puso en acción esa visión.

12:28 Entrevistador: Él tenía la visión operacional completa.

12:30 Respuesta: Que es un poco yo creo que lo que ocurre en la universidad acá digamos, o sea, tenemos una visión que es la que tiene la visión más macro de la universidad que la lleva adelante el rector y la visión de desarrolladora que la ven ellos digamos, en su rol da lo mismo el nombre.

12:50 Entrevistador: Perfecto, ahora ¿cómo tú ves el rol del directorio?

13:00 Respuesta: O sea, para mí el directorio primero nunca he tenido muy claro cuál es su función digamos, yo entiendo que hace el oversee final digamos, pero no lo tengo muy claro en términos de cuál es su real capacidad de visualización o de apoyo a ciertas iniciativas. Lo que yo sí, por ejemplo, yo he tenido que presentar los programas, cuando nosotros presentamos el primer programa de doctorado yo hice, bueno "este es el programa y queremos comenzar en dos años más, y la razón de eso es que queremos madurar el grupo o queremos tener un poco más claro, el laboratorio más aterrizado, todo listo", y uno de los miembros del directorio me dijo "no podemos esperar, así que maduren más rápido", y terminamos...

Claro, yo después me devolví a la academia y les dije "miren, el directorio quiere que partamos mañana" y claro, hubo una resistencia, todo el mundo dijo "pero es que los tiempos, la madurez

académica", qué sé yo, pero en realidad el directorio quería otra cosa y lanzamos el programa y al final nos fue súper bien digamos, yo creo que en ese sentido. Yo creo que el directorio debía ser, debería tener un rol fundamental en proporcionar el sustrato de reflexión para que la universidad pueda cumplir su visión de una forma mucho más estratégica, yo creo que eso es una, es uno de los desafíos que hay.

¿Qué te digo? por ejemplo, que el directorio pudiera estar, por ejemplo, alguien del mundo de la industria que dijera "oye, nosotros en cinco años más", hoy día por ejemplo en la conversación del ministerio estaba la representante del Concejo Minero, y ella decía "en Chile no hay ninguna universidad, exceptuando la Universidad de Viña del Mar, que prepare ingenieros en mina para la mediana y pequeña minería". Me dice "el futuro de Chile es la pequeña minería", entonces ella dice ¿y quién se prepara pa eso? No, aquí preparamos gallos pa trabajar en BHP, en no sé, en Codelco, el gallo de casco blanco y la camioneta 4x4 y la galla decía "en 10 años más eso no va a ocurrir". Entonces yo creo que los directorios deberían tener esa capacidad ¿no cierto? tener ese input, de dar ese input, ese sustrato para que después la toma de decisiones o eso se refleje al interior de la universidad. Por lo menos yo lo veo así.

15:45 Entrevistador: Entonces tú dirías que no existe una relación de autoridad en el directorio sobre el rector.

15:54 Respuesta: No es obvio, por lo menos no es obvio. Por lo menos lo que corresponde a mi.

16:00 Entrevistador: perfecto, ahora la idea de, o la pregunta asociada a esta investigación habla de una sucesión, una sucesión es una actividad planificada de renovación ¿verdad? ¿Tú crees que eso hoy día está dentro de la cabeza de esta gente, del rector o de incluso el otro fundador que tienen roles muy acoplados?

16:29 Respuesta: Yo creo que está dentro de sus pensamientos, pero yo creo que más bien en el plan, o sea, por lo menos el plan es claro.

16:36 Entrevistador: Perfecto.

16:38 Respuesta: Porque la universidad yo creo que tiene uno de los, yo creo que uno de los grandes desafíos que tiene la universidad en este minuto es cómo genera cuadros de... de... de renovación en todos los niveles, o sea, si tú piensas cuando se vayan los decanos ¿quiénes son las obvias sucesiones? tú deberías por lo menos tener tres gallos, directores de escuela o académicos que tú dijeras "si queremos la visión A, yo creo que la mejor persona es Juan, si queremos la visión B es tal persona, qué sé yo". Hoy día no hay nadie.

Appendix 3: Example of Meetings Minutes

Cycle of Action I

Tuesday, December 31, 2019

11:17 AM

Asistentes

- Héctor Meyer - Vicerrector de Aseguramiento de la Calidad y Planificación
- Anita Sanhueza - Directora de Comunicación Estratégica
- Víctor Lara - Director de Personas

Temas Tratados

- Presentación de Marco Conceptual de la Investigación
- Presentación de los Elementos Centrales de la Revisión Comparativa de Literatura
- Recuento de los Descubrimientos Generales de las Entrevistas en Profundidad
- Se establece modelo general de trabajo bajo una metodología de Aprendizaje Activo en ciclos iterativos de trabajo mediante análisis, dialogo, reflexión e implementación (Revans, 1982).

Análisis y Reflexión

- Se inicia la discusión en base a un modelo de múltiples etapas para poder abordar la necesidad hoy versus la necesidad futura.
- Se tiene consenso sobre el rol hoy del Directorio, desde un punto de vista consultivo y asesor.
- Respecto a los fundadores se observa una diferencia sustancial en la forma de ver su "legado", el contralor con una idea central de la razón de existencia de la institución y el Rector bajo una forma de liderazgo y posicionamiento de la institución en el medio.
- Se denota además una estructura superior de "cúpula" versus una estructura de Administración Media, los cuales no tienen líneas directas de comunicación o desarrollo profesional.
- Existe un modelo meritocrático de desarrollo, que además esta indexado bajo un criterio de confianza desde los fundadores que permite posicionar a las personas dentro de la

orgánica.

- El modelo de sucesión inicial debe contemplar una mentoría doble, por parte de ambos fundadores y generar un modelo de mentoría y coaching para que ambos puedan ejecutar de buena forma esta transición.
- Se plantea la necesidad de ver otros casos universitarios a nivel Chile, para explorar primeras sucesiones. Entre ellas se considera que los casos UAI y UDD podrían ser significativos.

Acuerdos y Próximos Pasos

- Continuar la reflexión individual de los puntos tratados.
- Revisar documentación adicional que sea pertinente y casos similares que se puedan explorar.
- Establecer una próxima reunión de trabajo, tomando como base los antecedentes y a la reflexión previa.
- Estructurar preguntas que quisiéramos poner sobre la mesa, como parte del proceso reflexivo, como parte del proceso de esta iteración.