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**Thesis**

**“Exploring leadership challenges for senior academic leaders of higher education institutions in Ontario, amidst public policy reforms”.**

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## Dedication

The thesis is dedicated to my parents: Nicole and Panos Liberakos, whose lifelong hard work, learning, and development, had inspired me from my earliest years to explore new ideas with an inquisitive and curious mind. My parents come from a Greek urban family environment, practicing traditional values for societal and communal behaviour, and by all means loving family attitudes. Five main values, Christianity, Statehood, Family, Civilisation, and Languages, were instilled in me from a young age, and gave me purpose and drive to face my life's journey.

My mother, Nicole, had dedicated her early years educating herself, possessing excellent communication skills in three languages: Greek, Italian (Latin), and English. However, as an adult, she got married early, raised three children, and gave up further education during that time. Later, through entrepreneurship, she assisted in our family finances. She carried on with her small business until we were all adults, well provided for, and educated, and until we established our own families. During retirement, my mother took on administrative tasks as a volunteer, planned a fund-raised library funded by close family members based in the US, successfully established, organised, and operated the institution up until her 80s. Today, my mother is aged 98, physically fit, but mentally suffering from memory loss.

My father, Panos, an honourable person, with great initiative, hand precision manual skills, and integrity was always ready to assist people in need. He raised me with the hard work ethic as a meaningful way to become a good provider for my family. However, a full-time bus driver in the national bus services sector, he was also cultivating his agriculture land for an additional family income. And, although he had only achieved the basic required education, he supported my higher education in Montreal Canada, to the undergraduate level. My father passed away in 2014 at the age of 88 from natural causes. At his funeral hundreds of people turned up to honour him, showing their love, admiration, and the feeling that he was going to be missed.

I dedicate this dissertation and the completion of my doctoral degree to both of my parents. Thank you for the life you gave me, for the science of life you trained me, the share of the family fortune that you have passed on to me, and all the great things you have done for me!

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## Abstract

This interpretivist research study identified and explored the three key (macro-external) challenges faced by academic leaders in HEIs in Ontario, namely: political and institutional leadership, data, gaps in data and measurement techniques, and labour agreements. Senior academic leaders (SALs) in HE navigate systemic neoliberal public policy changes. As policy implementors they exhibit leadership practices and employ systematic Organisational Change Management (OCM) processes to successfully transit their HEIs to the new era. The challenges appear to be social structural reforms that should have been resolved prior to the government of Ontario implementing public policy reforms in HE. However, such social structural reforms have not been fulfilled, and were addressed in the 'problem statement'. Therefore, OCM processes could not be employed properly and effectively. The current thesis combines leadership sensemaking and identity social cognition, with OCM political, evolutionary, teleological, cultural, and sub-cultural theories to navigate public policy reforms. It then presents a conceptual model that combines political, institutional, structural, and human resource frames for the interpretation of academic leaders' experiences, and the reframing of the model.

Nine SALs of Ontario's HEIs participated in semi-structured interviews and expressed their perceptions concerning the challenges they encountered while enacting their academic and administrative roles. SALs, despite commonalities on these three key challenges, showed diversity in their roles as academic and administrative leaders. The study contributes to the field of Educational Leadership, focusing on application of OCM practices. Suggestions and recommendations for further research may provide a better understanding of identity and sensemaking theories applied to shared leadership practices specifically in the HE setting, both in Ontario and in Canada more generally.

**Key-phrases:** Neoliberal systemic change, public policy reforms on HE (Higher Education), systematic OCM (Organisational Change Management) processes in HEIs (Higher Education Institutions), SALs (Senior Academic Leaders), three key (macro-external) challenges, social structures , the 'problem statement', the 'gap', leadership, sensemaking, identity, shared leadership, reframing.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

### 1.0. Introduction

The current research study identifies and further explores the leadership challenges faced by HE's Senior Academic Leaders (SALs), where the purpose of public education intersects dramatic policy reforms in Ontario. The study aimed to address the complexities and ambiguities of educational leadership. Specifically, how SALs reacted to the turbulent change that led to the public policy reforms introduced by the government of Ontario, and how they are managing policy changes in what is becoming a mass HE system.

There are fiscal pressures on the federal state of Canada and the provinces, brought upon by international economic trends, ageing demographics, and labour-market demand changes. The Ontario government's ideological, philosophical, and political perspectives have changed: "There have been substantive policy reforms introduced in Ontario's HE sector, and frequently underscoring the analysis of these changes is the assumption that the province is now following along the well-travelled restructuring pathway associated with neoliberal policy reform" (Jones, 2004, p. 51). Organisational purpose has drawn the increased attention of many practitioners and academics as an important foundation for leadership, employee engagement, and strategic direction, as well as a means to articulate the organisation's broader role with its stakeholders and within its environment (e.g., Chapman *et al.*, 2017; Hong *et al.*, 2021).

According to Max De Pree (2004, p. 22), "...to be a leader is to enjoy the special privileges of complexity, of ambiguity, of diversity. But to be a leader means, especially, having the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who permit leaders to lead".

Managerialism (based on principles of the New Public Management [NPM]) has become increasingly prevalent within HE. However, in this context, where many are sceptical of traditional influence and authority, it

has been suggested that shared leadership can offer a means of reconnecting academics with a sense of collegiality, citizenship, and community.

Shared leadership offers a viable and effective approach for developing and enhancing leadership in HE, and for engaging a wide range of interests and expertise in the leadership process. However, it is not a panacea, an open yet critical approach in which consideration is given to the wider social, political, and cultural context in which leadership takes place (Bolden et al., 2015).

Macro-level disruptions occur occasionally, including the challenges explored in this thesis, but also events such as the Covid-19 pandemic; yet organisational viability is an everyday issue, especially for universities in emerging economies that struggle with resource constraints, faculty/staff productivity concerns, and student success imperatives (Allaoui & Benmoussa, 2020; [Halai, 2013](#); Hong et al., 2021).

According to Schein (2010, 2016), learning culture acts on several beliefs, including active problem solving, a commitment to the learning process, faith in people, and trust that external environment(s) can be managed. From this perspective, learning is a shared and future oriented activity, where there is a commitment to integrating diverse worldviews, systemic thinking, and reflective cultural analysis. Schein proposed perception and insight, motivation, emotional strength, awareness of and ability to change cultural assumptions, and involvement or participation as the characteristics of leadership required to develop learning culture.

However, leadership can be challenging in unsettled times and for HEIs with limited resources. These institutions differentiate themselves by focusing on reaffirming their mission and values and embedding their purpose in the leadership practices of the institution. Yet much remains unclear about what exactly it means for these organisations to seek a sense of purpose to implement a holistic model of quality education

(Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2005). It is an enormous challenge for institutions to stay purposefully constant while also adapting their practices to the changing external requirements (Bayraktar, 2020; Maier, 2014; Hong, et al., 2021).

In response to the ever-changing external environment, contemporary organisations, including universities, are building conducive organisational cultures (McDowell & Anderson, 2019), which involves leading the economic development agenda (see, Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020). Universities can effectively lead the economic development agenda through knowledge and technology transfer to the industry, and society at large, thus facilitating innovation.

The concept of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is widely discussed at venues such as the World Economic Forum at Davos and within business leadership. Recent white papers describe how the 4IR will ‘shape the future of education, gender and work’ and how the 4IR will require ‘accelerating workforce reskilling’ (Penprase, 2018, pp. 207–209).

Online and tech-enhanced teaching within universities is enabling both research universities and liberal arts colleges to more efficiently teach students with diverse backgrounds, and to open up their campuses to a more global community of both faculty and students. Small liberal arts colleges are working together to realise economies of scale with new types of technologies that improve on-campus experience for students through online math courses for incoming students, language courses taught via videoconferencing, and new ways of merging social media with small-class seminars (Penprase, 2018, p. 221).

## 1.1. Thesis Structure and Study Overview

The remaining thesis is structured as follows:

**Chapter 2 – Context:** This chapter provides an overview of the changing landscape of HE in Ontario, in tandem with the significant contributory



factors. A brief discussion follows on OCM and leadership challenges, both political and institutional, addressing data, gaps in data, and measurement techniques, and labour collective and differentiation agreements for faculty staff.

**Chapter 3 – Literature Review:** The literature review presents different schools of thought: those that maintain the purposes of HE as a societal public good under “ethical liberalism” and others that view the individual benefit of HE in a structure of a corporate model under “neoliberalism”. However, these two purposes of education are presented as complementary rather than contrasting.

Leadership theories of sensemaking and identity, along with political, evolutionary, teleological, social cognition, cultural, and subcultural theories of change are mainly used in this study; however, other theories are utilised. Different theories of change were examined helping to formulate an appropriate OCM strategy for HEIs.

**Chapter 4 – Methodology:** The semi-structured elite interview methods are presented in this chapter. The philosophy consists of an interpretivist epistemology, a subjective ontology, and an organisation-based enquiry assuming a managerialist axiology. This interpretivist (generic) qualitative enquiry employs inductive thematic analysis using coding techniques.

**Chapter 5 – Findings:** This chapter presents the data analysis. Descriptive cameos of the participants using metaphorical representations of their unique roles are followed by the findings of their reflective views and internal and external experiences in relation to their organisation. Then the participants’ self-reflections of their roles as SALs are analysed. Finally, the findings are thematically summarised and reported.

**Chapter 6 – Discussion:** The findings of this study are analysed further, interpreted, and discussed with reference to the literature review. The previously proposed Four Frame Model, using the theoretical framework from theories of change combined with leadership theories, is employed

by the researcher to interpret the participants' experiences on the key three challenges. The themes are aligned with a pluralist model of theories of change, using recently cited scholars' comments. Finally, reference is made concerning other challenges in HE in Ontario.

**Chapter 7 – Conclusion.** The study draws to a close in this chapter with key conclusions and implications of the study, offering its contribution to theory in the fields of OCM and Educational Leadership.

Recommendations are made to other SALs of HEIs in Ontario and in other provinces of Canada. The experiences and strategic responses of SALs may be useful to other HEI's academic leaders in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada, as a contribution to practice.

## Chapter 2 – Context of the Study

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter will add perspective to the ensuing thesis material by providing a high-level account of HE in the Ontarian and the Canadian context. It commences with an overview of the changing landscape of HE in tandem with the significant contributory factors. It then briefly discusses OCM, institutional and political leadership, data, gaps in data and measurement, and labour collective bargaining and labour differentiation agreements for faculty members.

### 2.1. The Main Provider(s) of HE in Ontario

The Canadian Constitution provides each province with the responsibility for HE; there is no corresponding national federal ministry of HE, and it allocates final authority for HE in Ontario to the provincial government. In practice, the responsibility lies with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU), (formerly the Ministry of Training of Colleges and Universities [MTCU] but henceforth referred to only as the MCU). This member of the Executive Council of Ontario (or cabinet) reports to the Premier and is held accountable by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The deputy minister manages the Ministry's operations, including five main divisions: employment and training, post-secondary education, strategic policy and programmes, corporate management and services, and French language education and educational operations. The divisions report to the deputy minister, who then reports to the minister. Governance within Ontario Universities and Colleges generally follows a bicameral approach with a separation of authority between a Board and a Senate (MCU, 2021).

Central to public administration, public sector management, and public policy is the question of the extent to which the state (the provincial government of Ontario) should steer, plan, regulate, and control societal institutions such as universities (Huisman, 2009). In many countries, the

traditional 'modus operandi' for the government is to steer and control institutions; this approach explains the government ethos of many governments, although to varying degrees.

There are two types of governance: external, with the stewardship of the government of Ontario but also supported by the government of Canada; and internal, managed by the three levels of institutional leadership: higher management level (Presidents, Boards of Governors, Senate, and [NPM] Administrators of HEIs; middle management level (SALs of HEIs); and lower management level (Heads of department and faculties, and academic personnel).

HE in Ontario includes postsecondary education and skills training regulated by the MCU and provided by universities, colleges of applied arts and technology, and private career colleges. The Ministry administers laws covering 22 public universities, 24 public colleges (21 Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology [CAATs] and three Institutes of Technology and Advance Learning [ITALs]), 17 privately funded religious universities, and over 500 private career colleges. Eighteen of Canada's top 50 research universities are based in Ontario (MCU, 2021).

Within Canadian federalism, the division of responsibilities and taxing powers between the Ontario and Canadian governments creates the need for cooperation to fund and deliver HE to students. Public funding of HE involves direct public funding of institutions, investment, and research combined with the funding of students. The public funding of HE in Ontario primarily relies on cooperation between the federal government of Canada and the provincial government of Ontario. Both governments of Canada and Ontario provide funding and support for post-secondary students via the Canada-Ontario Integrated Student Loan initiative (MCU, 2021).

## 2.2. Funding Model Reforms in HE in Ontario

Neoliberalism reflects the tenets of classical liberalism (the self-interested individual and free market, laissez-faire economics) but is characterised by intense individualism, consumer sovereignty, freedom and choice, competition, marketisation, modes of governmental, and institutional regulation that relies on performativity and audit mechanisms (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Economic development, therefore, sacrifices many societal social rights, communal life achievements, and regard for family and spiritual values as the cornerstone of our society's development, which people have established for many years. As Saunders (2010, pp. 44-45) argues, in "the neoliberal world, there is no longer a distinction between the market and the state, between public and private, and between the individual and social". Olssen (2000) argues that the advent of neoliberalism must be explained within the context of the contradictions of the capitalist economy and the welfare state economy. For Olssen, Jonathan's assertion that "... the state's retreat from regulation represented a populist demand for reduction of bureaucracy, an increase in democracy and a renewed concern with the rights of the individual" (p. 505), does not constitute a suitable explanation of the "... transition of the welfare state to the free market" (Olssen, 2000, p.504).

On March 12, 2015, the government announced that Ontario would be launching consultations on modernising the university (and college) funding model with the aim of outlining engagement processes and explaining the position of the government's overall plan for postsecondary education (University of Ottawa, 2015). The National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) and the Jean-Luc Pepin Research Chair's Symposium held on October 16, 2015, under Chatham House rules, were to outline engagement processes and explain the position of the government's overall plan for postsecondary education. Funding universities in a more quality-driven, sustainable, and transparent way is part of the government's economic plan for Ontario. Following the

Symposium, a report was issued and published by the government of Ontario (University of Ottawa, 2015).

Enrolment growth, the main driver of university operating revenue, will slow in the medium term due to demographic factors (Miner, 2014). As demographers, Foot and Stoffman state “Demographics explain about two-thirds of everything” (Foot & Stoffman, 1996, p. 2). Ontario has a demographic problem because the population is ageing quickly, with more Ontarians moving into retirement faster than they are being replaced by new workers. The number of immigrants moving to Ontario has also slowed (Statistics Canada, 2021). This could increase pressure on budgets at some universities if costs outpace revenue growth. The numerical shortage is solvable, but there is a need to avoid skills mismatches by having more of the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time (Miner, 2014). Substantial new government investments in postsecondary education at levels comparable to the recent past are not feasible. Government and institutions need to work together to find another way (University of Ottawa, 2015).

### 2.2.1. The Present Funding Model

There are four principal sources of funds, from most to least significant:

1. Government grants.
2. Tuition and other fees (e.g., ancillary revenues).
3. Benefactors’ donations (tuition bursaries to students, funding infrastructure etc.).
4. Patents, royalties, fees (intellectual rights), and other grants (private funding) (OPS, 2015).

For generations, governments have been funding HE from an input-based approach (i.e., student enrolment). Presently, the funding formula applies, under which HEIs receive 42% of their funding from government grants. However, several factors are pushing funding formulae towards financing outcomes (or even outputs), rather than inputs.

### 2.2.2. Ontario's Differentiation Policy Framework for HE

Ontario's 2013 Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education transformed HE. Objectives of the framework included:

- Shifting the focus of institutions away from enrolment growth.
- Reducing unnecessary duplication.
- Ensuring that institutions' mandates align with government priorities (including financial sustainability at the institutional and system levels through a diversity of programme strengths).
- Reinforce the ministry's role as a steward of the system.

Following the release of this framework, the government negotiated and signed Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs) with each of the province's 45 publicly assisted colleges and universities (Curry et al., 2009; Yin, 2015). The province of Ontario's funding has since been linked to institutional performance at 1.4% for universities and 1.2% for colleges, but that will go up gradually to 60% in the next five years.

The government of Ontario's position is that differentiated mandates are the tool to implement outcomes-based budgeting. Specifically, HEIs within a specific radius cannot offer exactly the same programmes because then they would be competing between themselves. Also, compressed fiscal environments, changing demographics, and a more vocal student client base provide an opportunity to reform and improve the HE-funding model, with traceable benefits for students, HEIs, and taxpayers (Curry et al., 2009; Yin, 2015). These factors will be discussed in more detail below.

There is a squeeze on provincial funding due to budgetary compressions, with a decrease in provincial funding as an overall percentage of university revenues. By contrast, between the academic year 2000–2001 and 2013–2014, there was an over 200% increase in tuition fees paid by Ontario students and a 90% increase in funding from the government of Ontario. As demographic changes result in fewer students eligible to attend HEIs, these institutions may face significant fiscal shortfalls if their

funding models are not adjusted. However, the shortfall cannot be met by the government. Economic trends and an ageing demographic are fiscal pressures on the state which translates into budget compressions for funding programmes, including HE (University of Ottawa, 2015).

Subsequently, students are becoming a more significant contributor to university revenues through higher tuition fees. Operating grants, however, have not risen proportionally. As students and their parents/guardians pay more, they expect concrete outcomes from their education, e.g., skills relevant to the labour market, jobs, etc. Similarly, benefactors' donations are premised on outcomes. Whether it is a building, a speaker series, or a programme, a benefactor expects a measurable result from their gift. The markets dictate revenues from patents, royalties, and fees because consumers, presumably, will only pay for what benefits them, as private enterprises are looking to fund research and development in HEIs (University of Ottawa, 2015).

It appears that all HEIs' principal funding sources (with the exemption of government grants) are premised on measurable outcomes. Furthermore, a lack of alignment between inputs, outputs and outcomes can result in a cross-subsidy whereby undergraduate tuition is funding graduate work without deliverable outcomes for undergraduate students. With differentiated mandates, institutions would be required to define their responsibilities and desired outcomes, and demonstrate their mandate-specific (e.g., research and teaching) goals (University of Ottawa, 2015).

One way to measure this performance is through the context (i.e., institution-specific mandate), inputs (i.e., resources, both human and capital), outputs (i.e., research, teaching, and advisory products) and outcomes (i.e., the impact of efforts on student satisfaction and labour-market performance, as well as fulfilment of specific mandates). This approach is based on an evaluation framework developed by Page et al. (2014) for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).



### 2.2.3. Higher Education Metrics

New details were found in a MCU briefing document marked "confidential", obtained by the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) news and published on May 6, 2019 (and later confirmed by the MCU). It lays out the ten measures, sometimes called metrics, and the implementation schedule. Six of the metrics are related to skills and job outcomes:

- Graduate earnings.
- Number and proportion of graduates in programmes with experiential learning.
- Skills and competencies.
- The proportion of graduates employed full-time in a related or partially related field.
- The proportion of students in an identified area of strength.
- Graduation rate.

The other four metrics were related to what the government calls "economic and community impact". There was some variation between the measurements for colleges and universities. Both were to be evaluated on funding received from industry sources, as well as on "community/local impact", which is a simple measure of the student population as a proportion of the local population (MTCU, 2019).

The document stated that universities would be measured on federal research funding (from such agencies as the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council [NSERC]) and colleges would be measured on an apprenticeship-related metric that was marked "TBD" (to be determined). Finally, each college and university would have its own "institution-specific economic impact metric". The ministry document did not explain how that, or some other measurements, would be

calculated. The metric for skills and competencies was also labelled "TBD" (CBC News, 2019).

The first year of the new agreements stated that from 2021–22, approximately 25% of funding will be tied to outcomes, and that proportion was due rise annually until 2024–25. However, an extension due to Covid-19 means the first year will be 2023–24 and will rise annually until 2027–28 (MCU, 2021). This is the so called “Quarter Budget”, derived from the above-mentioned 42% existing public funding based on enrolments (Canadian Council on Learning, 2010), multiplied by 60% to the maximum of public funding per HEI on outcome-based criteria. That is equal to the maximum of 25.2% public funding, or “Quarter Budget”.

### 2.3. Changing Landscape of HE in Ontario

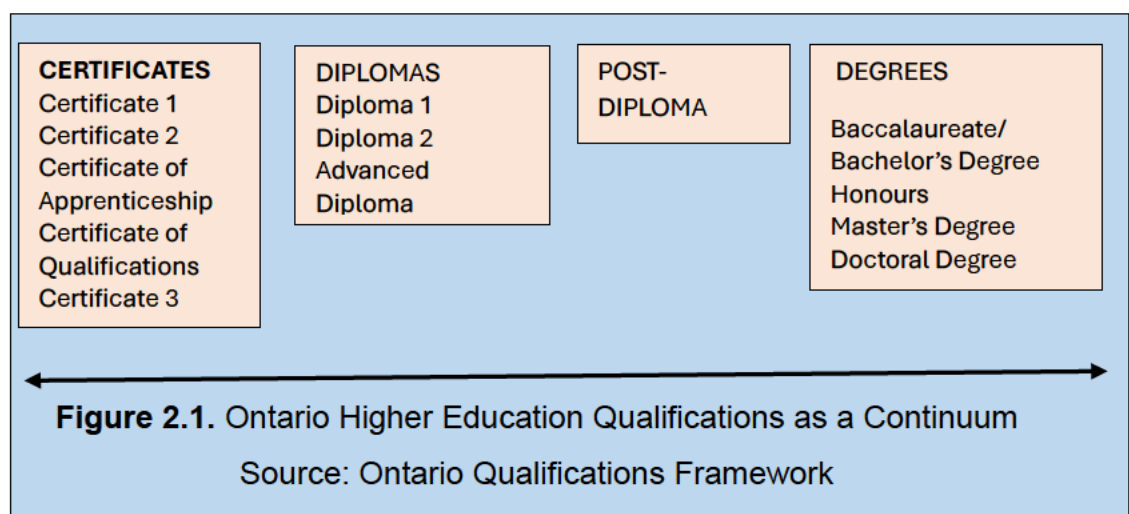
HE has taken prominence in the development of the Ontarian society and, by extension, the Canadian population. Several academics, including Tishcoff (2022), support this paradigm and advocate that HE is pivotal to developing Canada's economic, social, and cultural fabric. Some crucial factors have profoundly impacted HE, such as the implementation of systems to widen Ontarians' access to HE: the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF), OPAIP and Pathways to Education Canada, the standardisation of metrics gauged at assessing the effectiveness of HE, deliveries like Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs), and HE Metrics. Additionally, the influx of numerous refugees into Ontario is associated with new opportunities and attendant challenges. These approaches and tools have contributed to optimising resources, rationalising programmes, and effectively improving access to HE. They are discussed in detail below.

#### 2.3.1. The Ontario Qualifications Framework

The OQF provides standards for HE establishments, including those registered to grant three- and four-year degree programmes. This extended HE to the broader Ontario community by vesting degree-

granting functions on less prominent public universities, colleges, indigenous institutes, and other learning institutions. The institutions expanded their academic offerings, improved their reputations, and attained the lucrative rankings enjoyed by other educational institutions (Colyar et al., 2022).

The Framework gives a holistic approach to the development of HE in Ontario by providing a progression from the certificate level to the degree level, as captured in Figure 2.1. below:



### 2.3.2. The Ontario HE Access, Diversity, and Social Inclusion Programme

According to Chatoor et al. (2022), the OPAIP was introduced to remove non-financial barriers to HE faced by underrepresented groups. They argue that extending the reach of HE offerings could significantly help the disenfranchised if it is complemented by tactical support and intervention by essential personnel. They envision that this approach will ensure that students in rural or remote communities, indigenous students, students with disabilities, and the like will be better able to access and complete HE programmes.

### 2.3.3. Strategic Mandate Agreements

SMA's were implemented by the MCU to assess the effectiveness of programmes in a cyclic nature based on their ability to achieve

governmental priorities. In Ontario, the cyclic events include confirmation of government priority areas, associated system-wide and/or institutional-specific performance metrics and reporting metrics, metric weighting parameters, funding allocations, and the establishment of targets and other parameters (MTCU, 2019). These have been instrumental in streamlining the programmes and optimising their resources.

The province of Ontario utilises performance metrics to ascertain HE-funded programmes' ability to meet governmental objectives, be financially sustainable, and operate efficiently. The metrics are used to measure impacts and outcomes in tandem with Ontario's economic and social aspirations (Weingarten et al., 2019). Like SMAs, HE Metrics are instrumental in optimising financial resources and efficiently managing programmes.

#### 2.3.4. Purposes of Education

The key purposes of education can be described as two-fold. First, the efficient preparation of skilled workers who will achieve personal success through contribution to market economics. Thus, high-quality preparation for the “citizenry of life” through education is viewed as a public good. Second, preparing “citizens for life” through education can be viewed as a (self-interest) private benefit (Greene, 2001, pp. 10-11).

The challenge for today’s academic community is to find balance between these two paradigms. While both purposes of education are equally important – contributing to global competitiveness and economic stability and while also contributing to the individual’s self-actualisation and empowerment (Young et al., 2021) – they create a tension between the seemingly divergent and at times conflicting purposes of education. However, the researcher of this study views the two purposes of education as complementary.

Viewing the purpose of education through economic competitiveness, personal benefit, and individual development is meant to prepare citizens

for life as a complementary purpose to public societal purpose. Educational leaders are faced with the challenge of finding the balance between the two purposes of education: contributing to global competitiveness and economic stability and contributing to the individual's self-actualisation and empowerment (Young et al., 2001). However, SALs in HE are familiar with employers' demands that students graduate with labour skills that complement the technical competencies acquired during their studies.

### 2.3.5. Influx of Refugees into Ontario

According to Statistics Canada (2022), over one million people have emigrated to Canada, predominantly seeking refugee status due to climate change and political upheaval. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a perfect example of the benevolence of the Canadian government, which has undertaken to receive and regularise the status of an unlimited number of Ukrainian refugees. Interestingly, almost 50% of refugees gravitate to Ontario to settle there (Statistics Canada, 2022). Refugees have varying requirements for HE, and based on their cultural and social differences, do not readily receive the necessary information, funding, and support to optimise the HE opportunities and attain their full potential. Consequently, the Employment Services of Ontario predicts that no more than 20% of the refugees will engage in HE, with the vast majority employed in low-paying jobs.

### 2.3.6 OCM and Leadership in HE in Ontario

Like in many countries, the landscape of HE in Ontario is radically changing following a public policy “restructuring pathway”. According to Jones (2004, pp. 39-54) “substantive policy reforms have been introduced in Ontario’s HE sector, and frequently underscoring the analysis of these changes is the assumption that the province is now following along the well-travelled pathway associated with the neoliberal policy reform”. As a result of the dynamic environment, academic leaders' role in HE is continuously transforming to adapt to these changes. This political

systemic public policy change is the cause of 'the restructuring path', and an external driver of change in HE in Ontario.

SALs have different views and perspectives on establishing a sustainable, quality assured, and viable HE system. Many SALs have realised that unfulfilled social structural reforms by the Ontario government pose a severe threat to HE's operational stability and are inhibitors to OCM processes. Other SALs articulate that this new era is an excellent opportunity for HE institutions to become more autonomous, increase access to HE markets domestically and internationally, and attract more investment from business communities and from the government for research and development.

Central to public administration, public sector management, and public policy is the question of the extent to which the state (the provincial government of Ontario) should steer, plan, regulate and control societal institutions such as universities. In many countries the government steers and controls institutions to varying degrees. Universities as public entities were included among those institutions that were subject to the approach. The extent and nature of government involvement in HEIs defines the state-university relationship; this is the external governance of the academy (Huisman, 2009).

Ontario's HE system is mostly influenced by the British HE system. The cultural- oriented belief system is typical of what is found in the United Kingdom, where the collegium model guarantees significant freedom to act in several areas. The British model is characterised by substantial institutional autonomy, academic collegiality, and limited state involvement (Capano, 2011).

Within British HE, executive management of hybrid institutions must be accountable for the financial and social performances of the establishments in their purview. Hybrid organisations may fail in their commercial or social operations, and some have. In several cases, the uncertainties inherent in the process of resolution are such that the

government has intervened to avert the process of formal bankruptcy (Kay, 2018).

The issues raised by the insolvency option bring to the fore consideration of whether existing insolvency procedures are well adapted to the failure of businesses (public corporations) providing critical public services. However, in a public limited company, the board oversees the organisation's activities and its executive management's effectiveness. "One would need to have extreme and unjustifiable faith in the role of a board populated by high custodians of the public interest to believe that hybrids could be left free of broader regulatory oversight" (Kay, 2018).

## 2.4. Challenges Faced by HE Senior Academic Leaders

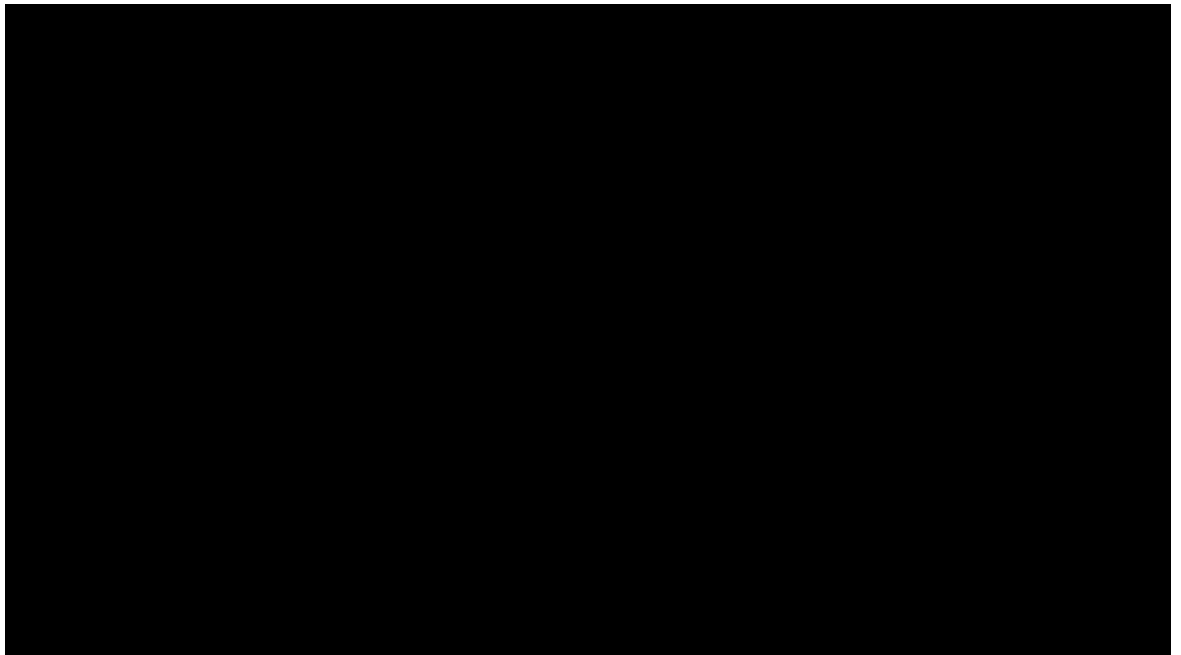
This study aimed to identify and investigate the key challenges that academic leaders are faced with in HE in Ontario. The challenges that trouble academic leaders the most are political leadership, institutional leadership, data and measurement, and collective labour agreements. OCM processes in HE cannot be applied correctly and effectively. Academic leaders utilise political, symbolic, structural, and human resource leadership frames, theories of change, and other theories and models to address these challenges.

### 2.4.1. SMA Metrics Assessment

There is an ongoing debate between the academic community and the MCU concerning the Strategic Management Agreements (SMAs). SMAs are not set with realistically achievable and measurable goals, clarifying tasks, responsibilities, and reporting lines. It is also noted that missing data or huge gaps in data have undermined the proper assessment of the SMA metrics' agreements, signed with HEIs. Hence, deadlines cannot be realistically met and, systems and procedures cannot be effectively set.

### 2.4.2. Increased Workload and Labour Disputes

The expansion of HE has created an increased demand for faculty resources, particularly staff. Implementation of SMAs and metrics for performance have directed that staff competencies meet a minimum standard. In many instances, this has stretched academic resources to their limits. Evidence provided by the Ministry of Labour Dispute Resolution Services in Ontario, on an enquiry raised by the Collective Bargaining Information Services (CBIS) and according to CAAT Academic Workloads Survey has shown that the workloads in complementary functions have increased steadily from 2005 to 2018 (Ministry of Labour Dispute Resolution Services, 2019).



**Figure 2.2. Average Workload Hrs/ Week by Category, All Colleges  
1999–2018**

**Source: (Ministry of Labour Dispute Resolution Services, 2019).**



### 2.4.3. Political and Institutional Leadership

Political and institutional leadership are the biggest challenges and greatest potential influences of HEIs' policy reforms. However, reforms became mechanisms for transforming HE education based on the view of what the sector should be accomplishing. In many respects, there has been little system or sectorial planning in Ontario, and little emphasis has been placed on policy giving a clear direction to Ontario's colleges and universities (Jones, 2004).

The proper implementation of OCM processes by the SALs in HEIs in Ontario has been undermined by political decisions made in haste. Hence, the MCU have passed on the burden to SALs at the institutional level to address these challenges. Leadership theories, referred to in Chapter 3 – literature review, may provide answers to complexity and ambiguity facing the academic leaders in HEIs.

### 2.4.4. Rising Costs of HE

With the expansion of HE came increased costs for the students, the government, and the institutions. According to Snowdon (2022), the student's expenses include direct costs associated with the delivery of the service or good, namely tuition and fees; books and equipment; and living expenses, while student assistance costs include debt servicing and loan financing for non-governmental loans.

Governmental costs for funding students are segregated into provincial and federal charges. The provincial government's direct costs include grants to institutions, operating, capital and research, grants administration, and provincial HE regulatory and policy administration. Provincial costs associated with student assistance include scholarships, grants/bursaries, interest relief, tax credits, bad debt, and financing loans. Direct costs borne by the federal government include grants to institutions for research, capital and indirect cost, grants administration, and regulatory and policy administration.

Institutional costs, which are direct student costs, include operating expenditures associated with all aspects of the program delivery. They also involve central service costs: libraries, academic support, student services, physical premises, administration, and capital expenditure. Institutional costs associated with student assistance include scholarships and grants/bursaries.

#### 2.4.5. Special Covid-19 Conditions.

Globally, very few countries have been spared the effect of Covid-19. The pandemic drastically impacted all sectors of economies to varying extents, radically changing the educational landscape. The upsurge in online/remote learning, the closure of schools, and the impact on the international student sector are three leading indicators of the pandemic's extensive influence on Canada's educational sector (Global Affairs Canada, 2021). It has disrupted all levels of the Canadian HE system.

## 2.5. Conclusion

The current chapter lays the foundations for developing the literature review in the next chapter and adds context to the thesis. It provides a description of the changing landscape of HE, the factors that affected the political decisions made, and the process of change initiated that progressively facilitated the transition of HE from the public sector to a hybrid (from public, to publicly funded, to publicly assisted) corporate model, effectively leading to some kind of privatisation. Whether this decision will prove correct, it remains to be seen.

## Chapter 3 – The Main Literature Review

### 3.0. Introduction

The literature review focuses on the aim of the study ‘to identify and further explore the key challenges that SALs are faced with in HE in Ontario, while they enacted their administrative and academic roles’. In the literature review, the researcher examines the questions: “How does change come about?”, “Who are the SALs?”, and “How do SALs lead and manage organisation change in their HEIs amidst public policy reforms?”

This chapter references literature on leadership theory, OCM theories of change, and other theories, studies, and practices employed by SALs in HEIs. The literature review is divided into three parts:

1. A review of the evolution of theories of change (OCM processes) both traditional and contemporary, and their relation to specific leadership conceptual models and theoretical frameworks.
2. A critical review of the evolution of specific leadership theories, models, and frames, along with selected OCM-linked theories of change. The theoretical underpinning of the study, along with the conceptual framework derived from the synthesis of various conceptual models, is presented in this part.
3. The presentation of relevant research to the study of Educational Institutional Leadership that support the understanding of leadership practices exhibited by academic leaders experiencing turbulence, ambiguity, and complexity. The key challenges that academic leaders are faced with in HE in Ontario are discussed in this section.

### 3.1. Traditional Approaches to Organisational Change

OCM has a long history, beginning with Kurt Lewin’s Change Management Model (Lewin, 1947). The first step in Lewin’s three-stage model of the planned change process is to unfreeze or destabilise the

equilibrium state to overcome inner resistance to change. The second stage is moving the system to a new equilibrium that “enables groups and individuals to move to a more acceptable set of behaviours” (Burnes, 2004a, p. 313). The final third step of Lewin’s change model is refreezing, “it does not suffice to define the objective of a planned change in group performance as the reaching of a different level. Permanency of the new level, or permanency for a desired period, should be included in the objective” (Burnes, 2004a, pp. 34–34). Lewin argues that without the commitment to freezing the new equilibrium, the group life will return to the previous equilibrium level (Lewin, 1947, 1951). These stages will be discussed in more depth later in section 3.1.8.

Following the Lewin change model, six main categories of theories of change developed to assist in understanding, describing, and developing insights about the change process: dialectic (political), evolutionary, teleological, life cycle, social cognition, and cultural and sub-cultural. These are discussed in detail below.

### 3.1.1. Dialectic Theories of Change

Dialectical models, also referred to as political models, characterise change as a result of clashing ideology or belief systems. Human dynamics are always a force in shaping organisations. In politics, people put themselves at the centre; that is where people assert their sense of self. Organisations as political systems focuses on human assertiveness in the realms of “interests, conflict and power” according to Morgan’s political metaphor (Morgan, 1986, p. 148).

All organisations have political discussions. In HE, understanding these discussions helps identify some of the significant impact that human activity has on organisational ethos, structure, and discussion. These activities discussed in this metaphorical view are relatively observable and detectable manifestations of how we, as human beings, process and react to experiences that involve our interests and power.

### 3.1.2 Evolutionary Organisational Change.

Organisational change can occur quickly or slowly. Forces and sources examine the 'why' of change. First and second order, scale, foci, timing, and degree all refer to the 'what' of change. Adaptive/generative, proactive/reactive, active/static, and planned/unplanned refer to the 'how' of change. Last, the target of change refers to the outcomes. As a campus begins to engage in a change process, the organisation's members must first examine why they are about to embark on the process, the degree of change needed, and the best approach to adapt (Kezar, 2001).

Classifying organisational changes into two types – revolutionary and evolutionary – is helpful to call attention to two different, valid ways of changing organisational culture. People less familiar with organisational change have difficulty recognising the validity of both approaches, particularly the evolutionary type. Very often, transformational change refers to a dramatic evolution of some basic structure of the business itself: its strategy, culture, organisation, physical structure, supply chain, or processes. Adaptive change happens incrementally over time, whereas transformational change is often sudden and dramatic. Though not always the case, transformational change is often pursued to address a major concern or challenge the business is facing (Harvard Business School, 2020).

In revolutionary organisational change, senior leadership dictates the degree, the pace, and the timing of the change, and department managers must follow the guidelines

In HE, the ideology and philosophy are neoliberalism, a revolution (or rather a counterrevolution); therefore, one would expect the organisational change to be revolutionary. However, due to structural macro-level external factors and issues unresolved within the HE-sector and its stakeholders, a slower organisational change is necessary and has been followed by the government of Ontario, as in many other jurisdictions. Therefore,

the evolutionary type of change in HE is the norm. Kotter's (2012) organisational change model serves the "Guiding Coalition" purpose for committees building organisational change into HEIs.

While countless tools, tactics, methods, and strategies have changed over the years, after its introduction in 1996, organisations of all sizes continue to rely upon *Dr. John Kotter's (2012) 8-Step process for Change Management*, which refers to both evolutionary and revolutionary theories. This model recognises globalisation and technological change as drivers of organisational change. While each step is vital and works together as part of a holistic Change Management ecosystem, it is clear that three principles underlie Dr. Kotter's methodology: teamwork, transparency, and communication (Kotter, 2012).

Kotter's Model echoes Lewin (1947, 1951), in that stage 1, steps 1–4 help to defrost a hardened status quo, stage 2, steps 5–7 introduce many practices, and stage 3, step 8 "grounds the changes in the corporate culture and helps make them stick" (Kotter, 2012, p. 24).

Organisations like HEIs are complex, and applying complexity thinking to change requires concept transfer from natural to social sciences. Complex systems, as HEI's administration, have the capacity to respond to their environment in more than one way, tending to self-organise and producing new emergent states.

### 3.1.3. Teleological vs Ateleological Organisational Change

Teleology is defined as the direction, goal, and purpose of change and is a planned organisational change theory. Teleology finds its origin in the Greek word "Telos" which means achieving a direction, goal, or purpose. Teleology, as a purpose-driven approach, is concerned with setting and achieving goals or objectives. Teleological change rests on the belief that organisations are purposeful, adaptive, and often rational, and strategic directions create successful change. Strategic direction within HE is found in design applications of Information and Communication Technologies

(ICT; particularly in e-learning, open, and distance learning), Management of Information Systems (MIS), and Accounting Management Technologies (Truex et al., 2000).

It is difficult to adopt an ateleological approach within a heavily teleological context. An extreme ateleological approach might lead to organisational anarchy, with no overarching plan for bringing together localised energies and initiatives (Jones et al., 2005). The anarchy that SALs were faced with during the initial Covid-19 pandemic was handled well and acted upon swiftly by them, using ICT techniques, Artificial Intelligence, and other initiatives demonstrating shared leadership practices.

#### 3.1.4. Life-cycle Organisational Change Theories

Change management is a cyclic process, as an organisation will always encounter the need to change. Life-cycle change grew out of child development theories and focuses on recurring stages across organisations' experience of change. There are three phases in the OCM lifecycle: Identify, engage, and implement. The elements of change, processes, technology, and people and the phases of the OCM lifecycle are closely linked, and their intersection points must be carefully considered. By paying close attention to how people are engaged in each phase, an organisation can manage that change to adapt to any business or economic condition.

Lifecycle OCM, evolutionary theories, and the teleological designs of ICT can be jointly employed to monitor the HE sector, for example by conducting research on key policy issues within HE and analysing the government's policy options. Initiatives such as the Best Value Business Model (BVBM) (Council of Ontario Universities, 2015), which is one of the best initiatives recently procured by the government of Ontario, can prove instrumental in improving the capacity to inform those who are responsible for public policy on the "state" of the system, policy issues, and challenges, and various policy options and alternatives. Through collaborative partnerships of Ontario Universities and Colleges, this

innovative initiative can be realised with simplified submission of proposals, project team evaluations, and ongoing metrics that reward expertise, risk mitigation, and performance management (Council of Ontario Universities, 2015).

### 3.1.5. Social-cognition Organisational Change

Theoretical models of organisational change have evolved as we turn our attention from the individual to the organisational level. In the 1970s, Chris Argyris and Donald Schon defined organisational learning as a three-step model of change in which detection precedes correcting errors leading to change (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

Change occurs because individuals see a need to grow, learn, and change their behaviour. Social-cognition models describe change as being tied to learning and mental processes such as sensemaking and mental models (Kezar, 2001).

Recent research into quality assurance of HE in Ontario and Canada focuses on mental models, the sustainability of HEIs, and sense-making theories as cited below.

The fifth discipline was a theory and culminating principle to the four foundational principles of learning organisation: “personal mastery... mental models... shared vision... [and] team learning” (Argyris & Senge, 2006, pp. 7–9). Further, Argyris and Senge (2006, p. 3), described “... an organisation where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together”.

Mental models are frameworks consisting of our underlying assumptions from socialisation, values, beliefs, education, and experience that help us organise information (Argyris & Senge, 2006; Kezar, 2001). Put simply, our mental models dictate how we understand our world. They are essential because they heavily influence how we intake information and



react to it; individuals, leaders, teams, and organisations need to understand the why behind their thinking and behaviours. Mental models influence not only leadership reasoning and behaviour but also organisational centres. And often, mental models become barriers to change rather than enablers (Argyris & Senge, 2006; Kezar, 2001).

### 3.1.6. Cultural and Sub-cultural Theories of Change

Within the business community in the last 20 years, organisational culture has emerged as a topic of central concern to those who study organisations. Schein, (2010) describes organisational culture as “the foundation of the social order that we live in and of the rules, we abide by..., and it is... created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated by leaders” (Schein, 1985, p. 3).

HEI cultures are influenced by external factors such as demographic, economic, social, and political conditions. Yet, they are also shaped by strong forces that emanate from within. This internal dynamic has its roots in the organisation's history and derives its force from the values, processes, and goals held by those most intimately involved in it. It concerns decisions, actions, and communication both on an instrumental and a symbolic level.

Organisational culture encourages practitioners to:

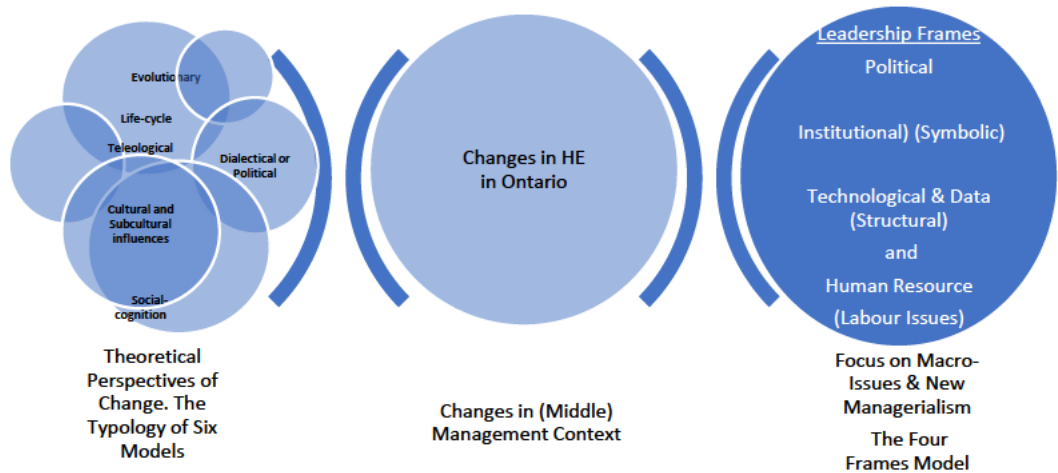
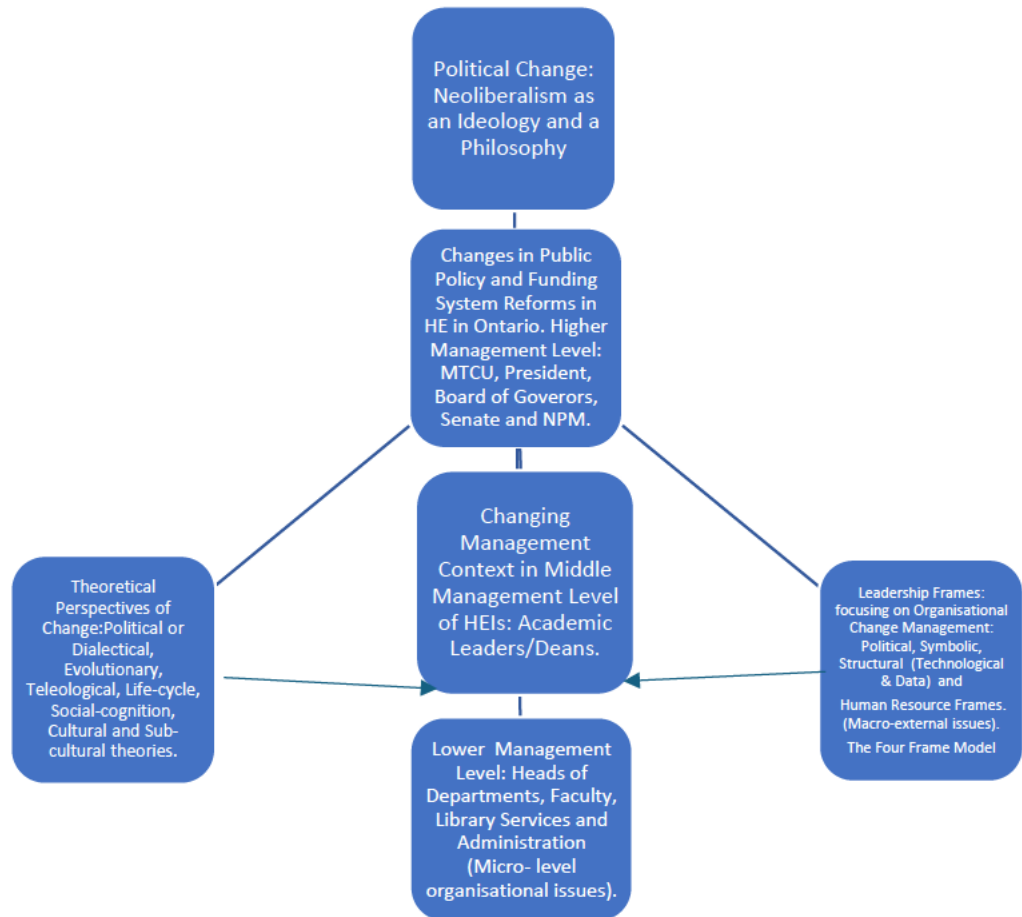
1. Consider real or potential conflicts not in isolation but on the broad canvas of organisational life.
2. Recognise structural or operational contradictions that suggest tensions in the organisation.
3. Implement and evaluate everyday decisions with a keen awareness of their role in and influence upon organisational culture.
4. Understand the symbolic dimensions of ostensibly instrumental decisions and actions.

5. Consider why different groups in the organisation hold varying perceptions about institutional performance (Tierney, 2011).

Culture and identity are described by (Schein, 2010) as organisational influences, where tensions may arise among and between subcultures as they seek alignment toward shared goals. Mitigation strategies may be necessary to address these challenges. This study explores the external macro- challenges for middle management level academic leaders to manage amidst organisational change management in a setting with identifiable subcultures.

Culture and identity are described by Shein (2010, 2016) as organisational influences, where tensions may rise among and between subcultures as they seek alignment towards shared goals. Mitigation strategies may be necessary to address these challenges.

The present study explores the challenges and opportunities for SALs to lead amidst change in the HE setting in Ontario with identifiable subcultures. Further to the identification of the three subcultures according to Schein's model, several "oppositional" pairings can also be seen in the community college setting: vocational versus academic programme focus; administration versus unionised labour groups; part-time versus full-time employees and general human resource management; and central main campus versus geographically dispersed smaller campuses.



**Figure 3.1. Preliminary Conceptual Model (Source: Created by the Author)**

### 3.1.7. Contemporary Approaches to OCM theory in HE

There are innumerable definitions of change management, but it is generally agreed that there is some semblance of familiarity between most of them. Riches et al. (2017) attest that every organisation changes its industry, age, or size, and that organisations that readily embrace change are more likely to be sustainable and profitable, whereas those less able to adapt are more likely to fail. In a like manner, Ogochi (2018) contends that organisational change is fundamental to any business entity and supports the view of Riches et al. (2017) that change management must be closely regulated for an organisation to be successful. Galli (2018) maintains that despite the OCM used, success can only be achieved with adequate managerial support, resources and knowledge, and effective communication with and acceptance by employees.

According to Burnes (2020), scholars have a fundamental understanding that change is inevitable for the growth and development of any organisation. Transformation requires careful and calculated measures by managers with the requisite experience and competence to adopt and implement new approaches to ensure successful change. In this regard, it is critical that organisations adopt a proactive approach to adapt and respond to the dynamic ecosphere in which they operate (Galli, 2018; Hussain et al., 2018). Three notable works substantiate this view (Bugubayeva et al. 2017; Palmer et al., 2016; Riches et al., 2017) and the contribution by Mannix et al. (2019).

Palmer et al. (2016) proffer that managers with excellent leadership skills can better ensure that their organisations achieve the desired goals and objectives. This position was supported by Bugubayeva et al. (2017), who argue that change management is commonly considered to be the most challenging aspect of managing an entity. Senior management must possess varied competencies and managerial skills to adapt to change effectively. This view was championed by Riches et al. (2017), who extended this argument to state that organisations that adapt well to the dynamic ecosphere in which they operate are more likely to succeed than

those that are not adaptable. They infer that such entities are more likely to fail.

Stouten et al., (2018) contend that if leaders and change management personnel possess critical change management skills and can creatively adapt and implement them, the success rate would be significantly enhanced. According to Barends et al. (2017) and Barends and Rousseau (2018), although managerial skills are essential, managers and change management leaders are too reluctant to embrace empirical evidence that would enhance change management decision-making. Furthermore, Dalcher (2019) contextualises this by asserting that change management involves transforming organisations from their preliminary state to a highly preferred state by the stakeholders through coordinated processes.

OCM is a complex undertaking that may involve varied approaches and models which, collectively, may contribute to the success or failure of the change process. Errida and Lofti (2021) see a change management model as a framework for leading or facilitating transformations by providing a pathway. Of note is the earlier work by Parry et al., (2013) who identified two types of change management models: processual and descriptive models.

Processual models provide a specific direction through exact stages like Lewin's three-stage Model, Kotter's 8-stage Model, and McKinsey's 7S Model. In contrast, a descriptive model identifies and explains the various determinants which must be engaged for change management to be effected. Bolman and Deal (2017) and McKinsey's 7-stage Model (CFI, 2020) are descriptive models as they identify determinants but no specific order. Although Kinsey's 7S Model is often used in shared leadership practices within the meso- and micro-internal HE environment and can be applied internally within the faculties and the departments, Bolman and Deal's model (2017) is more appropriate for dealing with external factors such as the macro-external factors that the researcher is exploring in this research study. The researcher views the two models as complementary.



**Figure 3.2. Kinsey's 7-Step Model (Source: CFI [2020])**

From the host of OCM literature, including change management in post-secondary education, it is clear that no specific model or approach can be considered the best fit for any organisation or change process. In fact, Riches et al. (2017) argue that it may be necessary to use a combination of two or more models to attain the desired outcome. Similarly, Palmer et al. (2016) advocate that it is essential to adopt a multiple-perspective approach, customising the approach based on the best fit for the context. Furthermore, Bugubayeva et al. (2017) contended that integrating various techniques may be more practical, and Mannix et al. (2019) state that carefully selected multiple approaches can complement each other and collectively enhance the change management process. On the other hand, Stouten et al. (2018) infer that significant organisational research does not present a consensus regarding the most suitable change

management processes and principles that should be adopted. They reason that academics depend too heavily on common change management models founded on expert opinions rather than scientific evidence.

For the purpose of this research, three change management models will be discussed in greater detail: Lewin's three-stage Model (1947), Kotter's eight-stage Model (2012) and Bolman and Deal's (2017) model. Lewin's three-stage Model is considered the foundation block of OCM by academic luminaries, while Kotter's eight-stage Model and Bolman and Deal's Model have both been successfully used by scholars for research on post-secondary education.

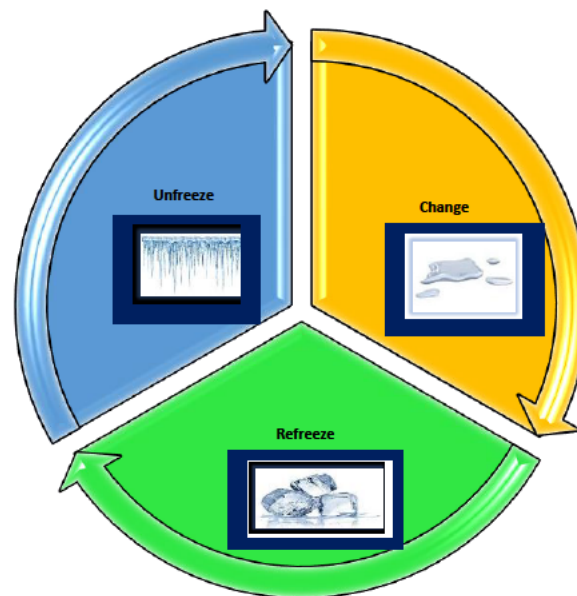
#### 3.1.8. Lewin's Three-Stage Model

Academics herald Lewin's Three-Stage Model as the foundation block for OCM. Rosenbaum et al., (2018) advocate that this model is a platform for planned change management. Cameron and Green (2019) add that stability is intrinsic in Lewin's Three-Stage model. They declare that stability is achieved when organisations' "push" factors for change are in equilibrium, for example, motivating and limiting factors. Cummings et al., (2016) describe this as a three-stage process synonymous with water in the form of ice that melts and then refreezes into ice. From this the acronym CATS emanated, Changing as Three Steps, unfreeze-change-refreeze.

##### 3.1.8.a) Unfreezing

Unfreezing paves the way for establishing the required change and justifying its necessity. It also involves the scheduling and planning of stage one meetings and seeking approval (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Rosenbaum et al. (2018) support the view that rigorous planning allows change management leaders to uninhibitedly assess and treat the real problem, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful transitioning.

Cameron and Green (2019) contend that change occurs when one of the "push" factors dominates and claim that it is incumbent on the change management leaders to understand the fundamental change comprehensively. In their view, the dominance of a "push" factor destabilises the state of equilibrium, thereby altering the status quo, which results in unfreezing. Like Errida and Lotfi (2021), Cameron and Green state that change management leaders must justify the need for change and map out the process systematically. They maintain that this stage is driven by perception management when the change management leaders seek to mobilise the stakeholders for the impending change, citing that effective communication is crucial for stakeholder involvement and participation. Molholland (2017) describes this as the stage at which change management leaders analyse procedures and human interactions to both minimise the likelihood of resistance to change and identify potential improvements to the processes.



**Figure 3.3. Lewin's Three-Step Model, (Source: Created by the author)**



### **3.1.8.b) Change**

Rosenbaum et al. (2018) identify this stage as the transition point. They argue that effective transition mandates a strong focus on educating, supporting, and communicating the change to all stakeholders. They opine that adequate training, technology, and resources must be readily accessible. Cameron and Green (2019) and Mulholland (2017) contend that change involves moving from a current state to a desired state. Like Rosenbaum et al. (2018), they promote in-depth stakeholder involvement and participation, and implement new policies and procedures to drive change and encourage positive behaviour modification to the change. Errida and Lotfi (2021) allude to this by declaring that once the status quo is disrupted, implementation of the change takes place. They agree that stakeholder feedback must be encouraged to ensure the transition is seamless.

### **3.1.8.c) Refreeze**

The final stage, Refreeze, moves the organisation to stability as the "push" forces revert to equilibrium and the stakeholders are encouraged to adhere to the new standards and status quo (Cameron & Green, 2021; Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Mulholland, 2017; Rosenbaum et al., 2018)

### **3.1.8.d) Strengths and Weaknesses of Lewin's Model**

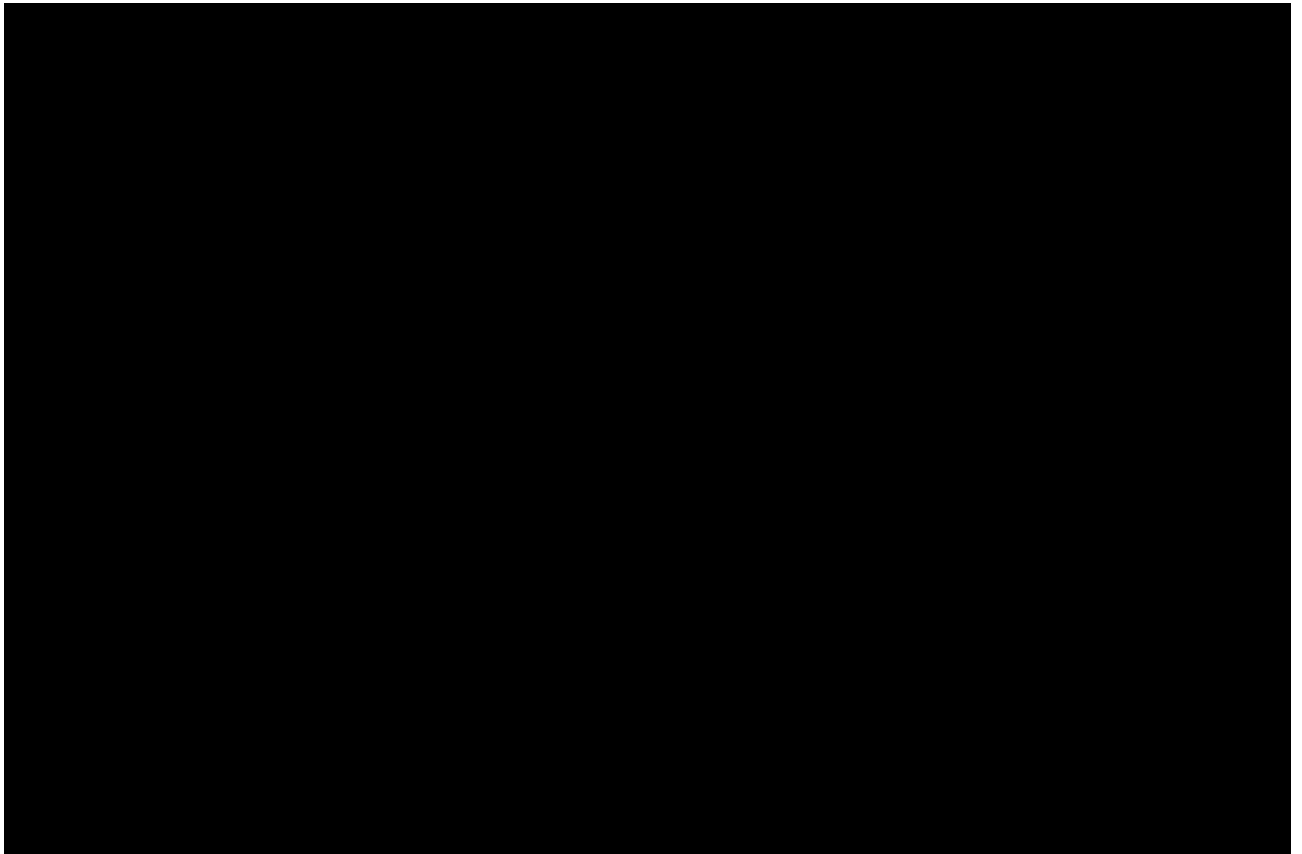
Bekmukhambetova, (2021) contends that Lewin's Model is suitable for drastic organisational changes because its iterative and deep-set nature can unveil issues that are not readily known or visible. Conversely, this in-depth approach is time-consuming, and the extent of employee resource allocation and input imposes the likelihood that the change process could be threatened when employees migrate to different positions within or external to the organisation.

### 3.2. Kotter's 8-Step Model

Kotter's Model, categorised by Kirsch and Carey (2013) as a processual model, illustrates the tenets of Lewin's three-stage Model, except it is more detailed and systematic in its approach. Kotter's Model is an 8-step model that focuses on preparing the employees for the impending change rather than preparing for the implementation itself by being flexible and testing each stage through trial and error (Dao et al., 2021; Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Wentworth, 2018).

#### 3.2.1. Strengths and Weaknesses of Kotter's Model / The Critical Synthesis of the Lewin's 3-Stage Model with Kotter's 8-Step Model

Bekmukhambetova, (2021) describes Kotter's 8-step Model as a charter for successful organisational change realisation that adopts a holistic approach to change management. It focuses on appropriate communication in the workplace, which partly justifies the model's extensive use. Galli (2018) argues that Kotter's model is a top-down approach, and employee input is lacking in the first two steps. This somewhat contradicts Kotter's (1986) initial assertion of advocating that steps 1 and 2 engage and enable the organisation when, in reality, employee input is non-existent. Galli (2018) contends that employee input is sought at step 3. He also argues that if a step is advertently missed or the sequence is not followed, this could jeopardise or derail the change process.



**Figure 3.4. Source: Wentworth (2018)**

Bekmukhambetova (2021) acknowledges that this Model is better suited for large organisations and is less suited to organisations requiring fuller employee participation and communication. She expresses concern about the lack of involvement of the employees in the early stages.

Errida and Lotfi (2021) compared Kotter's model to Lewin's and were able to superimpose all eight steps within Lewin's three-step Model. This further solidifies the frequent argument that Lewin's three-stage Model is foundational to other change management models (Cameron & Green, 2019; Cummings et al., 2016; Rosenbaum et al., 2018).

Lewin 3-Stage Model	Kotter's 8-Step Model
Unfreezing	Step 1: Create a sense of urgency
	Step 2: Build a large, powerful coalition
	Step 3: Develop a vision and strategy
	Step 4: Communicate the change vision
Moving (transition)	Step 5: Empower broad-based action
	Step 6: Generate short-term wins
	Step 7: Consolidate gains and produce more change
Refreezing	Step 8: Embed changes into the culture

**Table 3.1: The Synthesis of Lewin's 3-Stage Model and Kotter's 8-Step Model.**

**Source: Errida & Lotfi (2021) Lewin's and Kotter's Models Processes**

### 3.2.2. The Original Bolman and Deal Four-Frame Model

Lee Bolman and Terry Deal outlined their Four-Frame model in their book, *Reframing Organisations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* (1991). As stated in Van Vught (1989), Bolman and Deal cited that leaders should look at and approach organisational issues from four perspectives, which they called 'Frames' (frame of reference) or 'lenses'. In their view, if a leader works with only one habitual Frame, the leader risks being ineffective. The Four Frames outlined by Bolman, and Deal are: 1. Political, 2. Symbolic, 3. Structural, and 4. Human Resource. Here are descriptions of and differences between the Four Frames:

## Political

- The Political Frame addresses the problem of individuals and interest groups having sometimes conflicting (often hidden) agendas, especially at times when budgets are limited, and the organisation must make difficult choices.
- In this Frame, you will see coalition-building, conflict resolution work, and power-base building to support the leader's initiatives.

## Symbolic

- The Symbolic Frame addresses people's needs for a sense of purpose and meaning in their work.
- It focuses on inspiring people by making the organisation's direction feel significant and distinctive.
- It includes creating a motivating vision and recognising superb performance through company celebrations.

## Structural

- This Frame focuses on the obvious 'how' of change.
- It is mainly a task-oriented Frame.
- It concentrates on strategy; setting measurable goals; clarifying tasks, responsibilities, and reporting lines; agreeing on metrics and deadlines; and creating systems and procedures.

## Human Resource

- The HR Frame emphasises people's needs.
- It chiefly focuses on giving employees the power and opportunity to perform their jobs well, while also addressing their needs for human contact, personal growth, and satisfaction.

### 3.2.3. Bolman and Deal Four-Frame Model (2017)

Bolman and Deal proposed that a leader should see the organisation's challenges through these four Frames to gain an overall view, and to decide which Frame or Frames to use. The leader may use one Frame (implying a behavioural approach) for a time, and then switch to another. Alternatively, the leader might combine and use a few Frames, or all four, at the same time.

Crucially, Bolman and Deal's (2017) model seeks to avoid the temptation for leaders to become stuck viewing and acting on conditions through one Frame alone. Bolman and Deal assert that because no Frame works well in every circumstance, then a leader who sticks with one Frame will eventually act inappropriately and ineffectively. Instead, it is the leader's responsibility to use the appropriate Frame of reference, and thereby behaviour, for each challenge. Central to this methodology is asking the right questions and diagnosing the vital issues (Van Vught, 1989).

The critical synthesis of Lewin's 3-stage model with Kotter's 8-step model formed the basis of the evolving Bolman and Deal conceptual models since its first inception in 1991. Indeed, the newer sixth edition of the model (Bolman & Deal, 2017), was updated to include coverage of cross-sector collaboration, generational differences, virtual environments, globalisation, sustainability, and communication across cultures. Bolman and Deal's (2017) model was well suited to describe the present conditions of the transited HE system in Ontario because it expresses the "refreeze" 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of the Lewin 3-stage model. The seventh edition of Bolman and Deal's (2021) conceptual model describes the present environment both in the US and the UK. It could therefore serve as a prediction model for the transited HE system in Ontario, Canada.

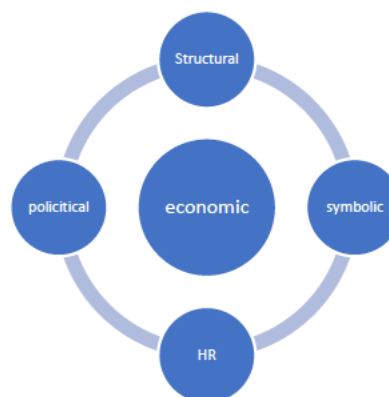
Lewin's 3-Stage Model	Kotter's 8-Step Model	Bolman & Deal Models
<b>Stage 1: Unfreezing</b>	Step 1: Create a sense of urgency	Initial Change Stage (Unfreeze). Lewin's 3-Stage Model.
	Step 2: Build a large, powerful coalition	Combine the 4 First Steps of Kotter's Model.
	Step 3: Develop a vision and strategy	Use the older (Bolman & Deal, 1991) Model, to describe change.
	Step 4: Communicate the change vision	
<b>Stage 2: Moving (transition)</b>	Step 5: Empower broad-based action	2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage on Lewin's Model (Moving/ Transition).
	Step 6: Generate short-term wins	Take Steps 5, 6, & 7 of Kotter's Model
	Step 7: Consolidate gains and produce more change	Use (Bolman & Gallos, 2011) Model, and (Gallos, 2008) to describe the transition process.
<b>Stage 3: Refreezing</b>	Step 8: Embed changes into the culture	Final Stage of Lewin's Model (Refreeze). Take Step 8 of Kotter's Model. Apply (Bolman & Deal, 2017)

**Table 3.2. Conceptual Framework synthesising three Conceptual Models (Lewin's, Kotter, and Bolman & Deal). Source: Based on Errida & Lotfi (2021) (Lewin's and Kotter's Models Processes) and added by the author for the appropriate use of (Bolman & Deal, 2017) Model.**

### 3.2.4. Conceptual Model

Neoliberalism emphasises the importance of the economic development rather than the social development. The researcher therefore proposes a conceptual model that places economic issues at the core of all undertakings. The major political parties in Ontario have caused HEIs in Ontario to transition into a corporate model. In a competitive environment, every leader must be competent in handling any economic issues. Therefore, economic factors play a leading role in the existence and sustainability of HEIs, which should be foremost.

The proposed conceptual model is a modification of Bolman and Deal's (2017) model. Multi-frame thinking is still the basis of applying the model. The leader will still have the option of choosing the frames, but the economic frame will reside in any approach as the political decision on public services (including HE), reached by the government of Ontario and any public policy reforms that are presently implemented. In no doubt, freeing HE from existing public sector regulation has tipped the balance of social and economic development in favour of the economic development under a corporate structure. Labour rights, democratic rights, and essential public sector services (such as StatsCan) have been affected the most, as presented in this study.

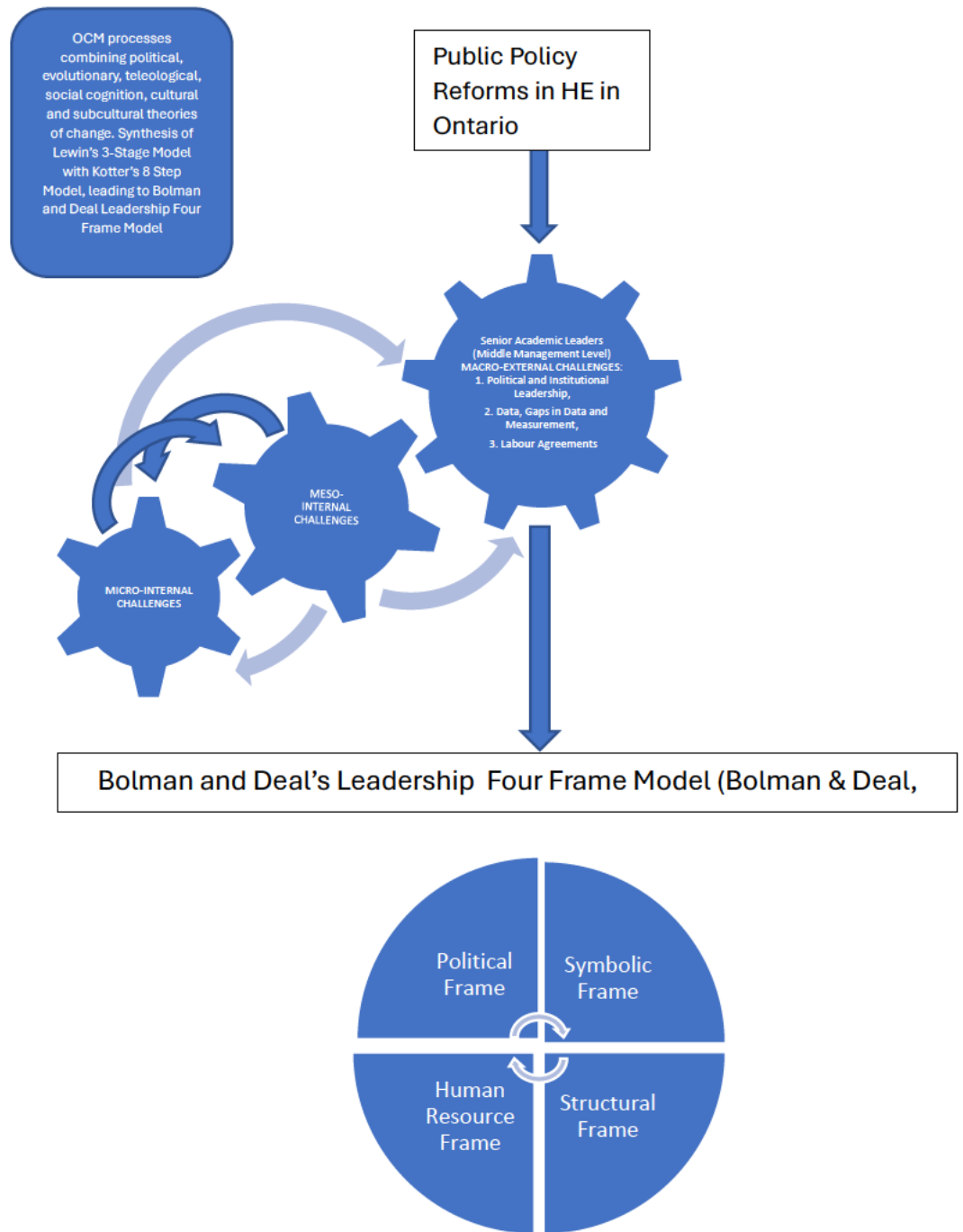


**Figure 3.5. The Economic Perspective of HE in Ontario/ Conceptual Model. Source: Created by the author**



### 3.2.5. Justification for Bolman and Deal Model

Lewin's three-phase and Kotter's 8-Step models have their place in OCM. In the context of HE, several studies attest to the successful implementation of the Bolman and Deal (2017) model. Fiscal pressures on the province of Ontario, brought upon by international economic trends and an ageing demographic, labour shortages, and labour skills mismatches, have resulted in budget compressions for funding programmes in HE. Bolman and Deal (2017) state that their original model requires some modification to cater for the new ideological, philosophical, and political environment, developed in Ontario, Canada under neoliberalism. The new equilibrium focuses mostly on the economic development of HE. The provincial government provides limited financial support (the 'Quarter Budget' at present) to the HE system, that gradually is expected to decline. However, the government of Ontario maintains stewardship, steering HE from a distance during the transition. The corporate model of HEIs in Ontario is taking shape. According to Hong et al. (2021), "It is an enormous challenge for institutions to stay purposefully constant while also adapting their practices to the changing external requirements" (Hong et al., 2021, p. 1005)



**Reframing of the Four Frame Model (Bolman & Deal, 2017)**

**Figure 3.6. Summary of Theoretical Frameworks and Conceptual Models used to Explain Change in HE in Ontario. (Source: Created by the Author).**

### 3.3. Leadership Theory

#### 3.3.1 Contemporary Leadership Theories

Contemporary leadership theory and literature emphasises the relationship between “leaders and followers”. Avolio et al. (2009, as cited in Van Dierendonck, 2011, p.1234) broadened the focus on the leader to include “followers, peers, supervisors, work setting and culture” (p. 1235).

Stacey (1995) contrasted organisational change of the new conceptualised model with traditional Newtonian and Darwinian scientific models of negative feedback processes that lead to stable states of equilibrium and predictability. Moreover, Stacey (1995) emphasised complexity theory’s implications for leadership.

Leadership research indicates that a leader can actually predict where the organisation is heading. However, the unpredictability of complex systems may limit leaders’ ability to predict the long-term outcomes of their change processes. Stacey (1995) argues that,

*“... to understand the kind of leadership required in turbulent times we need to understand more about the nature of the boundaries around the conflict, which is essential to organisational learning and how leaders may be able to manage those boundaries more effectively”* (p. 492).

#### 3.3.2 Contemporary Leadership Frames/ Models in HE

After decades in which transformational leadership theory has prevailed as the dominant paradigm in leadership scholarship, critical voices have started raising serious concerns about falsifiability, suggesting that transformational leadership theory within HE should be abandoned. According to Berkovich (2016), although transformational leadership is key to conceptualising ideal school leadership, after 25 years, the discourse has not found its way into the higher education field. Berkovich’s study suggests the educational administration community

should not abandon transformational leadership. Instead, it should address its shortcomings and look forward to future challenges as the community contemplates the promises the theory holds for the field.

### 3.3.3. Leadership in HE and the New Public Management Approach

The Ontario government is now viewed as an “evaluative mechanism”, and although the MCU is maintaining the HE stewardship, it is “steering from a distance and facilitating the rise of the markets and quasi-markets” (Huisman, 2009). This major shift has created a gap in the leadership of HEIs, and academic leaders are trying to fill that gap. An HEI is becoming more of a hybrid institution/corporation or a public limited company entity within HE in Ontario.

There is a cautionary note in this debate, while not seeming contrary to many of the ideas proposed by NPM advocates. Making performance information available will not necessarily lead to improved accountability or better management reforms; nor will it necessarily lead to increased confidence in our public services or to achieving better morale or a keener sense of mission on the part of public servants (Canadian Parliamentary Review, 2016, updated in 2020).

The past few years have seen university governance jump from relative obscurity and into headlines. How universities are run is suddenly big news. Big pay-outs to public sector managers (like university presidents), overreach by well-heeled members of the Board of Governors, sudden resignations of powerful leaders... these all tap into well-established narratives in the current climate, suspicious as it is about power and how it is exercised within public institutions. But for the people paying most attention to these controversies – students, faculty members, and administrators – governance fights are about more than the appropriate use of taxpayer money or personal clashes between senior leaders. University and college governance are fundamental, because fights over who runs universities are ultimately conflicts over what the modern post-

secondary education institute is, what it should look like, and how it should behave (OCUFA's Journal of Higher Education, 2016).

The new accountability tools will be useful for legislators who need more fundamental information on departments and programmes. This suggests that good organisational descriptions and profiles should be developed. Not only would they help legislators to better carry out their responsibilities in the accountability cycle, but they would also be useful for legislators and the government when conducting public consultations on policy issues. Such information is a public good that goes beyond the work of committees (Canadian Parliamentary Review, 2016, updated in 2020).

The themes on HE challenges and issues that have emerged in the current study may prove to be useful to establish the accountability tools necessary, but also the profiles and descriptions the legislators may need to carry out their responsibilities. The legislators and the government will then effectively conduct the public consultations necessary for informed public policy. It is evident from the literature that certain challenges and issues of concern have been raised by all the stakeholders of HE, namely: transparency, human and democratic rights, use of power by executive members of HEIs, data, gaps in data and measurements deficiencies, diminished research infrastructure base, research patents copyright protection issues, lack of national or provincial accreditation bodies, unregulated overseas activities by HEIs, and labour collective agreements.

### 3.4. Evaluating Organisational Change in HE

Using Weick's theory,

*Problems... must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain... Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend them (Weick, 1995, p. 9).*

Furthermore, the reductionist process of fault detection can be seen in public policy reforms. Deans of faculties are policy implementors, and political, philosophical, ideological, and other considerations are not their immediate concern; however, they have their own opinions. For them to enact their academic and administrative roles effectively, these macro-external challenges ought to have been resolved. The ball throwing from the middle higher levels of HEIs management may be an exhausting process.

**Aim** of this study is to explore SALs' perceptions in relation to the challenges they encounter while enacting their academic and administrative roles at HEIs in Ontario.

To achieve the aim of this study the following **first objective** is developed around the context and the literature review on the challenges that SALs are facing in HEIs in Ontario, amidst public policy reforms. These challenges form the '**themes**' of **the topics to be investigated**, along with the **thematic linkages** and **key authors**.

Themes	Research Question	Topic for Investigation	Key Authors
Political & Institutional Leadership	What are the academic leaders' views concerning the political and institutional leadership, amidst public policy reforms?	Leadership Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Policy Reform</li> <li>• Purposes of Education</li> <li>• Leadership vs Managerialism</li> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Organisational Change &amp; Shared Leadership</li> </ul>	Ancona, Argyris, Austin, Avolio, Berkovich, Bolman, Burnes, Cameron, Capano, Clark, Cumming, Greene, Deal, Fisher, Fris, Green, Hong, Jones, Kay, Kezar, Kinsey, Kotter, Lazaridou, Lewin, Miner, Morgan, Olssen, Palmer, Pierre, Peters, Piche, Saunders, Schein, Scoulier, Shults, Senge, Van Vught, Van de Ven, Wheatley, Weick, Williams, and others.
Data, Gaps in Data and Measurement	How do academic leaders cope with missing data, gaps in data and measurement, so vital for research and development, but also essential to government, leading to informed public policy?	Structural Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incapacitated Research Infrastructure Base.</li> <li>• Unable to Inform Public Policy on HE</li> <li>• SMAs cannot be realistically assessed</li> </ul>	Truex, Jones, Kezar, Miner, Tierney, Koch, Gujarati, Porter, Rowley, Happelmannand, Sealey, and others.
Labour Collective Agreements	What are the academic leaders' perceptions concerning Labour Collective Agreements, Social and Citizens' Charters with the academic community?	HR & CSR Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour Collective Agreements</li> <li>• Labour Differentiation Agreements</li> <li>• Social &amp; Citizen's Charter</li> </ul>	Schein, Weick, Morgan, Kotter, Kezar, Levy, Merry, Jones, Piche, Hughes, Mighty, Rajagopal, Balogun, Johnson, Maitlis, Christianson, and others.

**Table 3.3. Summary of the 'themes' related to Research questions, topics for investigation and key authors.**

### 3.5. Shared Leadership in Higher Education

HEIs in Ontario have faced turbulence, complexity, and ambiguity during public policy reforms the last decade or so, that led to funding system reforms ready to be implemented in spring 2023. At the same time, however, HEIs faced upheaval and were forced to find ways to respond to the urgent and rapidly changing situation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. It is clear that this pandemic required us to make changes that we may have never thought possible or only talked about as ideal. Leaders needed to significantly speed up their responses to these disruptions, as well as to those that were already taking place such as macro external challenges, changing student demographics, new virtual learning technologies and modes, and continuing pressure to demonstrate our value to an increasing sceptical public. It is a matter of institutional survival for many, and all of us face increasing uncertainties. In fact, we may never reach a “new normal” but be in a continual state of responding to the unexpected, something that economists describe as “contingency economics” – responding that is to crises and beyond – as a shared leadership strategy (Elrod & Ramalay, 2020).

A shared leadership approach draws upon multiple perspectives, and collaboration is an essential feature as it fosters the development of ways to plan, implement, and even celebrate working across traditional organisational lines and boundaries. As Kezar and Holcombe (2017, as cited in Elrod & Ramalay, 2020) point out:

Shared leadership also recognises the importance of leaders in positions of authority but focuses on how those in positions of power can delegate authority, capitalise on expertise within the organisation, and create infrastructure so that organisations can capitalise on the leadership of multiple people. Leadership is a process-not an individual- and can be supported by professional development, access to information, team-based work, and incentives. (p. 3)



Any effort to create a culture of shared leadership and collaboration will clearly be a work in progress, especially if this is a new idea or approach, and especially when campus leaders are working remotely. The way forward requires a great deal from each of the participants, but it takes someone to lead to make it happen. This can be a formal leader with a title or someone of influence or experience related to the particular challenges to be addressed.

### 3.6. The Role of Academic Leaders in HEIs

The role of academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario is pivotal and represents tensions, dilemmas, and opportunities that may be different from the past experiences under "ethical liberalism". While the changing HE landscape under neoliberalism influences the ways in which academic leaders enact their administrative and academic roles, they also are experiencing unique "complexities", "turbulence", and "ambiguities" (Weick, 1995) due to OCM processes, dealing with revenue challenges, curricula changes, performativity pressures, and other overlapping mandates, in order to improve accountability and efficiency. However, some of the government's performance benchmarks are not clear. They cannot realistically be achieved (CBC News, 2019) as they are not measurable, which are inhibitors of OCM processes.

Strategic choices are left to the politicians to make public policy. The Ontario government propels change with public policy reforms. However, the right change can only come with common consent by all stakeholders in HE, which may prove to be the catalyst for HE to transit smoothly to the new era. That requires both political and institutional leadership to address and resolve the key challenges affecting HE in Ontario. A range of theories of change, leadership, and other theories are blended together in this research study, acknowledging that academic leaders are policy implementors.

### 3.7. Leadership and OCM in Ontario HEIs

Leadership and OCM processes are employed by SALs to explain change, suggest ways forward, and finally recognise that these two different views concerning the purposes of education are complementary, serving therefore as a catalyst to OCM processes. The key challenges in HE in Ontario being resolved by the government will signify a breakthrough between the MCU and the academic community, serving as a catalyst, and leading to public policy reforms implementation. Inhibitors may affect OCM processes, and unplanned outcomes may delay the implementation of public policy reforms.

### 3.8. About the Study

The current study aimed to identify and investigate the key challenges facing SALs in HE in Ontario. The government's fiscal environment has changed. Economic trends, an ageing demographic, labour shortages, and labour skills mismatches have caused budget compressions for funding programmes in HE. Public policy reforms in HE in Ontario contain several macro-external factors and prerequisites for the changes that SALs find troubling. Social structural reforms and changes required prior to implementation of public policy reforms in HE have not been fulfilled by the Ontario government. The challenges which appeared to trouble SALs the most are political leadership, institutional leadership, data and measurement, and labour collective agreements. Therefore, OCM processes in HE cannot be applied correctly and effectively. SALs utilise political, symbolic, structural, and human resource leadership frames, theories of change, and other theories and models to address these challenges.

Internal "political processes such as persuasion, informal negotiation, mediation, and coalition-building appear to be powerful strategies for creating change" (Conrad, 1978; Hearn, 1996). At the institutional level within a hybrid corporate institution, the shared governance system, organised anarchy, conflicting administrative and professional values, and

ambiguous, competing goals also point to the need for an interpretive power of political models using evolutionary theories of change. This interpretive power is vested by the MCU and the NPM administrators (higher management level) to the academic leaders (Deans, Associate and Executive Deans at the middle-management level) of HEIs in Ontario.

The need for identity seems clear from the embeddedness of members who create and reproduce the history and values, the stable nature of employment, the strong organisational identification of members, the emphasis on values, and the multiple organisation cultures. Because there are no bottom-line measures for examining performance in HE, image and identification are extremely important in understanding whether change is occurring and how it occurs.

One particularly crucial element affecting HEIs performance and efficiency is the quality of management. Reference to middle management by academic leaders is made in this study. We discuss research aimed at clarifying how these academic leaders deal with the "new managerialism" environment. We are especially interested to know how this "new managerialism" affects academic leaders and how academic leadership may provide the right solutions for HE.

### 3.9. Research Aim and Objectives

This study aimed to explore the way SALs perceive the challenges they encounter while enacting their academic and administrative roles at HEIs in Ontario. The following objectives were identified:

*Objective 1: To identify the SALs' key challenges in HEIs in Ontario affecting organisational change management processes, amidst public policy reforms.*

*Objective 2: To explore the SALs' experiences dealing with structural social reforms and the various challenges they are faced with, while managing their HEIs.*

*Objective 3: To critically analyse the SALs' strategic responses to policy change in HE, within a contested regulatory environment in Ontario.*

*Objective 4: To make recommendations to other SALs of HEIs in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada on how to respond to both external and internal drivers of organisational change management.*

### 3.10. Research Question and Sub-questions

Neo-liberalism as an ideology paved the way for a changing landscape in HE and influences the ways in which academic leaders enact their roles.

The main research question of the topic was:

- What are the SALs' perceptions concerning the three main requirements and prerequisites of public policy reform, namely: political and institutional leadership, data, gaps in data and measurement, and labour agreements?

Three sub-questions follow, one for each of these three prerequisites. Firstly, according to social and economic development (SED) theory, development is the result of the organisation of national socio-economic policies' political, economic, and social institutions. Structural modernisation as an approach of SED identifies a set of social and political structural characteristics that define, and are prerequisites for, the realisation of economic development (Jaffee, 1998). Political and institutional leadership are of utmost importance in implementing public policy reforms in HE in Ontario. The first research sub-question is:

- How do SALs view political and institutional leadership amidst public policy reforms?

Secondly, statistical data facilitate proper research, leading to the development of an informed public policy. Moreover, the metrics imposed

upon HEIs may not be measurable or realistically assessed. Politicians need to communicate and cooperate with legislators effectively, with a strategically clear vision, and present convincing evidence based on research, using purposive, reliable, integral, accessible, and ready statistical data. The second research sub-question, therefore, arises:

- How do the SALs cope with missing data and gaps in data and measurement?

Finally, economic growth in HE has reached unprecedented levels of development due to international student enrolments. Many academic leaders are therefore wondering whether the pace can be maintained, or the growth levels will somehow stabilise and therefore whether the growth can become sustainable and socially responsible. The following research question therefore arises:

- How do SALs perceive Labour Collective Agreements, Labour Differentiation Agreements, Social & Citizens' Charters, and Corporate Social Responsibilities more generally in HEIs in Ontario?

The above-mentioned research questions fill the “gaps” identified in the literature review.

### 3.11. Special Considerations

This study was performed amid the Covid-19 pandemic and during the lockdown conditions. Although the political, institutional, structural, social, and economic consequences are yet to be assessed, an initial assessment on the HE issues, and the three main challenges that SALs are face with, can be described as follows.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of public services, including education. Hopefully, politicians will see the importance of

maintaining strong public service sectors, such as HE, health care, the army, security services, and other vital public services, with secure, continuous, and stable public funding. Although the importance of public services is extremely high, social structural reforms are treated as less important. Labour collective agreements have been marginalised, and workers and employees are facing an uncertain future.

It is very early to draw any valid conclusions as to the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and further assess the changing social, economic, political, institutional, and structural environments that may have affected this study.

### 3.12. Conclusion

The literature review has highlighted the changing landscape of HE in Ontario under public policy change coupled with OCM processes in HEIs in Ontario in dealing with structural and institutional reforms. The main three challenges for SALs in HE system in Ontario are:

- political and institutional leadership
- data, gaps in data and measurement and
- division of labour issues and collective agreements.

The literature has presented OCM theories and managerialism practices addressing the three key challenges faced by academic leaders of HEIs. Tensions and conflicts can be barriers to success; tools and strategies are necessary to mitigate the effects of these three main challenges. In contrast to the managerialist approach, this study emphasises how academic leaders engage in OCM processes and leadership practices. As a result, their mandate is as middle management level leaders. Our data comes from nine interviews with the participants of this study, SALs, Deans of Business Studies, ICT, Economics, and Social and Political Studies of different HEIs in Ontario. The findings from this study will be used to examine and further apply academic leaders' strategic responses, practices, policy negotiation and implementation. These responses can

serve the purpose of making recommendations to other academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario.

Kouzes and Posner (2006, p.119) share the following advice,

*Leaders find the common threads that weave the fabric of human needs into a colourful tapestry. They develop a deep understanding of collective yearnings; they seek out the brewing consensus among those they lead.*

Academic leaders in today's HEIs in Ontario are to follow this direction, to listen, observe, and act to serve all the participants of the HE system. The present study hears from these academic leaders as they navigate structural reform challenges to contribute to an efficient, accessible, accountable, viable, transparent, but also a sustainable, socially responsible, and quality assured HE system in Ontario, as per their NPM mandate.

## Chapter Four – Methodology

### 4.0. Introduction

As detailed in Chapter 3 (main literature review), OCM processes are transforming HEIs in Ontario within the context of broader social and economic conditions, demographic changes, and labour skills development. The methodology is the navigation tool that responds to this study's second objective, which was developed from the question, 'how do academic leaders deal with the three key challenges in HE in Ontario?' This objective meant to explore the experiences of SALs dealing with structural social reforms and the various challenges they are faced with, while they perform their academic and administrative duties in their HEIs.

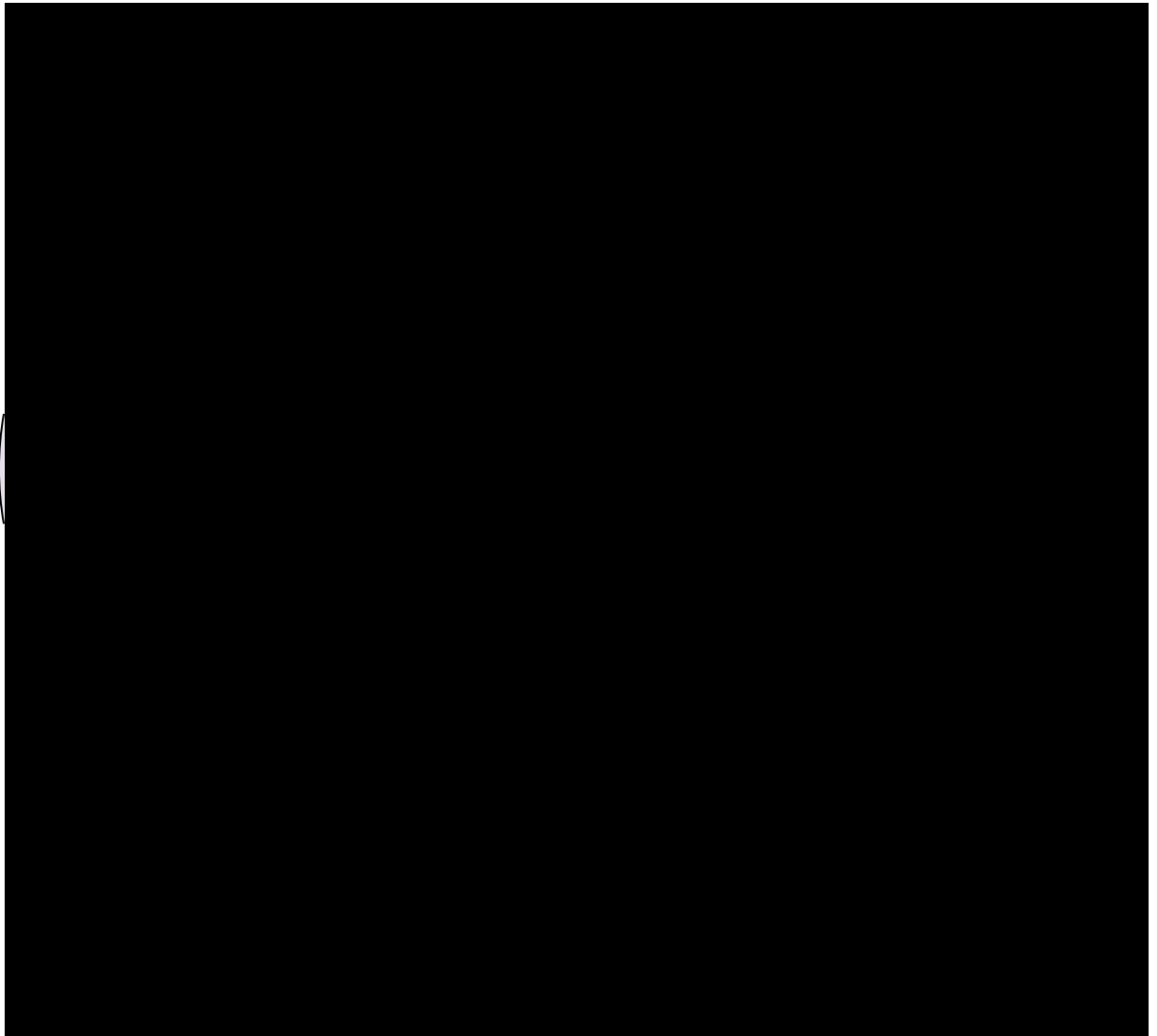
The current chapter first presents the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions upon which this study is founded. Next, the research methodology is introduced with reference to the research topic. Then, the research methodological assumptions are applied to the study's main research question: "What are the SALs' perceptions concerning the three requirements and prerequisites of public policy reforms, namely: political and institutional leadership, data, gaps in data and measurement techniques, and labour agreements?". The research design, including a detailed methodical rationale, is then presented. The research sampling strategy follows this from a conceptual perspective, and its relevance to the specific enquiry discussed with the central issue of the viability of adopting organisation-based enquiry borrowing from an exploratory case study research, is presented in this section. The purposive sample utilised in this study and the researcher's background ('insider-outsider perspective) are also discussed.

The results of the pilot study and its impact on the main study are also discussed in this section. The 'stage setting', the data sources of participants, as well as the data collection methods



and the data management are then described. A summary of the data analysis undertaken in this research study prepares the ground for the reporting of findings in the following chapter, including the assurance of the trustworthiness of the outcome of this research. Ethical considerations that protect the participants are outlined next, including the Research Ethics Board approval process and protections provided to participants. Special circumstances induced by Covid-19 are also discussed, in full compliance with the Edinburgh Napier University guidelines and in consideration of the federal, provincial, organisational, and local authorities restrictions of the study (Southeast Ontario, Canada). Finally, reflections, and extensions of the study are also presented.

## 4.1 Research Philosophy



**Figure 4.1 The “Research Onion”**  
**Source: (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).**

The methodology is the overarching design of a research project. It is how the researcher gathers and interprets knowledge (Brown, 2021). All research builds on philosophical, specialisation, and theoretical foundations (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015) followed by methodological and methodical assumptions. In designing this research study, the researcher took the position of an interpretivist or social constructionist to identify SALs' challenges in HE in Ontario. The reasons of this selection are elaborated in the following paragraphs, specifically, on the sections of ontological, epistemological and axiological philosophical assumptions below.

Theories of change have been used as theoretical assumptions to explain academic leaders' perceptions, experiences, perspectives, opinions, and strategic responses, which are classic qualitative focuses. Hence, an inductive process to theory development is employed in this research study. However, the knowledge development that the researcher embarked upon, may not be as dramatic as a new theory of human motivation. It is meant to address specific problems (i.e., challenges for academic leaders in HEIs in Ontario), but is nonetheless developing new knowledge (Saunders et al., 2019). The philosophical assumptions made in this research study include ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Each of these are discussed in detail below.

#### 4.1.1 Ontological Assumptions

Ontology is the philosophical study of being in general or of what it applies neutrally to everything that is real. Epistemology asks, "What do you know?" and "How do you know it?" whilst ontology is concerned with "What is there?" Both act as the foundations of our approach to the research question(s) and range from positivist stances (deductive and more scientific views: "counting and measuring" quantitative research methods) to interpretivist stances (inductive "deeper truth" reasoning views: observational qualitative research methods (Saunders et al., 2019).

In this study, the researcher examined the research questions, which made specific reference to the concepts of leadership, both political and institutional, using theories of identity and sensemaking, issues which were something real. Furthermore, in this study, the researcher addressed the lack of data or huge gaps in data and measurement issues, which were again real, using theories of change. Moreover, the researcher has assessed the reality of the impact that public policy change may have on labour agreements using social theories of change.

According to Bryman (2001), ontology is concerned with the nature of social entities, describing the two positions positivism and social

constructionism (or interpretivism), and likens their differences by referring to two of the most common norms in social science – organisation and culture. Bryman talks about an organisation as a tangible object, with rules, regulations, and procedures, with people appointed to different jobs under a division of labour with a hierarchy, mission statement, and so on. He suggests that the organisation has a reality external to those within it, representing a social order that requires individuals to conform to the rules and regulations (Bryman, 2001). It is a restraining force that both acts on and inhibits its members. Bryman also suggests that the same is true of culture, which can be seen as a collection of shared values and customs to which people are socialised to conform. In essence, positivism says that social phenomena have an existence that is independent or separate from the actors within it. Examples of this are Virgin or GEC, where the CEO (Branson or Welsh, respectively) has clearly defined the cultural norms, albeit in very different ways, and new employees conform very quickly because the culture is so strong and dictated by charismatic leaders who are aligned with their strong brand (Bryman, 2001).

However, HEIs in Ontario have transited from public institutions to publicly funded institutions, publicly assisted institutions, to hybrid corporate entities, leading to some kind of privatisation. The government of Ontario's political, economic, and social environments have been decided by previous governments in the last 30 years or so. Neo-liberalism, which is the causal factor of public policy reforms, is gathering pace in all aspects of government ideology, strategy, policy implementation, and successful establishment as a dominant force. We may subject the way the discourse of neoliberalism has been imposed on our societies, but it is doubtful that we can make changes. Here, the HE sector is not an organisation tangible object. It is an organisation transitioning from the public sector to a hybrid corporate model. Positivism, therefore, cannot fulfil this study's ontological requirements and assumptions.

Alternatively, Bryman (2001) considers social constructionism (sometimes called constructivism or interpretivism) as an alternative ontological

position where social phenomena and their meanings are continually being changed and revised through social interactions, e.g., the researcher's accounts of the social world where nothing is definitive as the versions evolve with experience. (Truth only happens in the moment.) Bryman gives the example that human beings construct the organisation and the culture instead of the organisation and culture being pre-given categories that affect behaviours.

Furthermore, social constructionism metatheory allows that any coherent epistemology must be self-reflexive (Maze, 2001). However, while it denies that any assertion can be true and that there are any independent realities to be referred to, it nevertheless treats discourse as having objective existence and assumes that its own statements about discourse are true. According to Maze (2001), constructionists are recognising the possibility and necessity of objectivity in discourse is not authoritarian. It is essential for the practical criticism of social dogma.

Subjectivism incorporates assumptions of the arts and humanities, as the ones made above, asserting that social reality is made from social actors' perceptions and consequent actions (people).

Ontologically, subjectivism embraces nominalism (also sometimes called conventionalism). Nominalism, in its most extreme form, considers that the order and structures of social phenomena we study (and the phenomena themselves) are created by us as researchers and by other social actors through the use of language, conceptual categories, perceptions, and consequent actions. For nominalists, there is no underlying reality to the social world beyond what social actors (people) attribute to it, and because each person experiences and perceives reality differently, it makes more sense to talk about multiple realities than a single reality that is the same for everyone (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, 2016).

A less extreme version of this is social constructionism. Social constructionism is offered here as a postmodern approach with epistemological assumptions that generate new methods for

organisational change (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). Social construction typically refers to a tradition of scholarship that traces the origin of knowledge, meaning, or understanding to human relationships. The term “constructivism” is sometimes used interchangeably, but most scholarship associated with constructivism views processes inherent in the individual mind, as opposed to human relationships, as the origin of people’s constructions of the world. One may trace certain roots of social constructionism to Vico, Nietzsche, and Dewey; scholars often view Berger and Luckmann’s *the Social Construction of Reality* as the landmark volume (Gergen, 2012).

Dialogue, imagination, and co-creation are described and embraced not just as theoretical concepts within this approach but as practical resources that can be actualised in conversations and interactions. These concepts can become creative resources, used as research/intervention tools to favour pluralism, allowing multiple voices to emerge and encouraging diversity where new meanings can be co-created, promoting organisational transformation. Furthermore, social constructionism blurs the division between intervention and enquiry, inviting the professional to become an integral practitioner-researcher. This stance toward intervention and knowledge production can help organisations to coordinate a collective process of collaboration among stakeholders, to reflexively and critically create knowledge that helps in understanding the organisational system and the process of change promoted by an intervention (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013).

Social constructionist theory, together with its resources, brings a fresh approach to organisational development where the focus is on people generating meaning together to create their organisational worlds. In that sense, it sustains the assumption that organisations can change their culture by changing the conversation, by putting people together to dialogue and co-create possibilities for action generating new realities. Social constructionism is therefore embraced by the researcher of this study as the appropriate subjective ontological stance.

For a long time, business and management scholars made the ontological assumption that resistance to change was highly damaging to organisations. They argued it was a kind of organisational misbehaviour and happened when change programmes went wrong. Consequently, they focused their research on how this phenomenon could be eliminated, looking for the types of employees that were most likely to resist change and the management actions that could prevent or stop resistance (Thomas & Hardy, 2011). However, these managerialist practices are against human, democratic and labour rights, these practices are still observed in many HEIs in Ontario today.

The ontological assumptions shape the way in which we see and study our research objects. In business and management, these objects include organisations, management, individuals' working lives, and organisational events and artefacts (Saunders et al., 2019). The ontology employed in this research study is subjectivism, as realities socially constructed intersubjectively by the participants are interpreted, leading to an interpretive epistemology.

#### 4.1.2. Epistemological Assumptions

Following the ontological assumption made in the above section, the researcher assumed that leadership, data issues, and labour agreements could be studied productively and that we could learn something meaningful and valuable about these factors. Epistemology refers to assumptions about knowledge and how we can communicate knowledge to others (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, 2016). Epistemological assumptions are about what can be known and applied. An interpretive epistemology is used in this study, as the researcher tried to identify and capture lived experiences, perceptions, and the strategic responses of academic leaders in HEIs in Ontario. As the NPM mandate is specific, the researcher put greater emphasis on the interpretive powers vested to academic leaders by the MCU of Ontario. Their direct perception and

perspectives are considered more reliable than explanations or interpretations in communication within the given guidelines of the NPM mandate. These factors are well presented by interpretive research. The use of interpretivism in education can be traced back to the late 1970s, though it has been used in anthropology, sociology, and philosophy for much longer (Taylor & Medina, 2013).

The interpretive research paradigm assumes that social reality is not singular or objective but rather shaped by human experiences and social contexts (ontology) and is therefore best studied within its socio-historic context by reconciling the subjective interpretations of its various participants (epistemology). This contrasts with the positivist or functionalist paradigm that assumes that reality is relatively independent of the context (University of South Florida, 2012).

Different people of different cultural backgrounds, under different circumstances and at different times, make different meanings and so create and experience different social realities that apply to everybody. Interpretive research aims to create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts. For business and management researchers, this means looking at organisations from the perspectives of different groups of people. They would argue, for example, that how the CEO, board of directors, managers, assistants, etc., see and experience a large retail company are different, so much so that they could arguably be seen as experiencing different workplace realities. If research focuses on the experiences that are always common to all, much of the richness of the differences between them and their individual circumstances will be lost, and the understanding of the organisation that the research delivers will reflect this. Furthermore, differences that make organisations complex are not simply contained to different organisational roles. Male or female employees, customers, or those from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds, may experience workplaces, services, or events differently. Interpretations of what, on the surface, appears to be



the same thing (such as a luxury product) can differ in historical and geographical contexts (Saunders et al., 2019).

It is crucial to the interpretivist philosophy that the researcher adopts an empathic stance. The challenge for the interpretivist is to enter the research participants' world and understand it from their point of view. Some would argue the interpretivist perspective is highly appropriate in the case of business and management research. Not only are business situations complex, but they are unique, at least in terms of context. They reflect a particular set of circumstances and interactions involving individuals coming together at a specific time (Saunders et al., 2019). Hence, this study focuses on recruiting participants who are competent in their expertise to identify the challenges they face in HEIs in Ontario.

The term “interpretive research” is often used loosely and synonymously with “qualitative research”, although the two concepts are quite different. Interpretive research is a research paradigm that assumes that social reality is not singular or objective, rather it is shaped by human experiences and social contexts (ontology) and is, therefore, best studied within its socio-historic context by reconciling the subjective interpretations of its various participants (epistemology). Because interpretive researchers view social reality as embedded within social settings and impossible to abstract from them, they “interpret” the reality through a “sense-making” process rather than a hypothesis testing process (University of South Florida, 2012).

In this interpretive research study, the epistemological assumptions were to identify the participants' experiences. These experiences could be captured by hearing what the participants had to say, since they were the ones employing OCM processes in order to transit their HEIs into the new era. This could be realised by conducting an interpretive qualitative enquiry (mono method), thematic analysis and an inductive approach to theory, and constructing long in-depth interviews, with open-ended

questions using prompts and probes, directed to the participants of this study, the academic leaders.

#### 4.1.3 Axiological Assumptions

Axiology is engaged with assessing the role of the researcher's values at all stages of the research process (Kreiner et al., 2009). Subjectivists believe that as they actively use data, they cannot detach themselves from their own values. They therefore openly acknowledge, actively reflect on and question their own values, and incorporate these within their research, a technique known as 'radical reflexivity' (Cunliffe, 2003). Axiology is a branch of philosophy that studies judgements about the value, and in this study, judgements were about applying effective OCM techniques using leadership practices.

<b>Ontology</b>	<b>Epistemology</b>	<b>Axiology</b>
Subjective	Interpretive Research	Managerialist

**Table 4.1. Summary of the Research Philosophical Assumptions.**

The axiology employed in this study was managerialist. Small purposive samples are considered acceptable in interpretive research if they fit the nature and purpose of the study. A purposive sample in this interpretive research, qualitative in nature mono method, employing elite interviews with open questions using prompts and probes, and a thematic analysis, inductive approach to theory, may serve the purpose of this study and prepare the ground for the research sampling strategy section that follows.

#### 4.2. Research Methodological Assumptions

Qualitative research tries to get to the heart of what exactly happened to the participating individuals, what led them to the decisions that they made, and how the choices they made came to take the form they eventually did (Curry et al., 2009; Yin, 2015). An advantage is the

researcher's ability to demonstrate transparency and accountability throughout the whole research process. This enables the readers of qualitative work to see the 'researcher's decision making and the analytical approach...' (Davies & Hughes, 2014, n.d.; Holloway, 2005, 2006). The orderly establishment of clarity and responsibility is made evident by constantly being reflexive in the decisions made regarding all the elements used in the research. Therefore, transparency, accountability and reflexivity should be evident throughout the process (Research Gate, 2017).

#### 4.2.1. The Research Topic

The research topic is: "Organisational change management: Key challenges for SALs in HEIs in Ontario, amidst public policy reforms". This is an appropriate topic for research because HE in Ontario has transited from the public sector to publicly funded, publicly assisted, hybrid corporate entities of HEIs.

Secondary sources of data were used, as referred to in the Literature Review (Chapter 3), to research the key challenges faced by SAL in HEIs in Ontario. This research aims to establish which strategic responses academic leaders should employ to resolve these challenges.

Academic leaders' strategic responses are of interest to the researcher, as they may contribute to informing other academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario, and other provinces in Canada who face the same challenges. The researcher, as a member of the academic community and a professor of economics at an Ontario college, has experienced the drastic changes that the HE system in Ontario is going through, and wishes to contribute with this research study. Contributions will include identifying problems and making recommendations to other academic leaders of how to respond to both external and internal drivers of change at the organisational level of HEIs. The researcher has shown reflexivity in

conducting this research study and intends to enhance this skill as the research study develops further.

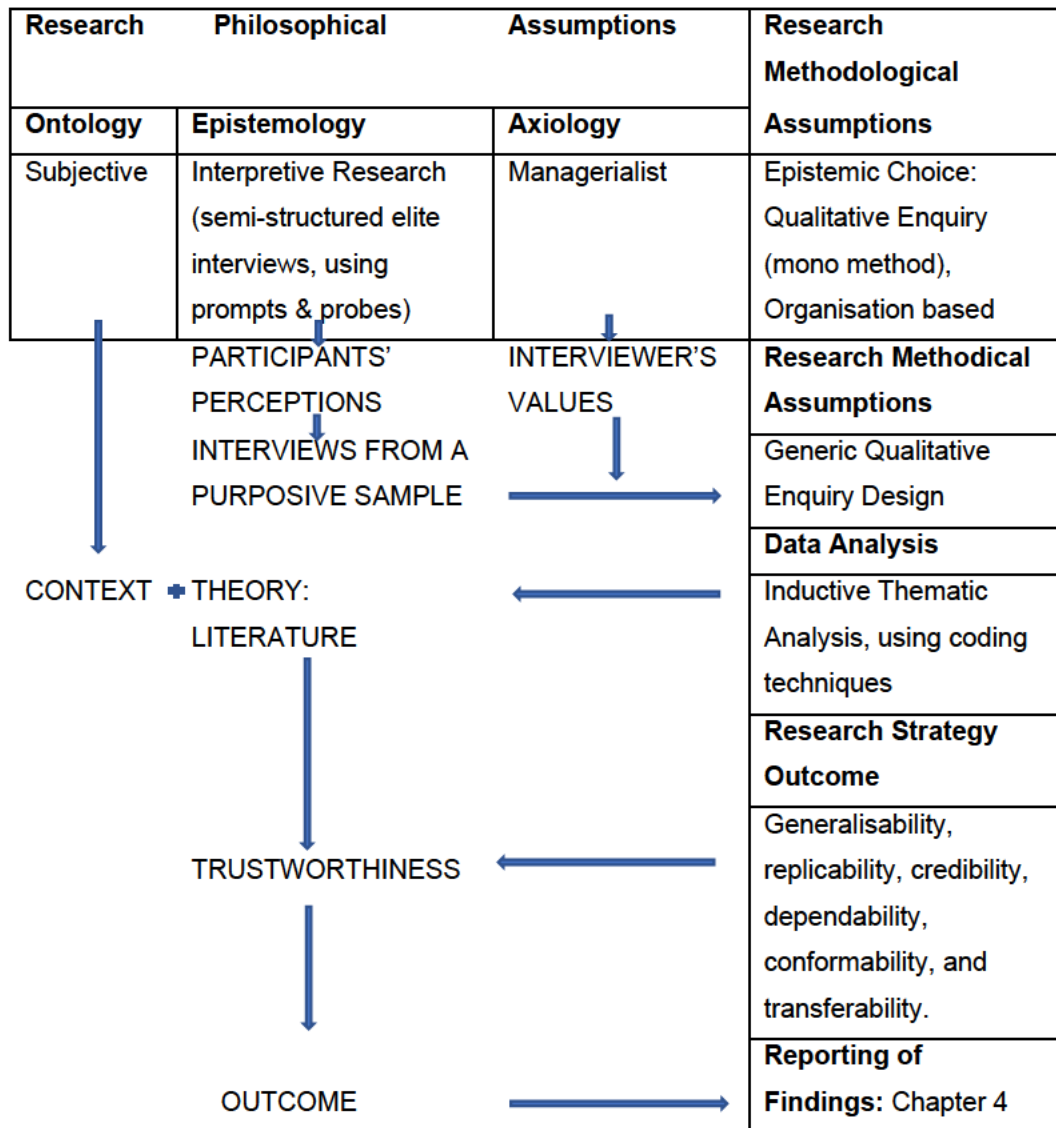
#### 4.2.2. Theory

The use of theory is essential in all research practices but is more critical in qualitative research. It is widely acknowledged that having a prior theory aids the structuring of the whole research process (Creswell, 2003; Klenke, 2008; Research Gate, 2017). The theory of OCM using leadership theories combined with theories of change, including evolutionary, teleological, life cycle, cultural, social cognition, and sensemaking and identity theories, are well presented in the literature review in Chapter 3. The study also aimed to explain causal links of public policy reforms to funding system reforms describing the HE environment in Ontario.

#### 4.2.3. Qualitative Research Design

Well-articulated qualitative research spells out in very simple language the research design, coupled with the detailed rationalised method criterion the research will employ and how the data gathered will be analysed (Hatch, 2002; Seale & Silverman, 1997; Yin, 2016, n.d.).

**RESEARCH DESIGN**



**Figure 4.2. Summary of the Research Design (Created by the author).**

#### 4.2.4. The Sampling Strategy

Interpretivist research employs a theoretical sampling strategy, where studies select participant cases or responses based on theoretical considerations such as whether they fit the phenomenon being studied (e.g., sustainable practices can only be studied in organisations that have implemented sustainable practices), whether they possess certain characteristics that make them uniquely suited for the study (e.g., a study of the drivers of firm innovations should include some firms that are high innovators and some that are low innovators, in order to draw a contrast between these firms), and so forth (University of South Florida, 2012).

The purposive sample employed in this study was intended to investigate the challenges these academic leaders are faced with in HEIs in Ontario amidst public policy reforms, and is described as a selection of participating units from within the segment of the targeted population (HEIs in South East Ontario) which provide the most data information on the characteristics (of SALs), or the category of interest (addressing the challenges academic leaders are faced with amidst public policy reforms). Qualitative research usually conducts in-depth studies of small samples of people nested in their context. Qualitative researchers follow non-probability sampling methods to answer their research questions (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). Therefore, qualitative sampling tends to be purposive rather than random, purposeful rather than probabilistic (Patton, 2015). Purposive sampling is suitable when targeting very small samples, such as in case study research and when the researcher aims to select informative cases. This kind of non-probability sampling allows qualitative researchers to engage with the selected sample so as to allow for in-depth data gathering (Saunders et al., 2019; Saunders & Townsend, 2016).

The key three challenges that academic leaders in HE in Ontario face are mainly political, economic, information technology, and related social issues, which are considered. Therefore, the selection of participants

conducting elite interviews in this purposive sample was deemed most appropriate to address the challenges mentioned above. Academic leaders possess adequate theoretical knowledge in the field of their expertise, along with experience running their faculty or department and dealing daily with the HE stakeholders.

The research was supposed to be conducted on-site (in situ), but due to the Covid-19 pandemic it had to be conducted remotely using virtual online meetings for interviews. In this interpretivist qualitative research study, nine academic leaders of nine different colleges and universities across South-east Ontario, the most populated area in the province hosting most public HEIs, participated in this study. The positions held by these SALs were: Academic Dean, Executive Dean, Associate Dean of Business and Economics, ICT studies, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

There are no rules for sample size in qualitative enquiry (Patton, 2002). However, too little data can lead to false and premature assumptions, while too much data may not be effectively processed by the researcher (University of South Florida, 2012), and may (create redundancy of information or) lead to saturation of data. In this interpretive qualitative study, the researcher has conducted and assumed the requirement of a minimum of 5 participants and a maximum of 25 participants from the 45 public HEIs (21 colleges and 24 universities) in the province. Four SALs of colleges and five SALs of universities participated in this study. This sample included three SALs of Economics and Business Studies, three SALs of ICT, and three SALs of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies.

The selection of nine participants out of 23 prospective participants was adequate to perform this study. In fact, as HEIs in Ontario comprise approximately 45% colleges and 55% universities, the selection of four SALs of colleges and five SALs of universities is a representative purposive sample of participants in this study.

Researchers are often embedded within the social context they are studying and are considered part of the data collection instrument in that they must use their observational skills, trust with participants, and ability to extract the correct information. Further, their personal insights, knowledge, and experiences of the social context are critical to accurately interpreting the phenomenon of interest. At the same time, researchers must be fully aware of their personal biases and preconceptions and not let such biases interfere with their ability to present a fair and accurate portrayal of the phenomenon (University of South Florida, 2012).

The researcher has intimate knowledge of the organisations (HEIs) and their systems (organisation management) and processes (OCM techniques), as well as the roles of HEI stakeholders (in particular, the SALs) whose responses are investigated and analysed. There is, therefore, a possible limitation to the study if all the participants are within the researcher's direct network of preferred participants. The danger of such a priori familiarity of the participants could have led to superficial analysis and findings based on pre-existing assumptions or an investigation designed to confirm, rather than challenge, preconceptions, and therefore deciding the outcome of this study. Indeed, the a priori familiarity of SALs and the possible a priori understanding of their perceptions and perspectives concerning ideological, philosophical, political, institutional, social, economic, information technology, and labour related issues may precondition the research study. The researcher identified that this familiarity potentially provided an inherent danger of providing solely an 'insider' perspective of SALs' perceptions concerning the key challenges they are faced with in HEIs in Ontario. After discussion with the supervisory team, the researcher integrated HEIs and SALs from a wider and well extended network into the purposive sample. For this reason alone, the researcher had selected nine out of twenty-three perspective participants from a wider, more extended network of SALs of HEIs.



This allowed for access to HEIs and SALs external to the direct network of academic leaders connected with the researcher. Hence, introducing an 'insider-outsider' perspective (Corbin et al., 2009; Hellowell, 2006). The researcher introduced the element of an 'outsider', not possessing the same prior knowledge and familiarity of the academic leaders' perceptions and perspectives on the above-mentioned issues. This has allowed the researcher to observe, identify, and at times challenge and critically analyse the perspectives, opinions, and strategic responses held by SAL much more efficiently, leading to a fair and ethically conducted research study.

The introduction of the purposive sample is consistent with the axiology and is compliant with the axiological ethics of the researcher of this research study. In this purposive research sample, the researcher has identified the possible bias and has acted by employing an external sample selected from a wider network of participants from HEIs in Ontario. An 'insider-outsider' perspective was introduced in this research study to reduce this potential for bias.

### **SELECTION OF PARTICIPATING UNITS (HEIs IN ONTARIO)**

<b>DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATING UNITS</b>	<b>CAMPUSES</b>	<b>CODE</b>
This College Institute of Technology and Advance Learning is a public college. Established in the 1960s, it has appr. 43,000 registered students through its campuses with an enrolment of appr. 10,000 full-time, 30,000 part-time registrants and over 3,000 apprenticeship students. The College ranks among the best 10 in Ontario and in Canada's top 50 Research Colleges, and it hosts appr. 7,000 international students.	The college's operation is spread out in eight campuses, including associations and co-op programmes.	1
The College of Applied Art and Technology is a public college. Established in the 1960s, it is one of the largest colleges in Canada, with appr. 45,000 (20,000 full-time and 25,000 part-time) students and provides over 200 higher education programmes. The College hosts about 6,000 international students and is ranked among the 100 best HEIs in Canada.	This college is operating five campuses in collaboration with other universities.	2
<b>DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATING UNITS</b>	<b>CAMPUSES</b>	<b>CODE</b>
This College of Applied Arts and Technology, established in the 1960s, is a public college, hosting more than 15,000 full-time and 45,000 continuing education registered students, from which 2,000 are international students, and 4,000 are apprenticeships. The College is ranked among the 20 best in Canada's top 50 Research Colleges and ranked among the best 10 in Ontario.	The College operates four different locations and offices, including collaborations with other HEIs.	3
This University is a public research university and is one of the largest higher education institutions in Canada. It has over 60,000 students, of which 40,000 are in undergraduate programmes and 20,000 are in graduate programmes. It is ranked among the 50 Best World Universities and the 10 bests in Canada. The university hosts over 25,000 international students.	There are few locations in Ontario, and overseas representation and collaborative programmes	4
This University is a public research university. Established in the 1960s, it serves appr. 10,000 students in both undergraduate and graduate programmes within two campuses and one cooperative campus with a college. The number of international students is about 1,500. The University is ranked among the best among Ontario universities in its category and among Canada's top 10 primarily undergraduate universities.	The university operates in three locations, including cooperative programmes with a college.	5

The University is a public university. Established in the early 1900s, it serves approximately 20,000 students, of which 16,000 are full-time, and appr. 4,000 are part-time students. This University is ranked among the best 50 Best Global Universities in Canada and one of the best in Ontario. Appr. 6% of the students are international students.	This university has nine campuses and offices in Ontario, Canada and worldwide.	5
This University is a comprehensive public research university in Ontario. It was established in the 1960s and hosts more than 30,000 students (over 20,000 undergraduates, 5,000 graduates, and 5,000 in special programmes). It is ranked among the best 20 in the world for Food Science and Technology and among the best 10 in Canada. The University hosts more than 1,000 international students.	There are a few locations and one other office from which this university operates across Canada.	6
This University is one of the largest universities in Canada. It is a public research university. It hosts more than 45,000 students (35,000 undergraduate and 10,000 graduate). The university is ranked among the best 200 universities in Best Global Universities and within the best 20 in Canada. The number of international students in the university was nearly 10,000, accounting for about 20% of the student population.	Canada and worldwide representation with campuses and offices.	7
This University serves over 30,000 students across all campuses and in both undergraduate and graduate studies. The University is ranked among the best 20 in Canada and 100 in the world. International students account for appr. 15% of the undergraduate programmes and nearly 25% of the graduate programmes.	The University is operating five locations in South-eastern Ontario and Canada-wide.	8
Established in the 1960s, the College of Applied Arts and Technology is a public college, and it hosts over 10,000 full-time and 5,000 part-time students. There are appr. 5,000 international students in the college. This College is ranked among the 10 bests in Ontario and among the top 20 colleges in Canada for applied research.	This College operates four campuses in Ontario and Worldwide locations.	9

Note: Participant 5 served in two HEIs at the same time.

**Table 4.2. HEIs Institutions Represented by SALs (Participants) in this Research Study (The Table of this sample is arranged in ascending by participant's code order).**

### 4.3. Methodical Assumptions

Reviewing the pilot study, important lessons were derived as to the phrasing of the interview questions, the appropriateness of the questions used, and whether these questions realistically achieve the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the purposive sample usefulness is confirmed, and the researcher's 'insider-outsider' perspective is explained. Moreover, the philosophical, ontological, epistemological, axiological, and research study strategies are evaluated. Finally, the issue of trustworthiness of the study findings has been revisited, along with the ethical considerations and the limitations of this research study. The general purpose of this qualitative interpretive, organisation-based enquiry of the research study is to understand and describe a specific phenomenon in depth and reach at the essence of participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon.

#### 4.3.1. The Pilot Study

The pilot study was performed in late 2020. The participating unit (HEI) was a community college located in Southeast Ontario, represented by a SAL. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the interview meeting was performed remotely using Microsoft Teams. The pilot study tested the application of the conceptual themes of the research questions, specifically: 'What drives change and public policy reforms in HEIs', and 'What are the academic leader's perceptions concerning the three requirements and prerequisites of public policy reform, namely:

- Political and institutional leadership,
- Data, gaps in data and measurements, and
- Labour agreements?'

The interview questions were simplified and refined to allow a wide discussion on the part of the participant to the open questions. Prompts and probes were directed to the participant in a semi-structured way, and depending on the participant's answers, to achieve responses around the key challenges and the research questions.

*Objective 1: To identify the SALs' key challenges in HEIs in Ontario affecting organisational change management processes, amidst public policy reforms.*

Question 1 was meant to identify the SALs' perception of change and the key challenges he faces at his HEI. In response, the participant voiced an opinion concerning public policy change and its implications on HEIs in Ontario, described perceptions of all three main challenges, and added other challenges such as Covid-19 and institutional micro-level issues. The participant emphasised institutional leadership.

*Question 2, 'In your view, how can SALs manage reforms at the organisational level?'*

The participant referred to the NPM mandate after a prompt question revealed the interpretive power vested to academic leaders by the MCU to act with institutional leadership. He also expressed an opinion concerning regulation in the HE sector.

*Question 3, 'Which organisational strategic responses will you employ for the institution's transition to the new era?'*

The participant responded predictably, referring to the SMA signed with the MCU. Prompt questions confirmed the role of the SAL as an 'in between, a 'buffer' or a mediator, responsible for distributing funding to the faculties and the departments. However, he/she did not fight directly for funding, as those are functions of the Vice Provost and the Board. He/she admitted that fighting for funding is one of the functions that a dean is usually assigned with. Also, he/she accepted that handling the public policy change required leadership skills for a dean to practise relationship building, coalitions, informal mediation, patience, persuasion, and negotiation to convince the academic community of the need for change.

*Question 4, 'In your opinion, how can the development of a coherent organisational management policy be achieved in order to serve public policy reforms in Ontario?'*

It was not phrased properly, and the researcher had to repeat the question as further clarification was required. After discussions with the supervisory team and my mentors, I realised that it was not only the phrasing of the question, but this question came as a direct reflection of objective 4 of the study:

*Objective 4, 'To establish a practical, theoretical platform using theories of change responding to both external and internal drivers of organisational change management, of other public services that the government of Ontario is intending to privatise'.*

SALs are the participants of this study; however, while they can express their opinion on this matter, it is beyond their mandate as academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario. Therefore, the rewriting of objective 4 was necessary, as follows: 'To make recommendations to other academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario and other provinces in Canada, of how to respond to both external and internal drivers of change using OCM'. This led to the rewriting of Question 4: 'In your opinion, how can OCM enhance operational performance in the faculties and departments of HEIs?'

Another interview meeting was arranged with the pilot study's SAL to revisit question 4, and a supplemental online meeting was held, recorded, and transcribed. As a result, the pilot study could now (after the supplemental interview) be included as a part of the main collection, processing, analysis, and reporting of data in this study. The experience led to a simplification of the open questions asked, so the participants could comprehend and elaborate freely on the issues of reference.

The pilot study tested the application of the conceptual themes of the research questions to the interview questions. As a result, objective 4 was realistically varied in harmony with the research questions. Question 4

has also been rewritten as a reflection, completing the cycle, research aim and objectives, research questions, interview questions, responses according to the study's aim and objectives.

On supervisory advice and mentors' discussion meetings, the study was realigned, the questions were refined, and one of them changed (as described above). The simplified questions allowed the study participants to have an easier understanding and fully comprehend the interview questions asked. The phrasing of the questions, independently of the order of the questions asked, met the study's aim and objectives, and produced rich data. On the key three challenges as proven emerging themes, other themes were classified as further challenges. Some of these were temporary, such as Covid-19 conditions; others were issues such as funding and micro-level departmental and faculty issues, which apply to question 4 and in reference to the operational performance of the departments and faculties.

In the categories, we have the participant's opinions, perceptions, feelings, strategies, perspectives, and lived experiences. Sub-categories are also evident as two prominent sub-categories emerged: pursuit of public policy change and scepticism about the timing, scale, degree, and foci of public policy reform. Opposition to public policy reforms, however not a realistic proposition, is covert under the auspices of the sceptical participants' group, for obvious reasons of avoiding prejudice and preoccupation within HEIs.

The pilot study's findings confirmed the three key challenges, proving that the 'gap' of the research study was real. Consequential to public policy reform, as the issue of funding system reforms is yet to be implemented. The time for the Ontario government to implement the new funding system was April of 2020, based on metrics as described in Chapter 3. The Covid-19 pandemic conditions made the government of Ontario postpone its decision on the funding system reforms until further notice. The government of Ontario still supports HEIs based on the funding

formulae system as before, and special support during the pandemic is provided to HEIs by both provincial and federal governments.

#### 4.3.2. The Interview Questions

General questions and information to show relevance and position of the SAL (the participant) of the institution in this study.

- What is your professional title and position in the institution?
- How long have you been with the institution?
- How long have you held office under your present position and title?

The following questions are dealing with the impact that public policy reforms have on the OCM, and the implications these changes may have on middle-management level of HEIs in Ontario:

1. What are the greatest challenges that you are facing at the institutional level?
2. In your view, how can SALs manage reforms at the organisational level?
3. Which organisational strategic responses will you employ for the institution's transition to the new era?
4. In your opinion, how can OCM enhance operational performance in the faculties and the departments of HEIs in Ontario?
5. How do you envisage the future of HEIs in Ontario in 5 years' time?

#### 4.3.3. Data Collection Methods

All nine interviews were conducted in English; however, one participant used greetings and some French expressions, which had no bearing to the issues discussed in this study. The 'insider-outsider' issue helped as both parties (researcher and participants) were knowledgeable about the



HE issues under discussion. The interview was in-depth, semi-structured, and used open questions, which allowed the participants to answer from their own individual perspectives as academic leaders and informed citizens. Prompts and probes were directed to the participants in no sequence in order to understand the lived experiences, feelings, perceptions, and opinions on the key issue of this study. Prompts were related to the previous question, and probes were initiating a new question on other matters or issues.

The interviews were performed remotely using Microsoft Teams meeting, and the sessions were recorded with prior notification in writing via email and verbally before the interviews commenced. The processing of data was followed with transcription, made available using Otter.ai information technology software, for the first seven of the nine interviews. As for the other three interviews, transcriptions were easily achieved from the newly established software of Microsoft Teams, which includes audio/video recording as before but also employs transcription functions as well. Two participants were uncomfortable with the video recording and opted for an audio recording only. The researcher observed the participants' body language and comfort level by keeping notes. The further notes were kept by the researcher concerning the level of comfort of the participants and the tone of voice when the participants who and chose audio-only recording answered the questions. All the participants agreed to a supplemental interview session should that be necessary.

One leader (from the originally selected 10 SALs), no longer wished to participate, and decided to withdraw from the interview at a later stage. In fact, the participant of the study had been interviewed on 27/01/2021, and his video was either deleted in error, or the file was corrupted during the transfer of data to a secure USB memory stick. Although efforts were made to retrieve the corrupted or lost file, the researcher was unable to do that as more than 15 days went by, and the file was erased from Microsoft Teams meeting recordings. Contact was re-established with the participant. However, the participant was unwilling, due to the course load,

to participate in another interview. Another leader objected to video recording of the interview however an audio interview was possible and participated in the study. Nevertheless, nine interviews provided enough evidence to proceed with the study. Ten participants were selected initially. Finally, nine interviews were available for data processing and analysis.

Transcription of the video and audio recordings were made possible for six interviews using otter.ai software. The video/audio recording was downloaded to this software, and the transcription of these sessions were provided. For the last three interviews, transcriptions were made available by the new updated version of Microsoft Teams. Handwritten notes were also kept and assigned to each interview helping at the later data analysis stage. Furthermore, a diary of notes concerning the recruitment of the participants with email or social media communication was also kept by the researcher, proving that main documentation required for the research interview as the Research Protocol, Ethical Research Study Approval, and Interview questions were sent to the participants alongside the Participant's Consent Form to be signed by the participant. All related documents are included in Appendix A.

Finally, a reflective diary recorded the interview process, a description of the interview settings, and other observations concerning the participants' subliminal messages. A few participants, for example, were pressed with time due to other duties upon completion of the meeting, so the researcher had to make provisions that the 60-minute interview accommodated their needs. A diary of these issues was made ready for submission to the supervisory team and the mentors upon completion of the collection and processing of data processes. Technical issues using Microsoft Teams were observed in two interviews, but the connection was re-established back to normal. Internet connection overloading or signal reception issues was reported in one other interview.

#### 4.3.4. Data Management

In line with the Research Integrity Ethical Approval and the Research Interview Protocol, assurances concerning audio, video, transcriptions, email, and social media communications with the participants, with regard to anonymity and HEI confidentiality, all above-mentioned documents or electronic means of storage were and will be kept securely, as their use is only for academic purposes. They shall remain stored on completion of this research study for another 5 years before all documents are shredded and all electronic means of storing permanently deleted.

#### 4.4. Data Analysis Framework

Qualitative data analysis is a large and complex multidimensional subject. Using an inductive approach, qualitative data analysis begins with a complete set of collected data in text. These texts are transcripts of semi-structured interviews. Before analysis begins, the analyst-researcher opens a new diary to record ideas, results, and problems during the process of data analysis. The initial stage of analysis is usually a complete read-through of the data. The basic analysis consists of the manual highlighter pen method and/or the computer highlighting.

Most data are collected in words; thus, qualitative analysis is about the use and analysis of words. Words form language and may be constructed or interpreted in a variety of ways. Qualitative data, regardless of method, once written down, becomes text or narrative. This can be in the form of transcripts or notes, aiming to make sense of unstructured material. Transcription is a necessary part of the process, albeit somewhat tedious. Data clearing is usually carried out prior to analysis. There are various approaches to managing and analysing the data against the backdrop of the research questions and objectives (Edinburgh Napier University, 2018). There are four stages to be examined in qualitative data: collection, processing or organising, analysis, and findings reporting. The initial stage, after the collection of data, is the processing of data. Transcription of the video and audio recordings of the interviews with the participants of

this study becomes text with the help of information technology software tools. Otter.ai was used to download video and audio recordings and acquire the transcription of the interview sessions. Microsoft Teams did not provide transcription until 15th March 2021, and only recently, after the last three interview meetings, the researcher realised that the function of transcription became available in its latest updated version. The researcher's primary concern was to inspect the transcribed texts for corrections and accuracy levels, clearing the transcribed text from the unwanted irrelevant text. Corrections were also made to the text meaning or correct spelling of the transcription. The researcher performed this process upon the interview collection completion while the interviews were still easily and clearly recollected.

#### 4.5. Data Analysis Preparation

Concept maps have been used to frame this research project, organise, and reduce qualitative data, analyse themes and show interconnections to this study, followed by the presentations of the findings. A concept map is a schematic device for representing a set of concept meanings embedded in a framework of propositions (Novak, 2004).

The following concept map has allowed the researcher to see participants' meanings and the connections that participants discuss across concepts or bodies of knowledge.



**Figure 4.3. Map linking the conceptual framework of the research to the actual research methods. Source: Created by the author.**

The meaningful reduction of data is one of the strengths of using concept maps. By using maps, it is possible to display an average 20-page interview transcript on a single page. It also allows the researcher to capture the meaning of the participant interviews because the maps display concepts both horizontally and vertically. The horizontal axis encourages comparisons of how similar policies and practices unfold across sites (macro-external challenges) at roughly the same level or scale, specifically across HEIs in Ontario. The vertical axis urges comparison within HEIs micro-internal (or meso-internal) levels, or scales. Finally, the transversal axis, which emphasises change over time, urges scholars to situate the processes or relations historically under consideration (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2020). In addition, reducing qualitative data to one-page concept map can facilitate the process of cross-site or cross-group analysis. Sorting the one-page maps by groups or sites can facilitate the process of comparing for similarities or highlighting differences (Daley, 2004).

THEMATIC 'DIRECTION' THROUGH THE ANALYSIS					
← HORIZONTAL DIRECTION →					
Key Challenges Macro-external Issues		Political & Institutional Leadership VERTICAL DIRECTION Questions 1, 2 & 3	Data, Gaps In Data and Measurement VERTICAL DIRECTION Questions 1, 2 & 3	Labour Agreements VERTICAL DIRECTION Questions 1, 2 & 3	
Other Challenges	Public Policy Reforms Question 1				Meso- & Micro-internal Issues/ Funding/Metrics, HE Future. Questions: 4 & 5
Strategic Responses	Observations: Codes: F or S	In-Depth Exploration	In-Depth Exploration	In-Depth Exploration	Observations: Codes: FF or CS
Suggestions	Exploration	Specific Initiatives	Specific Initiatives	Specific Initiatives	Exploration
Outcome	Different views	Recommendation	Recommendation	Recommendation	Internal reports

**Table 4.3. Direction of Key Themes within the Analysis.**

**Notes:** \* Code P: Academic leaders pursuing public policy change; Code S: Academic leaders sceptical about change.

\* Key Challenges: 1. Political and institutional leadership; 2. Data, gaps in data and measurement techniques; and 3. Labour agreements.

\* Funding formula (Enrolment Based), Corridor System (Metrics apply, but funding remains under the funding formula enrolment based; full implementation is delayed due to Covid-19

\* Covid-19 implications yet to be assessed (TBA) for HE in Ontario). Other challenges are micro-internal issues within the departments and faculties of HEIs.

Given the various approaches to sensemaking, many definitions have been proposed. Typically, definitions polarise into two camps: sensemaking “within” individuals, – a cognitive process whereby the individual develops a mental model to make sense of the organisational environment – or sensemaking “between” individuals, – “a social process that occurs between people as meaning is negotiated and mutually constructed” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, pp. 66-67). The latter collective nature of sensemaking is the focus of Maitlis and Christianson’s review; the present study of academic leaders in HE in Ontario, draws on both concepts of sensemaking “within” and “between” individuals.

The theory consisted of context and literature review. Selected cases are public policy reforms on HE and the three key challenges (macro-external) cases referred to in the main section by across case, followed by within cases meso- and micro-internal issues, directly linked with these macro-external issues and the public policy reforms. Theory needs modification by adding or discarding parts in relation to and close interpretation of the presented findings. Next, discussions lead to the final case report, consisting mostly of recommendations and suggestions made, directed to SALs in HEIs in Ontario. These recommendations may transverse over time. The researcher used the simple coding approach; however, transcription is not a simple clerical or administrative task but rather a tedious interpretive process dealing initially with the familiarisation of the data collected.

Temporary challenges, for example Covid-19, were treated as a variable. Funding was treated as a mixed variable and is dependent on all three key challenges. The participants’ responses (respondents) are to be presented as categories. Participants’ strong opinions pursuing change or being sceptical of change formed two sub-categories (selective coding, code P, and code S correspondingly).

The analysis of the data process was conducted thematically, working systematically from the interview responses to the interview questions to the research questions and the three key challenges explaining the ‘gap’



of this research study. There are 16 software programs in qualitative data coding, such as NVivo-13, CAQDAS, MAXQDA, etc., for computer analysis and mapping. The researcher has previously pursued training NVivo-13 software and discussed its benefits with DBA colleagues (Online QDA, n.d.).

Although an information technology software such as NVivo-13 could have been employed in this study, and the researcher for data analysis initially pursued it, the researcher later decided to use pen and highlighter manual analysis process. This way, the researcher is better familiarised with the data and the critical material that aided the data analysis. Continued reference to the data had the effect of establishing better classification and interpretation of the variables of the formed matrix until the saturation point was reached, and after exhausting utilisation of all user data collected.

Relevant theories were identified in this study before data were collected. As the first cycle of coding was completed, additions to the literature review were made to reflect the new findings. These theories were the foundations for analysing data that led to explanations of participants' perceptions, borrowing from the case study research. The researcher pursued the choice of putting pen to paper and using manual coding techniques, printing copies of the transcripts and highlighting passages, and using colour coding to represent codes. "There is something about manipulating qualitative data on paper and writing codes in pencil that gives you more control over and ownership of the work" (Saldana, 2016).

A code page helps the organisation of data. It comprises a list of codes, a description of the code, and an example of data that matches the code. The researcher had provided only the essential demographic information, purposely concealing the identity of the participants, the institution's name, whether it was a college or university, and only included the number of years as an academic leader in HEIs. These demographic data are presented with a 'clustering' rather than 'individualising'

emphasis, protecting, therefore, the anonymity and confidentiality of all the participants while at the same time providing enough information to the reader to ensure a good understanding of the context of the reported results. This qualitative study resulted in themes, which are an outcome of the coding process and analytic reflection.

In particular, three key challenges have emerged as themes from the study's onset:

- Political and institutional leadership
- Data, gaps in data and measurements
- Labour collective agreements

The process was followed by arranging categories and themes and further cutting, pasting, and reprinting hard copies to visually represent the evolving themes throughout the analytical process. Next, the researcher chose case-by-case coding, over question-by-question coding. As the main themes are well arranged (three key challenges), case-by-case coding is more efficient, avoiding the drawback of participant interviews being a bit off-topic in the question-by-question coding. However, there are other themes, such as the public policy reforms and other meso- and micro-internal issues present in this study. The next step was for the researcher to establish codes in the context of theories preselected in the literature review to interpret the participants' experiences.

The researcher needed to establish **codes 'a priori'** according to pre-identified theories, or to start inductively coding from scratch using 'true opening coding' with no pre-selected theories. Coding is an analytical process in which qualitative data are categorised to facilitate analysis. The primary tool for analysing data using the generic qualitative enquiry approach is thematic analysis, a flexible analytic method for deriving the central themes from verbal data. Thematic analysis can also be used to conduct analysis of the qualitative data in some types of the case study. Thematic analysis essentially creates theme statements for ideas or

categories of ideas (codes) that the researcher extracts from the participants' words. Generic qualitative enquiry, and thematic analysis, are really a foundation for all other analytic methods. Thematic analysis is the starting point for the other (five), and the endpoint for generic qualitative enquiry (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

There are two main types of thematic analysis:

- Inductive thematic analysis, in which the data are interpreted inductively without bringing in any preselected theoretical categories.
- Theoretical thematic analysis, in which the participants' words are interpreted according to categories or constructs from the existing literature (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

The researcher chose a combined approach of the two main types of analysis, as the option to proceed with pre-selected theories would be biased and risk the trustworthiness of the study, and the other option for complete 'true open coding' would be difficult to pursue as not enough data were available to confidently build themes from codes (whether pre-determined or not). *Mears (2013) explicitly puts "the observation before the participation" and "...rather than starting out to find expressions or examples to prove a preconceived idea or to advance a theory, your task is to connect directly with the experience described by your narrator. Your prior knowledge should inform yet not precondition your interpretation" (Mears, 2009, p. 123). Following this advice, the researcher continued with the analysis of data using open coding and assigned preliminary coding to data segments relevant to the research questions (see Table 4.4).*

PARTICIPANTS	YEARS IN HEI	HEI	CHALLENGE 1: POLITICAL & INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP	CHALLENGE 2: DATA, DATA GAPS & MEASUREMENT	CHALLENGE 3: LABOUR AGREEMENTS	FUNDING	OTHER CHALLENGES
<b><i>PARTICIPANT 1</i></b> <i>Code: P</i>	15	1	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal issues
<b><i>PARTICIPANT 2</i></b> <i>Code: P</i>	14	2	Priority code: 2	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 3	Corridor system Code: CS	Micro-internal issues
<b><i>PARTICIPANT 3</i></b> <i>Code: S</i>	4 & 10	3	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal issues
<b><i>PARTICIPANT 4</i></b> <i>Code: P</i>	15 & 11	4	Priority code: 2	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 3	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal issues
<b><i>PARTICIPANT 5</i></b> <i>Code: P</i>	12 & 11	5	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Corridor system Code: CS	Micro-internal issues
<b><i>PARTICIPANT 6</i></b> <i>Code: S</i>	27	6	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal issues
<b><i>PARTICIPANT 7</i></b> <i>Code: S</i>	6	7	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal issues
<b><i>PARTICIPANT 8</i></b> <i>Code: S</i>	11	8	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal issues
<b><i>PARTICIPANT 9</i></b> <i>Code: P</i>	5 & 4	9	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Corridor system Code: CS	Micro-internal issues

**Table 4.4. Schema of the Preliminary Thematic Analysis and Coding Frames.**

**NOTES:** \* Code P: Academic leaders pursuing public policy change; Code S: Academic leaders sceptical about change.

\* Key Challenges: 1. Political and institutional leadership; 2. Data, gaps in data and measurement techniques, and 3. Labour agreements.

\* Funding Formula Code: FF (Enrolment Based), Corridor System Code: CS (Metrics apply, but funding remains under the funding formula enrolment based; full implementation is delayed due to Covid-19

\* Covid-19 implications yet to be assessed (TBA) for HE in Ontario. Other challenges are micro-internal issues within the departments and faculties of HEIs.

The steps to follow for the data in a (manual) thematic analysis are:

1. Underline any passage (phrases, sentences, or paragraphs) that appear meaningful. Make no interpretation yet. Review the underlined data.
2. Decide if the underlined data are relevant to the research question(s) and cross out or delete all data unrelated to the research question(s). Some information in the transcript may be interesting but unrelated to the research question(s).
3. Create a name or “code” for each remaining underlined passage (expressions or meaning units) that focus on one single idea. The code should:
  - Be briefer than the passage
  - Sum up its meaning
  - Be supported by the meaning unit (the participant’s words)
4. Find codes that recur; cluster these together. Begin the interpretation.

5. After you have developed the clusters or patterns of codes, name each pattern. The pattern name is a theme. Use language supported by the original data in the language of your discipline and field.
6. Write a brief description of each theme. Use brief direct quotations from the transcript to show the reader how the patterns emerged from the data.
7. Compose a paragraph integrating all the themes you developed from the individual's data.
8. Repeat this process for each participant, the "within-participant" analysis.
9. Finally, integrate all themes from all participants in "across-participants" analysis, showing what general themes are found across all the data.

Some variation of thematic analysis will appear in most of the other forms of qualitative data analysis, but the other methods tend to be more complex (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

There is a risk that bias will influence the codes, categories, and themes that only relate with pre-conceived theories, potentially excluding codes, categories, and themes that would naturally emerge otherwise. Glacer and Laudel (2019) encourage explicit memo writing during coding processes and exercising caution when the data do not appear to align with pre-conceived theory. The researcher should strike a balance between supporting the analysis with theory vs. coding the data rigidly according to theory and warned that immediately abandoning theory whenever a conflict between theory and data arises is not a good way of resolving such conflict – it should be recorded and kept until it can be resolved in the context of all the theory and all the data that have a bearing on the analysis (p. 66)

Finally, the researcher recognised that an analytical process may be inherently biased, and to mitigate against this risk, triangulation using multiple sources of data was employed to confirm the themes emerged. Further, the researcher committed to explore unanticipated themes that emerged outside the pre-conceived theoretical background.

#### 4.6. Qualitative Strategy: Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1981) outlined four aspects of trustworthiness that should be addressed: True value (internal validity), applicability (external validity and generalisability), consistency (reliability), and neutrality. In this study, the true value of the participants 'lived experiences' have been respected by treating the participants as subjects. Qualitative researchers rarely discuss **generalisability** of their data because the goal of their endeavour is a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, not statistical generalisation. The purpose of the research, the sampling method, the data analysis method, and the coding strategy are discussions on generalisability and the standard for reporting qualitative report is that the research question is phrased to demand a general answer.

The concept of **replicability** relates only to a single finding. This study contains three macro-level findings, each of which should be addressed separately. This research is generally **reproducible**, although it is not unusual to have only a subset (one or two) of findings from the study be replicable. The researcher believes that the issue of data, data gaps and measurements is reproducible. The issue of labour agreements may also be reproducible. However, political, and to some extent institutional leadership, may not be predictable factors and surely when trying to reproduce the study different findings may make this subset non-reproducible. A repetitive testing process of any of these three findings will increase the **reliability** of the study. **Credibility** corresponds to internal

validity of the study, meaning the researcher does not deviate purposely from the intended meaning of the participants' answers. **Dependability** relates to the consistency of the results of this study and the degree to which this study is replicable (Bock, 2019). The degree of **conformability** refers to the degree of the researcher's neutrality. The axiological ethics provide that the participants of this study will be treated as subjects. Finally, the **transferability** aspect of this study has been established. Objective 4. 'To make recommendations to other academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario, and elsewhere in Canada, of how to respond to both external and internal drivers of change using organisational change management'. The external drivers of change were addressed in this study with the three key challenges. Interview question 4 makes specific reference to: 'How can organisational change management enhance operational performance in the faculties and the departments of HEIs?' The findings of this question will therefore be extended to internal drivers of change within the faculties and the departments.

#### 4.7. Ethical Considerations

Many of my past colleagues had an academic role and some hold an academic leader's position today in many of the colleges and universities in Ontario. Therefore, the necessity to build narrative that captures the essence of the data but conceals identity (Patton, 2015) was paramount for this study. With respect to reciprocity, I recognise the significance of the contribution that can be made to the collective profession by way of the participants' sharing of their experiences. I believe that my colleagues share with me an interest in academic contribution, as well as an understanding of their experience as administrative leaders.

Approval by the Research Integrity Committee of Edinburgh Napier University, The Business School, was issued to the researcher on 14/09/2020, with Reference no: ENBS-2019-20-054 (see Appendix A).



The application contained the ethical considerations pertaining to this study specifically, risks and benefits to participants, confidentiality and data security, participant control, and the Participant's Consent Form. The Interview Protocol were sent, and the Participant's Consent Form was signed by all participants along with the interview questions, in preparation of the online remote meetings.

Risk to participants in this study was deemed to be minimal. In order to minimise any potential risks/harms, participants were told they could refuse to answer a question for any reason, although none of them did. Furthermore, two participants objected to video recording procedures during the interview; however, they agreed to audio recording. Time demands on the participants included time for the interview itself, 60–90 minutes in duration. A 10-minute briefing was required to test the efficient Microsoft Teams account compatibility and functions used for the meeting with the participants. All the interviews were carried out using participants' college or university Microsoft Teams account. There was no anticipated risk to me as a researcher, nor the participants, especially when remote Microsoft Teams online meetings were used for this study.

Participants received no compensation or incentive for participation, nor did they receive any reimbursement for expenses. Participation in this study may have provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on the meaning that they derive from their work and to reinforce positive experiences with other stakeholders in HE.

The Ontario College and University Multi-Site-Form includes guidelines for confidentiality and data security. All data collected will be stored in a specific folder and on the laptop computer, using pseudonyms for participants and codes for the institutions. The drawer to store both computer and calendar will be lockable and access to the computer

password protected, and files encrypted. All computer-stored information and any written data for this study will be securely stored for five years and then removed and erased from all electronic means and paper data will be shredded.

Participants were informed at the time of recruitment and again at the time of the interview of their option to withdraw at any time. There were no consequences to a participant withdrawing from the study. No deception was used in this study. No undue influences were exerted on the participants. All communication was directed via my Edinburgh Napier University email to the participants of this study, and remotely using Microsoft Teams recorded meetings (see attached Appendices B, C, D, and E).

#### 4.7.1. Respect for Persons

The critical principle of respect for human person recognises research participants' autonomy. The principle of autonomy can be adhered to by providing adequate information in the participants' information leaflet (protocol), in an understanding manner to enhance their informed consent (Munhall, 2012; ResearchGate, 2017; Scott, 2013).

#### 4.7.2. Beneficence and Non-Maleficence and Justice

The critical principles of beneficence (do good) and non-maleficence (do not harm) are concerned with the benefits and risks associated with conducting the research study (Sarantakos & Scott, 2017). It is also important to mention whether a research study was funded by any funding agency and if there was any pressure or conflict of interest from the agency that may have had adverse effect on sampling, collection, or analysing of data to suit the agency. The ethical principle of justice is

concerned with ensuring that procedures in the research study are fair and that the participants' rights to privacy are respected (Scott, 2013).

#### 4.7.3. The Ethics of Metaphor as a Research Tool

The interpretive and subjective nature of qualitative research has led to growing utilisation of arts-based strategies for data collection, analysis, and dissemination. The defining characteristics of all such strategies is that they are largely subjective and intended to invoke personal responses in the 'audience'. Following that direction, many qualitative researchers, mostly in health and education matters, use metaphors when describing results of qualitative research. This allows them to illustrate some of the complexities and ambiguities using a case study. Data analysis is designed to sensitise researchers and ethics reviewers to some unique ethical issues inherent to this approach towards data analysis and presentation. Issues related to participants' dignity, respect, and vulnerability led the researcher to take these points into consideration in designing this research and seeking informed consent (Manhas & Oberle, 2015).

Metaphors can be linguistic devices, but also conceptual aids that help develop patterns in analysis or facilitate re-interpretation. However, there is a thin line between artistic license for better expression and distorting the participant's actual experience and meanings. The literature review referred to Morgan's (1986, 2011) use of metaphors when discussing political theories of change. Researchers and viewers must be aware of the danger to participants' dignity and integrity when aesthetics overshadow actuality. The use of metaphor may also trigger tensions between researchers and participants, especially if member checking is used. The implications of participant withdrawal must be considered and conveyed to ethics reviewers and participants. It is important to have a plan in place for dealing with some of these issues. They should be

detailed in the proposal and communicated to participants (Manhas & Oberle, 2015).

The metaphor shows the whole of interaction, the movement back and forth of the many facets that are important. It captures the mystery of interaction, of the connection that really makes things happen (Davies et al., 2022). The metaphors used in this study are discussed in the following findings chapter. Upon completion of the study, the major findings, including the use of the river metaphor, will be shared with the participants involved in this type of transition.

#### 4.7.4. Use of Cases and Reflection on the Use of Cameos

The following are meant to introduce the case, serve as case reflection notes summarising the events, and present the Case Reflection Tool (abdo CPD, 2020) of this study:

1. Public policy reforms initiated by the government of Ontario seem to be the cause of HE transitions from the public sector to a corporate model. However, although these are political decisions, academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario are faced with social structural challenges (the three key challenges) that the government of Ontario should have accomplished prior to the transition. These social structural reforms remain unaccomplished by the Ontario government up until today, and although academic leaders have employed OCM processes, demonstrating leadership to transit their HEIs to the new era, they are unable to do that without the help of the political leadership with specific initiatives that address data, gaps in data and measurement techniques, and labour agreements.
2. The ball throwing between the political and the institutional leadership, in resolving these three key issues, has affected the academic leaders thinking, creating the feeling of complexity, ambiguity, and turbulence.

3. As the case has been formulated and written up, the researcher discussed it during his interviews with SALs of HEIs in Ontario and he analysed the findings of this enquiry. Thoughts, insights, and factual evidence were shared during these interviews that helped the researcher to consider parameters that were not taken into account at first.

4. Public policy reforms are implemented by the government of Ontario, including funding system reforms in HE. The government of Ontario is steering the HE system from a distance, offering the “Quarter Budget” for funding HEIs on an outcome-based model and according to institution-specific mandate policy. SMAs are signed with each and every HEI in Ontario. SALs are trying to cope with huge gaps in data or missing data, by tilting or leveraging the data available. Although both the governments of Ontario and Canada acknowledge that data is a very serious issue that needs to be resolved, instead of making the Census Canada in 2021 mandatory,

5. The researcher made recommendations to academic leaders in HEIs in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada, by promoting the ‘Three Frame Model’ that, if the corporate model is to be successful in any of the provinces, the Political frame should be taken out from Bolman and Deal’s (2017) Four Frame model. Internal political views mainly concern power and funding and can always be addressed by the Symbolic Frame. The Structural frame, however, needs consistent policies, including the challenge of data and overall, the smooth operability of HEIs. The Human Resource frame should address Corporate Social Responsibility challenges and labour agreement issues. More research should be undertaken to address these three key challenges in HE in Ontario and other provinces of Canada.

The use of cameos while interviewing the SALs of HEIs in Ontario was deemed necessary by the researcher of this study, aware of the participants’ dignity, and in order to protect participants identity and

integrity. Specific reference is made of these cameos used in the following findings chapter.

#### 4.7.5. Special Covid-19 Considerations

All Covid-19 guidelines were followed as per Edinburgh Napier University guidelines. All communication with prospective participants was directed using electronic communication means as email, media sources, and links, and for the interviews with the study's participants only via Microsoft Teams remote meetings and emails using the researcher's account with Edinburgh Napier University. All the participants used their official email and Microsoft Teams accounts of the university or college they are employed by.

Additionally, and because the study took place in Ontario, Canada, all federal, provincial, local community, and institutional guidelines were followed, along with special Covid-19 conditions.

Due to special circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher experienced a considerable delay in carrying out the study's interviews, as SALs were particularly burdened with additional duties to cope with the pandemic conditions. The time for conducting the interviews took 3 months, between 15/01/2021 and 15/04/2021, although under normal conditions it would not have taken more than a month. The researcher had initially assumed that the recruitment of 15 academic leaders would yield 12 interviews at least, under normal conditions. Due to the pandemic, however, 23 prospective participants were contacted and only nine responded positively to take part in this study. The supervisory teams of Edinburgh Napier University have been informed of the special conditions, the unforeseen delays, and special consideration was requested by the researcher from the supervisory team. Permission for submission by 30/09/2022 was approved.

## 4.8. The Transformation of HE after Covid-19 Disruption

The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed ways of working, living, and relating to each other on a global level, suddenly and dramatically. In the field of HE, HEIs are undergoing radical transformations driven by the need to digitalise education and training processes in record time with academics who lack innate technological capabilities for online teaching. The university system must strive to overcome this situation to be competitive and provide high-quality education in a scenario of digital transformation, disruptive technological innovations, and accelerated change. To achieve these goals, there are some barriers and challenges that universities encounter, as well as technological resources and methodologies they have used in the current scenario to transform HE to face the Covid-19 disruption. This disruptive impact of Covid-19 and the availability of digital technologies that can support online learning present an unprecedented opportunity for the transformation of HE at a global level. We are involved in a digital world, and the phenomenon of online learning is here to stay. After of some months of online experiences, a paradigm shift has occurred in university education. Online teaching has gained relevance and ensured its continuance even after the Covid-19 pandemic. There is a plethora of technological tools and platforms to support online learning (MS Teams, Zoom, Loom, Skype, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Cisco, Webex, etc.), to support new methodologies to enable learning processes. As this transition to online learning was hasty and forced by circumstances the various actors in the learning processes (students, professors, universities) encountered several barriers in adapting to this new setting (Garcia-Morales et al., 2021, p. 6) .

#### 4.9. Conclusion, Reflections, and Extensions of the Study

This research study explores SALs' lived experiences, feelings, perceptions, opinions, strategies, actions, and perspectives concerning the challenges they are faced with in HE in Ontario, trying to cope with public policy reforms using OCM. This study is a qualitative research enquiry, organisation based, using generic qualitative methodical design and an inductive approach to theory in interpreting the collected data. Thematic analysis using coding frames applied in this research study.

The findings of this study may prove useful to other SALs of HEIs who are facing the same challenges in their institutions. Also, although it is highly unlikely, is the finding could also inform public policy makers and the legislators of the dangers of pursuing public policy reforms, without accomplishing essential macro-level social structural reforms, which are prerequisites and requirements. However, the findings may contribute to the development of new theories, policy makers may give low credibility to interpretive qualitative studies (Dodovski, 2010).

Finally, recommendations are expected to be made to SALs in HE of Ontario, and also to SALs of other provinces of Canada, from the shared experiences and suggestions of the participants of his study, in relation to both external and internal drivers of change strengthening therefore the transferability aspect of this research study.



## Chapter 5 – Findings

### 5.0. Findings

The current chapter presents the analysis of the data retrieved from interviews conducted with senior academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario, with reference to the research questions. Additional evidence from reliable government agency sources related to the context of HE in Ontario were retrieved for the analysis of data. The process of the research respected Eisenhardt's (1989) process of building theory from case study research, such as across case pattern search using divergent techniques, which other authors have validated over time (Ravenswood, 2011). Some features of the Eisenhardt process were the problem definition, and case pattern research such as within-case analysis and replication logic were unique to the inductive case-oriented process. This study selected organisational changing structures. The analysis purposely selected different approaches to organisational structure. The presentation of the analysis was presented into three sections.

The first section of this chapter introduces the participants of this study, capturing their unique approaches to their leadership skills. Metaphorical cameos were used to describe their roles, as academic leaders and administrators, individually expressed with their voices, and each drawn from the analysis of their own interviews. Initially, the participants' position on public policy reforms and were classified into two groups: those in favour, and those sceptical about the degree, scale, foci, and timing of public policy reforms in HE in Ontario. Next, the researcher identified the key challenges that academic leaders are faced with, assigning priority codes to these key challenges. SALs' stage of funding system reforms undertaken by them were classified as: Funding Formulae (the old funding model presently applying), or the Corridor System under which, however the funding formulae applied, it also indicated that these leaders had

initiated funding system reforms in order for them to comply with the new outcome-based funding model.

In the second section, the researcher investigates the challenges identified in the first section. These challenges have affected OCM processes for SALs of HEIs in Ontario, and their experiences are of utmost importance to this study. This section is structured into three sub-sections reflecting on each of the three key challenges that affect OCM processes. Specifically, three themes were generated from the participants' interviews: 1. Political and institutional leadership, 2. Data, gaps in data and measurement, and 3. Labour collective agreements.

Finally, in the third section, the researcher reflects on other challenges, both meso- and micro-internal, temporary or permanent in nature, isolated, directly linked or overlapped with these key three macro-external challenges referred to in the second section. OCM processes were introduced to the faculties and the departments of HEIs to deal with internal HEI public policy reforms.

Valuable lessons and suggestions were derived through from the experiences of SALs in HEIs in Ontario who employed OCM processes, and answers were provided to the research questions concerning the three key challenges they are faced with.

## 5.1. Participant Demographics

Prior to presenting the SALs' metaphorical cameos a review of their demographic data is presented in this section. There were a variety of titles that these SALs held. The majority of the SALs shared the title of "Dean" (Six of nine participants). Among them there were three "Academic Deans" (of departments), two "Associate Deans" (of faculties), one "Executive Dean" (of a department). There was one Chair (of a department). From the remaining two participants, one was a Vice-

President, and one a Senior Research Fellow and Vice Provost. These participants were the most SALs within their HEIs. However, their titles had varied, and in most cases their titles were frequently changed. Seven of nine had a previous position in the same faculty or department but in another HEI and four had served in at least two different institutions. As such, the nine participants interviewed represented thirteen HEIs.

The years of experience in HEIs varied between the minimum of 6 years and the maximum of 27 years. The mean across all participants was 16 years, and the median was 14 years. Five participants were in favour of public policy reforms and four are sceptical about the scale, degree, foci, and timing of the reforms. This indicates how divided the academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario are concerning public policy reforms in HE. It does not appear to differ between participants employed by colleges or universities.

All nine SALs acknowledged that Covid-19 was an immediate major challenge, although worldwide and a temporary one, affecting HEIs in Ontario. Covid-19, as a challenge, is yet to be assessed (TBA), and therefore the researcher decided not to include it in this research study. A summary of these demographic data can be seen in Table 2.1.

## 5.2. Participants' Cameos

A brief, creative cameo has been developed for each participant, based on the experiences they shared in their interview. A metaphorical role of an academic leader was attributed to each of the participants and is derived from the analysis of metaphors they themselves used as they responded to questions throughout their interviews. This process is meant to assist the researcher in understanding and further assessing the outcomes from the SALs' institutional leadership perspectives. Also, the swapping of participants with cameos further protects participant

anonymity because these cameos cannot be correlated with the findings and quotes in subsequent sections. Cameos therefore satisfy the data analysis protocol requirements set out by the researcher in this research study.

The following cameos highlight the complexities of institutional leadership experiences shared by the participants of this study and introduce metaphorical roles that can be interpreted to represent the unique nature of each SALs' perception of their role within their HEI. Gender-neutral terms are used to further preserve participant anonymity.

### 5.2.1. Public Policy and Funding System Reforms

This is summarised in the table below, so the participant information was sent to the appendix just need a paragraph about the table to contextualise it.

PARTICIPANTS Metaphor POSITION ON: Public Policy Reforms	YEARS IN HEI	HEIs	CHALLENGE 1: POLITICAL & INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP	CHALLENGE 2: DATA, DATA GAPS & MEASUREMENT	CHALLENGE 3: LABOUR AGREEMENTS	FUNDING/ METRICS & OTHER MESO- INTERNAL ISSUES	OTHER CHALLENGES & MICRO- INTERNAL ISSUES
PARTICIPANT P1 Code : F	15	1	Priority code: 2	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 3	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal Overlapping issues
PARTICIPANT P2 Code : S	14	2	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code:2	Corridor system Code: CS	Micro-internal Overlapping issues
PARTICIPANT P3 Code : F	4 & 10	3	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal Overlapping issues
PARTICIPANT P4 Code: F	15 & 11	4	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal Overlapping issues
PARTICIPANT P5 Code : F	12 & 11	5	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Corridor system Code: CS	Micro-internal Overlapping issues
PARTICIPANT P6 Code: S	27	6	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal Overlapping issues
PARTICIPANT P7 Code: S	6	7	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal Overlapping issues
PARTICIPANT P8 Code: S	11	8	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Funding formula Code: FF	Micro-internal Overlapping issues
PARTICIPANT P9 Code: F	5 & 4	9	Priority code: 3	Priority code: 1	Priority code: 2	Corridor system Code: CS	Micro-internal Overlapping issues

**NOTES:** \*Participant codes: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9 (pseudonyms assigned).

\***Position** on public policy change, **Code F:** Academic leaders in **favour** of public policy reforms; **Code S:** Academic leaders **sceptical** about reforms (degree, scale, foci, and timing).

\* **Key challenges:** 1. Political and institutional leadership; 2. Data, gaps in data and measurement techniques; and 3. Labour agreements.

\* **Code FF: Funding Formula /Enrolment Based;**

\* **Code CS: Corridor System/** Metrics apply, but funding remains under the funding formula enrolment based. Full implementation is delayed due to Covid-19.

\* **Covid-19:** implications yet to be assessed (TBA) for HE in Ontario.

\* **Other challenges:** are micro- internal issues within the departments and faculties.

**Table 5.1. Summary of demographic data and participant codes.**

### 5.2.2. Summary of Findings Concerning Public Policy Change

Public policy change, as the causal factor of HE public policy reforms, has been acknowledged by all nine SALs; however, their perceptions have been addressed from different perspectives. These participants' perspectives may be ideologically, philosophically, and or politically driven, and although their opinions are heard, they were not analysed as they are beyond the scope of this study. SALs employ OCM processes within their HEIs to implement public policy reforms. Academic leaders are keen to see how well they can serve their students, their communities, their teams, and generally to serve all stakeholders' interests in HE, safeguarding the sector from the challenging peril of competition from other private institutions.

The key three challenges affecting HE in Ontario, were also confirmed by all nine participants as the main challenges of concern. The findings from the interviews, were represented above in Table 4.1. The leading key challenge for eight (88.8%) of the SALs was data, gaps in data and measurement techniques. The second priority was labour collective agreements, for eight (88.8%) of the participants. The third priority was political and institutional leadership for seven (77.7%) of the SALs. The meso- and micro-internal issues were: Covid-19, funding system reforms, the outcome based criteria (metrics) attached to funding, curricula development, IT solutions, research and/or teaching institution specific mandate, HEI regional development policy, quality assurance, accreditation, accessibility, viability, sustainability, accessibility for aboriginal communities, linguistic duality requirement programmes, proper regulation, Citizens and Social Charters, immigration and citizenship provisions, mental health issues, etc.

### 5.3. Three Key Macro-external Challenges in HE in Ontario

In reference to life-cycle organisational change theories, the second phase of engage (explore and/or investigate in depth), is intended to engage the participants and carry out an in-depth investigation of the three key challenges affecting HE in Ontario. The research objectives, in reference to these challenges, were:

Objective 2. To investigate the SALs' experiences dealing with structural institutional reforms and the various challenges they are facing, while managing HEIs in Ontario.

Objective 3. To critically analyse the SALs' strategic responses to policy change, within a contested regulatory environment in Ontario.

The interview questions were:

**1. What are the greatest challenges that you are facing at the institutional level?**

This is the question of "how" change occurs and what are the major challenges SALs are faced with because of change.

**2. In your view how can SALs lead and manage reforms at the organisational level?**

and

**3. Which organisational strategic responses will you employ for the institution's transition to the new era?**

These were intended to provide answers to the main research question(s):

- What is the SALs' perception concerning the three requirements and prerequisites of public policy reform, namely: political and

institutional leadership, data, data gaps and measurement, and labour agreements?

This main research question consists of three research sub-questions, each of which addresses the three key challenges:

- How do SALs cope with missing or incomplete data and measurement techniques, so vital for research and development, but also essential to government leading to informed public policy?
- What are the SALs' perception on Citizen's and Social Charters, and labour collective agreements with the academic community?
- What are the SALs' views concerning political and institutional leadership, as some social structural changes remain unaccomplished by the government of Ontario?

In reporting the answers to these questions, a simple coding system has been employed by the researcher.



THEMATIC 'DIRECTION' THROUGH THE ANALYSIS					
← HORIZONTAL DIRECTION →					
Key Challenges Macro-external Issues		Political and Institutional Leadership VERTICAL DIRECTION Questions 1, 2 & 3	Data, Gaps In Data and Measurement VERTICAL DIRECTION Questions 1, 2 & 3	Labour Agreements VERTICAL DIRECTION Questions 1, 2 & 3	
Other Challenges	Public Policy Reforms Question 1				Meso- & Micro-internal Issues/Funding/ Metrics, etc. Questions: 4 & 5
Strategic Responses	Exploration Codes: F or S	In Depth Exploration	In Depth Exploration	In Depth Exploration	Exploration, Codes: FF or CS
Suggestions	Observation	Specific Initiatives	Specific Initiatives	Specific Initiatives	Observation
Outcome	Different views	Recommendations	Recommendations	Recommendations	Internal reports

**Table 5.2 (same as Table 3.5) Direction of Key Themes within the Analysis. \*Covid-19 challenges are yet to be assessed.**

### 5.3.1. Political & Institutional Leadership Challenges

Public policy reforms in HE have gaps that are challenging SALs' ability to lead and manage change in HEIs in Ontario. The following paragraphs expand upon these gaps as expressed during the participant interviews.

**The ever-changing environment in HE in Ontario** was commented frequently by all participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, and P9).

*'I would say there is always room for improvement, on a continuous improvement sort of process or cycle, because there are changes that constantly occur.'* (P2)

*'So, anytime there is room for change or the need for change, it is not as straightforward, OK. Get everybody into the room and then this is what you are doing, going forward, right? So, because again of all different complexities, also being some of them are the collective agreements, some of them are not, so there are so many angles to it, so it's very important to have a change management process in place and have individuals that can drive it.'* (P3)

*'That, you know, we are in public sector...', 'I have been [in my position] with two different government politically, that you know what, each [government/political party] have their own flavour, but we managed through.'* (P1)

*'there is reform, and we are outdated. I mean, the education system needs drastic reform. I mean with this that we spend a lot of taxpayers' dollars. And so, I am for reform....', 'So, I think if anything, we do not change quick enough, where I think, the system is outdated. And I think, too many people are unwilling to change that', 'That there is no hurdle that cannot be overcome', 'drastic changes are required, and public policy reforms are not pursued quickly enough by academic leaders in Ontario.'* (P1)

*'And because of the policy changes in Ontario, foreign students are a great source of revenue. I just read this morning that foreign student's income at the University now exceeds the government grants. And that has great implications obviously for the way that you structure everything from programmes to faculty hiring and, how you perceive the future.'* (P5)

**The purposes of education** was the second topic that several participants commented on (P1, P4, P7, P8, and P9).

*'[HE] Its purpose should be about economic growth and jobs. It [MCU] doesn't support a more traditional conception of the university. And I think*

*part of the challenge this sector has faced is much more accountability and much more scrutiny than we ever had.'* (P8)

**On the challenge of leadership and managerialism**, participants had the following to say: *'...leadership, leading people, our faculties are the experts in their content area (of expertise), but we still lead and provide leadership.'* (P1)

*'The truth is that the universities, have more spots than we need currently. And given that some of the programmes in the universities have diminishing in size and the faculty cannot change that quickly, given tenure. How you [institutional leaders] shape the university is going to be very, very difficult in the next few years. And it is very challenging, I think, for the university administrators.'* (P5)

*'... the department remain the hard rock of the university founders. They prosper, and the university leader will be successful at the Dean's or the academic Vice-Presidential level, they must have, according to me, a very good knowledge of the operations of the department. What happens if the department goes wrong? What if it becomes a place of internal conflict, which happens far too often, especially now? I think that the academic leaders should be there at the first sign that something is going wrong and interact, and they should have more flexibility in determining who leads. In earlier times the senior administration used to choose the head, and now they have committees, and it must be mainly a departmental decision.'* (P4)

*'Sometimes you have bad leadership and sometimes good leadership. We have bad leadership in [university], and we have got good leaders again... And if there is transparency in how the administrative leadership deals with issues, the same thing with the government and we put on the table the issues that need to be tackled.'* (P6)

**Organisational change and leadership** comments were as follows:

*'We are trying to come up with this [public policy reform], the solution that's going to work for all of us. But at the same time organisational alignment and overall mandate is going to be still the prime concern. And people are going to have to understand that sometimes they will not get what they want, and they may have to accommodate the change as best they can', '... the ability to create, ultimately, a shared vision, initially a vision, and then you sell it, right. I keep the well-being of my personnel in mind first, so I tried to make sure that certainly in this environment, there are a lot of factors to keep in mind, the isolation, mental health, all those sorts of things, depression, the increasing demands of the institution and the students, but creating a go forward vision.'* (P9)

*'There are other drivers [of change, – meaning the metrics] that ... make no sense to anybody, ... the whole thing will crumble under the weight of the process that the ministry and this kind of thing happened in Quebec, ... it is too difficult for us to define some of these metrics, ... so, the thing will pull apart.'* (P7)

Participants' responses to the interview questions referred to in Section 4.2. were summarized in line with answer frequency analysis. Each interview question response was coded inductively and in an open coding technique. Over 40 codes were recorded. Next, an iterative re-coding process, by reviewing the summary responses to the interview questions 1 & 2 created the following preliminary codes, expressed in categories and listed in alphabetical order:

Academic leaders addressed the “how” of change, question 1, with the following statements:

- They experienced philosophical, ideological and political change.
- They experienced public policy reforms in HE.

- They also experienced HE-funding system reforms.

For interview question 2, “how do academic leaders lead and manage change”, the following were recorded:

- Academic leaders experienced constant change.
- They experience performative pressures to comply with an outcome-based funding model.
- They employ OCM processes, to transit their HEIs into the new era.
- They experience lack of clarity about public policy reforms.
- They lead amidst complexity and ambiguity.
- They lead and provide leadership.
- They experience structural social challenges.
- They are facing demographic changes.
- They are facing student labour skills development issues, to prepare them for the new era.
- They are committed to meeting students’ needs, promoting learning, and curriculum delivery mode change.

The above inductive coding analysis from the selected interview questions 1, 2, & 3 is meant to compare and contrast responses from each participant. Following the inductive process, a deductive analysis of the transcribed data was conducted using the codes from the literature review (Table 2.1., Summary of the ‘themes’ related to research questions, topics of investigation, and key authors). Selected codes from identity theory (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashford & Mael, 1989) and sensemaking theory (Weick, 1979, 1995) could be used to explain the leadership experiences and the characteristics of the participants. The following codes are listed below:

Identity (alphabetical order)

- Organisational identification
- Perception of leadership strengths
- Perception of belonging to a group
- Perception of isolation
- Perception of belonging in more than one group
- Perception of equality
- Perception of diversity
- Perception of inclusion
- Perception of engagement
- Serving and meeting needs

#### Sensemaking (alphabetical order)

- Accepting reality
- Adapting to changing environment
- Expressing confusion
- Expressing fear
- Expressing frustration
- Expressing hopefulness
- Feeling pressure or expectation from others
- Feeling sense of accomplishment
- Feeling unvalued
- Feeling valued
- Interpersonal experience
- Learning
- Managing priorities
- Orienting to new role
- Process of becoming
- Rationalising
- Transacting with others

Further to the inductive and deductive analysis of codes presented above, a number of matrices were formed and analysed. These matrices compared question responses and theoretical coding with specific attributes of participants (name of institution, locality, department or faculty, position held, role of participant, length of time in institution, attributes of participant with metaphorical meaning). The researcher had decided not to include these matrices analyses in these findings report, as they may reveal the participants' identity, which must be respected and preserved. I am satisfied that the analytical process has resulted in meaningful themes that captured the essence of the participants' experiences of this study.

Finally, inductive and deductive coding and categories could be combined with the frequency analysis, leading to the following themes:

- SALs experience almost constant change.
- SALs are leading amidst complexity turbulence and ambiguity.
- Academic leaders lead with strong sense of serving others.
- SALs are communicating with their fellow colleagues at other HEIs.
- SALs practice shared leadership.

These are the themes that are interpreted in the Discussion Chapter 5.

### 5.3.2. Summary of Findings Concerning Political & Institutional Leadership Challenges

Participants described significant changes in the HE landscape that influence the academic and administrative roles of academic leaders. The influences include macro-external issues as public policy changes, HE public policy reforms, and funding system reforms. However, although SALs had employed OCM processes to implement public policy reforms,

social structural reforms remain unaccomplished by the Ontario government. These social structural reforms are the three key challenges for SALs in HE in Ontario, investigated in this research study. Leadership skills are crucial for SALs to lead and manage change. Leadership theories of identity, sensemaking, and shared leadership along with OCM processes, may prove vital for SALs to transit their HEIs into the new era.

Inductive and deductive coding and categories concerning Institutional Leadership led to the following themes for interpretation in this chapter:

- SALs experience almost constant change.
- SALs are leading amidst complexity turbulence and ambiguity.
- SALs lead with strong sense of serving others.
- SALs are in communication with other fellow colleagues in Ontario.
- SALs foster shared leadership practices.

### 5.3.3. Data, Gaps in Data and Measurement

A major challenge identified during the research study was the issue of missing data, gaps in data and measurement techniques. This challenge was prioritised as the number one challenge for the participants of this study. Topics that arose during the interviews were: data infrastructure and alternative sources of data; research infrastructure base; informed public policy through research; and the assessment of SMAs for the funding system reforms. Some of the comments transcribed from the participants interviews include:

P4 stated the following addressing the challenge of data, gaps in data and measurement, **data infrastructure and alternative sources of data:**



*'... we put up a fight to have a Data Liberation and Stats Canada, we had cooperation, especially from an old friend of mine, who happened to be very senior in Statistics Canada.'*

*'I think that Statistics Canada, which was universally acclaimed in the 70s, 80s and 90s, for their quality of their work, has not maintained that very high level of government data, and is not internationally as highly respected, as it was.'*

P1 commented as follows:

*'I think, there is some shared data and again, some of these [challenges] are out of my area [of expertise]. So, I think more data [for research and development], any data and more business intelligence are always a good thing. And very costly to get the infrastructure in place. But with all the colleges we have, the CASS [College system shared data bank], which has a lot of data, and I know, this would be a better question, for it, for the individual director of institutional research... More collaborative [approaches] especially among colleges, as universities are more independent. [Universities] they are not as collaborative as colleges, as college system does share a lot of information, have collaborative approaches. And, as a taxpayer this is more efficient...'*

P9 commented as follows:

*'So, we are now more reliant obviously on the data we can gather and harvest, and increasingly we see the data has large gaps in it. So, there are lots of, you know, missing values so to speak. There are non sequiturs, there are areas where we just do not have the benefit of any previous experience with which to do progress. No projections. We did projections based on the physical world, in an online world. Everything has changed. But is also an environment at which time as we are trying to collect that data, the rules are changing constantly. So, there are a lot of complicating factors, one of which was the funding model changed in the*

*middle of all these? Well not in the middle, at the beginning. We went from, here is some money, go, go, you know, go make it work. And now, we will give you money, but we are going to ask you, what you did, and how you did it.'*

Furthermore, P9 commented as follows:

*'...I think, we went from a long form census data model to a short form census data model. And so, we lost a lot of very meaningful data in that transition, which is not with consensus. Yeah. So, that information is no longer harvested or collected. So, a lot of the projections, the economic viability, you know, the immigration data, housing data, all sort of things are no longer available to the same extent they were before. And so, trying to create knowledge and wisdom as a result of what a lot of data scientists now consider an incomplete set of data is tough. And then there is also the time lag, so the census is only done every two to three years. But the data once it hits the public domain, that data is already two years old. Yeah. So, the timelessness of data is a huge factor, before you even start to address the gaps that may be there in the data.'*

According to P2:

*'Real data is there. It is available. But your question around ready, readily available? That probably is the question. What happens is, we have a tonne of data that we work with, through our institution research through our tools, whether it be our academic management system, or our in my words sale force, or there is lots of tools that we use to collect data. But the problem is that is not always necessarily the exact data that you need, you need that data to tilt a bit, or may do some manual work (to adjust it). It is not like you can pull an automatic report that I know of mind, things have changed. The institutions are well known for, over data collecting, I think, in many cases, whether it be through surveys, or information, or record keeping systems and things along that nature. But I do not know if*

*the data is readily available in a way, and that it needs to be presented to (the) policymakers.'*

P6 commented as follows:

*'The data is first, an issue that is federal [government] and Statistics Canada is dealing with it. So, we have nothing to do with it. I mean there is nothing we can basically do to sort it out. Well, we do not have a data centre [in our institution], and we sort of lobbied, and we had one established but affiliated with [University].'*

On the **research infrastructure base** topic, P8 commented as follows:

*'This [public] policy [reform] has not been informed by research evidence. It was not designed, I think, for the most part by people with certain kind of expertise, and I believe that the ministry does not have some very good servants and folks working a lot, I believe, was decided or really some key features or basic elements were decided, at the political level. And the notion of evidence in their valuation, top of my mind, were not researched, as a whole bunch of other, politically oriented goals. And so, we are sitting here to navigate. A world that is imposed a system.'*

And concerning the issue of **informed public policy through research**, P4 shared the following:

*'The purpose of data for government is for policy analysis, and policy analysis is highly dependent on data that are reliable, accessible, and ready. Broadly accessible. So, I think, that is an area where we have fallen short, more recently. And we can see in some of the policy decisions that are made... we need to have to "ground" our analysis with cold hard facts.'* P3 had this to say, concerning the **SMA assessment for the funding system reforms**:

*'... it is the chicken and the egg, right? Because you need the data to help you for the funding. But you need the funding to help you get the data and*

*then so forth... so, there's a constant struggle of trying to find also where to best focus any funding you do get forward to, right?'*

P9 added:

*'And we are going to require some metrics. Right? So it is, you know, I hate to say, it is pay for performance model, but it seems like that at times. So, the better you do, the better, you know, the larger your allocation, et cetera, et cetera. And I am not saying there is anything wrong with it, I think, you know, an outcome-based model is, probably be needed for a while. But thankfully, the government decided, obviously, to put that on hold, given everything else that was going on [Covid pandemic], because I think, they knew we were all going to miss our targets.'*

P2 further commented as follows:

*'But the funding model in Ontario has significantly changed as well. So, it is a corridor-based funding model', '...it is a kind of based on individual enrolments measured through targets and actual deliverables as opposed to previously it was kind of like you got funded by a bum in a seat. So, if you fulfilled your target by way of numbers, you could receive your funding. But now funding is tied to outcomes, and measurements.'*

P7 also noted the following:

*'... these data are differently understood and differently interpreted, and so, if we could come to some common understanding on how we are going to measure some of what's being measured, that I think would be really, helpful.'*

Academic leaders have made the following statements concerning data, gaps in data and measurement:

- Large gaps in data reported.

- Missing data.
- Incomplete data.
- The federal government is responsible to provide census raw data.
- Canada not highly respected recently by international bodies (i.e., OECD) for delaying or not providing most needed data.
- Rules for the proper use of data sets are changing constantly.
- Scientifically incomplete data: voluntary, haphazard, self-interest, or tilted secondary samples are wrongly used as purposive, integral, reliable, accessible, timely ready samples.
- Research infrastructure base has been neglected and compromised.
- Public policy has not been informed by research findings and hard evidence.
- High census cost.
- The census voluntary short-form replaced the mandatory long-form in 2006.
- Shared data, business intelligence big data, and other “tilted” secondary data sources were used.
- HE-funding tied to outcomes-based model.
- SMAs are not realistically measurable, outcomes cannot be assessed properly.

In reference to the literature review in Chapter 3 (Jones et al., 2005; Kezar, 2001; Truex, 2000), using the theoretical framework of teleological theories of change, the following codes were generated (in alphabetical order):

- Distribution of duties.
- Goal direction.
- Goals are not met.

- Technology.
- Responsibility.
- Roles.
- Rules apply.
- Rules adherence.
- Task allocation.
- Task accomplishment.

The researcher is satisfied that the analytical process has resulted in meaningful themes that captured the essence of the participants' experiences of this study, as outlined below:

Academic leaders believe that (sequential order/overlapping issues):

- The research infrastructure base is incapacitated.
- Research infrastructure is therefore unable to inform public policy.
- SMAs cannot realistically be assessed.

#### 5.3.4. Summary of Findings Concerning Data, Gaps in Data and Measurement

Data, gaps in data and measurement are of outmost importance to SALs in HEIs in Ontario. In fact, eight of the nine participants confirmed this. Furthermore, the ninth participant, the 'caring chaplain', who voiced concerns about the political leadership in the province of Ontario, meant to assign responsibility to the political leaders and the legislators for both of the other two key challenges: data, gaps in data and measurement, and the labour collective agreements. The findings from all participants confirm that there is an overlap between data, gaps in data and measurement techniques and the outcome-based funding system

challenge, reflected by the literature review, the context theoretical references, and the participants who believe that the SMAs cannot be assessed, and they are not realistically achievable. The findings further support recent claims that HEIs academic leaders rely more on secondary sources of data, as primary data is either missing or incomplete.

There were 28 different codes on data, gaps in data and measurement; a redrawing of codes can be summarised with the above codes. Inductive and deductive processes in the analysis of data produced the following three themes:

Academic leaders believe that (sequential order/overlapping issues):

- Research infrastructure base is incapacitated.
- Unable therefore to inform public policy.
- SMAs cannot realistically be assessed.

These three themes will be discussed in Chapter 6.

### 5.3.5. Labour Collective Agreements

Labour collective agreements was confirmed as the second most important macro-external challenge for senior academic leaders in Ontario. During the interview, participants clearly referred to two types of labour bargaining agreements: labour collective agreement and labour differentiation agreement; horizontal and vertical categories of academic employees; under the corporate/hybrid HEI the labour issues are addressed as Human Resource (HR) issues; Precarity, tenure-track, permanent positions, Social & Citizens charters are all addressed as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) issues. The study examines all four topics. The following are some of the comments made by the participants in this study:

### Concerning labour bargaining agreements

*'We have two [labour bargaining] agreements [one collective agreement and one differentiation agreement] in our province [of Ontario], but we do not negotiate with our staff [directly]. It is done provincially. So, that is out of our control. So, that is just what it is. And we have a great relationship at our college [with our staff], that is for sure' (P1).*

P2 responded to a prompt question by the researcher 'So, labour issues maybe one of the challenges that you are facing in the new era...?' as follows:

*'I am currently doing an organisational review of my unit because I will be taking on more under my portfolio because of number one, the financial crisis. Number two, there is just seen been changes that were implemented that are in the works prior to Covid as well for reorganising things. So, part of all this, we have realised that there needs to be an organisational review that occurs because there's just the alignment needs to be evaluated.'*

The prompt question, 'The alignment you refer to, is it between the **labour differentiation agreements and the labour collective agreements?**', was responded by the 'navigator' participant, in clarification, as follows:

*'I think, it describes it. It will encompass everything, it will encompass job description, union positions, non-union positions, the business, the product, the market, the everything' (P2).*

**Concerning labour differentiation agreements**, the 'master tailor' participant commented:

*'That is a tricky one. Because I am involved into two levels personally, like, I know we have a union for our faculty...', 'By combing the two (levels), you would say from one side, the academics are well remunerated but from the other, we do have the 40% teaching, 40%*



*research and 20% administration..’, ‘so, if we look at our projects that we’ve worked on, and the amount of support we’re getting, 40/40/20 is no longer the rule anymore. But it should be open for review. Right? And I do not see that.’*

P4 commented as follows:

*“...universities do their hiring appointments. There are differences in the way that individually, you know, diversities give a voice to faculty on the faculty need to be very much a dominant force. In others it strikes me that the universities administration is preeminent and have a great deal of freedom to set (standards), and ‘...the universities are governed by provincial labour law.’*

Labour issues are classified by the researcher as Priority Code: 2 challenges of concern, for this participant. Labour collective agreements are well regulated by the Ontario Ombudsman as HE is the responsibility of the provincial government. Additionally, Canadian federal labour laws further protect the rights of employees, regulated by the Canada Ombudsman. HEIs have the freedom to set the standards and issue appointments to academics and administration staff. However, the reference made by this participant concerns the labour collective agreements, meaning with CAAT and OPS, the labour differentiation agreements are not bound by the same regulatory processes. In fact, the academic community sees labour differentiation agreements as structural reforms intended to bypass both the CAAT and OPS labour union collective agreements, and which the government of Ontario is intending to implement without consent of the academic community on these structural reforms. It is further the suspicion of the academic community that these reforms are intended to marginalise the labour unions, and that academics would have to negotiate personally and individually their contracts directly with the HEI they are applying.

In response to the researcher's prompt 'Do you think that labour differentiation agreements by the HEIs are meant to bypass the labour collective agreements signed by the labour unions and the government?', P5 commented as follows:

*'It is except, those labour union agreements, sometimes they define what the percentage is. Right? And so, if you are going to change it, you would have to negotiate. But by and large, I do not think they will be interested. See, if the government will really support [university name] because what happens if they try to change the faculty collective agreement, CAAT will go up in arms, then it will see. Everyone will see this, as you know, everybody will try the same technique except most universities will try to keep a balanced budget or closed to a balanced budget.'*

The above participant explained that every change made to the labour differentiation agreements with HEIs will have to be agreed in advance with the unions. Therefore, the institution-specific mandate, or any changes to it, will have to be agreed both with the government and the labour unions.

P8's comments were:

*'Probably 12 years ago or so, this idea for a teaching stream that can achieve permanence was introduced, and they are covered by the same collective agreements, in terms of their member of faculty association, just as tenure stream faculty.'*

Here the 'explorer' participant has explained that Universities have maintained a strong full-time tenure stream professoriate. However, the number of full-time faculty with permanent appointments and tenure-track positions have grown for the past 12 years or so, though not as rapidly grown as the number of students.

### **On vertical and horizontal and other employment positions, P8**

commented as follows:

*'Now, differentiation among faculty and then how does that get reflected in the collective agreements that cover these different types of faculties, I can only speak for our institution. There are covered by the same collective agreements in terms of their members of the Faculty Association [university union body], just as the tenure stream faculty, they enjoy the same benefits. The thresholds for financial consideration leading to dismissal is a bit lower for the teaching stream. So, there is a bit of differentiation. Then, when they have permanents, well, it brings in the [issue] of equity. Contraction limited appointments in our institution that are considered full faculty, full-time faculty, and therefore obviously they do not have permanent status or tenure...'*

Here, the participant indicated that there were other categories of academic personnel created. However, while Canadian universities have protected the full-time professoriate, they have increasingly turned to limited appointments without permanent status or tenure in order to increase institutional efficiencies. The participant also stresses the issue of equity of these limited non-permanent or tenure appointments as are not described by any specific labour agreements.

### **On CSR issues**

P9 commented:

*'One is the collective agreement, which outlines all the things that treats the body, couched within that, is the concept of academic freedom. And so, the idea that faculty are free to choose the approach, they are free to pursue their own research, they are free to chart their path in terms of their own professional development conferences. On the other hand, the collective agreements, puts restrictions on us in terms of faculty workloads. So, it's a tough one to navigate.'*

In this passage, the participant describes how labour collective agreements may have restricted academic freedoms as lack of control over academic decisions or inability to criticise poor management decisions, intellectual property protection, course material and curricula development, selection of textbooks, e-learning, and inability for student learning and success. Academic freedoms may be a constant source of conflict within HEIs along with Citizens and Social Charters issues. P6 noted the following:

*'There has been over the last two years a big tendency towards more of a system evaluating research, or moving users into different categories, towards research intensive versus teaching intensive places. But nothing has moved on. These were discussions that never led anywhere. I think, especially now in the last year because of Covid, things have been stagnant...'*

Here P6 mentioned the trend towards research versus teaching based appointments, which creates new categories of academic positions was seen in the last two years; however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, everything has been put on hold.

Most of the participants referred to the emergence of new categories of academic workers within the academic departments.

P4 commented as below:

*'But what has been so striking is the use of contract workers whose titles are ambiguous; they'll have doctorates, but they will not have status. Whereas on the other hand, those who are in the system have security that they could only dream about, nowadays. And in the election case, they cannot do anything about full-time tenured faculty, according to the newspaper this morning, because of severance and legal issues that have been more costly, we don't have enough money to pay severance. So,*

*why would you hire someone like that just keep of diminishing that pool over time and use contract workers as in many Canadian universities. That is now the 50% level in terms of actual context for students change and it's not a positive change. And that affect quality, if you like, of the universities.'*

In the passage above, the 'competitive coach' describes the inequality between well titled academics with doctorates, whose employment-security and salary conditions are compromised, while other privileged tenure track academics are treated exceptionally. The differentiation of academic personnel is striking within the HE system, and the level of permanent tenure track professoriate is at a level of about 50% within HEIs, therefore affecting the quality of the universities. This statement reinforces the issue of equity as a challenge of academic personnel in HEIs in Ontario, as referred to by many of the participants, as these limited appointments are not tenured, and are not included in any labour agreements. The classification for this participant's response is considered priority code: 2, on labour collective agreements.

Academic leaders have commented with over thirty different codes. The researcher followed cultural and subcultural theories (Schein, 2010, 2015) and sensemaking theories (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1979) to summarise the expressed interests of academic leaders, concerning labour and human resource issues, as follows:

- Personal growth
- Professional development
- Acquiring new skills
- Getting the right training
- Power to make decisions.
- Being able to perform their duties.
- Human interaction

- Equity
- Inclusion
- Diversity
- Job security
- Stability
- Health and safety
- Fair remuneration
- Specific timetable
- Benefit rights
- Contractual rights
- Labour union membership
- Democratic rights
- Human rights

The researcher cross-referenced the above codes with the literature review topics of investigation, using inductive and deductive processes. The researcher is satisfied that the analytical process has resulted in meaningful themes that captured the essence of the participants' experiences of labour challenges. The topics for investigation are outlined below. Academic leaders have experienced the following major concerns:

- Labour bargaining (collective and differentiation agreements).
- Different categories of employees and precarity.
- HR and CSR policies.

### 5.3.6. Summary of Findings Concerning of Labour Collective and Differentiation Agreements

The following section presents the findings concerning the labour collective and differentiation agreements challenges, different categories of employees and precarity, and Citizen and Social Charters issues addressed as human resource and corporate social responsibility challenges.

All participants have confirmed that there are two collective agreements in HE in Ontario. One collective agreement includes labour issues, code of conduct, status (full or part-time, sessional, partial load), pay scale (level of education, experience, and other credentials), category (contract or permanent position), etc. The other collective agreement is an institutional-specific mandate collective agreement (also referred to as labour differentiation agreement), according to the institution's mandate and specialisation (i.e., teaching and/or research). Concerning the latter agreement, disputes have arisen as to the differentiation of the normal duties of academics (40% teaching, 40% research and 20% administration).

The number of full-time faculty with permanent appointments has grown since 2000, though not as rapidly as the number of students. Canadian faculty have relatively high levels of job satisfaction; they are well remunerated and quite productive. However, it is generally assumed that while Canadian universities have protected the full-time professoriate, they increasingly turned to the employment of part-time university teachers in order to increase institutional efficiencies.

There are references made by six participants of this study (P3, P4, P5 P6, P7, and P8) for the emergence of new categories of academic workers within the academic departments. Academic work in Canada has

become increasingly fragmented along both the horizontal and vertical dimensions. The issue of precarity was addressed by all participants.

Evidence from three participants (P7, P8, and P9) showed that labour collective agreements may have restricted academic freedoms such as lack of control over academic decisions, or inability to criticise poor management decisions, intellectual property protection, course material and curricula development, selection of textbooks, e-learning, and inability for student learning and success. Academic freedoms may be a constant source of conflict within HEIs along with Citizens and Social Charters issues.

On the category of labour challenges, the topics for interpretation are outlined below:

- Labour bargaining (collective and differentiation agreements)
- Different categories of employees and precarity
- HR and CSR policies

#### 5.4.1. Other Meso- and Micro-Internal Challenges

In reference to life-cycle organisational change theories, the third phase in the cycle is the exploration and assessment of the recommendations made by HEIs' senior academic leaders, and/or the implementation processes initiated by them using their interpretive powers. The researcher assigned two sub-categories to the internal factors: meso-internal issues across HE in general, which are the funding model proposed by the government of Ontario and the SMAs (or the metrics) used for the funding model; and micro-internal challenges within the faculties and the departments of HEIs and other issues. In exploring



meso- and micro-internal issues, a selective coding process was chosen by the researcher.

The final research objective of this study is to make recommendations to other academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario of how to respond to both external & internal drivers of organisational change management.

And the interview question 4 was:

**In your opinion, how can organisational change management enhance operational performance in the faculties and the departments of HEIs?**

The researcher chose selective coding to explore meso- and micro-internal issues in HEI's departments and faculties. Selective coding is meant to offer meaning out of the interviews, and describe other internal issues faced by academic leaders in HEIs. This further explorative study is beyond the three key macro-external challenges investigated in depth in the main study. The researcher intended to show that most of these meso- and micro-internal issues are connected to the main three key macro-external challenges. The following topics were explored:

**Covid-19:** The following comment was observed by a participant:

*'I also think that the pandemic, however devastating in a lot of geographies, it's providing us with some incentives to try and redesign the system, which I don't think we would have got there for another 10 or 15 years.'* (P9)

**Mental health issues:** The following is an observation made by a participant:

*'Another challenge would be the mental health challenge. For most students there is a kind of crisis on campus for universities across the province and across Canada and in the US, we are seeing the mental health affect. We are receiving young people who will have mental health challenges in their lives while they are with us. Just because typically mental health or mental illness emerges in late teens early 20s, HE years, but we do not have funding.'* (P7)

**Funding System Reforms and the SMAs (metrics):** The following comment echoed from a participant in this study:

*'Since Ontario, and more generally in many parts of North America, are talking about emphasis on outcomes, that can be seen in one way as outcomes affecting kids [students] levels in higher education. You are going to have, to really have, very convincing and rigorously developed data sets, because these things [SMAs] are extraordinarily difficult to measure. And when I saw it, I thought this is truly interesting, because if you're going to do it in this way [metrics], how the outcomes are to have a value inherent in them, and precisely how are you going to have your own metrics, the outcome-based metrics assessed, if you are not having reliable data [sets], so, it is a macro- issue that it seems to be one of the greatest challenges.'* (P4)

**Quality Assurance, Accessibility, Accreditation and HEIs (ranking):**

The following statement was selected:

*'So, there is certainly an informal legal accreditation [process], an audit process, and every five years the institution [is audited] by SAR [Standard Auditing Request Committee in Ontario] observed by the government of Canada.'* The participant responded to a prompt question by the researcher concerning an official federal or provincial recognition body as the National Academic Recognition Information Centre of the UK (UK NARIC). *'No, we do not have that. In our case, we have built on a very*

*good reputation. That does not happen elsewhere, and we've got a lot more flexibility and we have shown a lot more flexibility. So, I think, the whole system has been a great success.'* (P4)

### **HEI Regional Development, Indigenous communities, and Linguistic Diversity**

The following participant commented as follows:

*'So many of the decisions on universities have been based on political revenue and educational considerations. And the latest one is the French language will then only have, what, 38 applications that was going to be located on the Toronto waterfront. We have bilingual universities, and the French language colleges, nearby in Toronto. This was a political thing... So, I think we do have a challenge and as I mentioned at the beginning, the demographics are not on the side of universities. There will be more local institutions serving local needs... And there are Law schools in the North [Ontario Regional Development policy], and those were set up for a particular purpose to keep the local people enter those fields stay in the north and early Indigenous communities. We will see if that works. One hopes it does.* (P4)

### **Immigration and Citizenship provisions:**

The Immigration and Citizenship policy by the province of Ontario and generally by the government of Canada was praised by all the participants in this study, as more students enhance the cultural diversity in Canada.

One of the participants commented are as follows.

*'Obviously, an educational institution is to produce valuable members to the community to be able to contribute to the economy, in many ways, financially, professionally and so forth, where many individuals, obviously, mostly international have other motives. Ways of getting permanent*

*residency into the country, and so forth. So, if that is their motive, sometimes that could affect the quality coming out of an institution. And it gives a blemish for not just to a certain group of students, but to all students one way or another. Right? And then that could have a trickle effect to any future funding opportunities in the sense that of donations, or grants, alumni support and all these.'* (P3)

**Appropriate Regulation:** There were conflicting views, interests, and perspectives among the participants concerning the level of regulation within the HE sector in Ontario. The following comment provides an overall picture on the subject:

*'Labour Laws in Ontario is the first level and then we got the collective agreements at the second level. And then we got the Office for Human Rights, and I would not say we need anything further. I think, we are appropriately regulated.'* (P8)

**Curricular Development, ICT, Research, and/or Teaching Specific Mandate:**

The following observation was made by a participant:

*'I see higher education evolving, becoming a more hybrid model, a more common, more accommodating [sector], you could have a faculty member in one town, some students are in class, and some students are remote, but still getting the same experience. But also, we need to adjust. That is ironic, because in a way, we are helping generate our own employees, while faculty and staff would also mean that the curriculum would need to start evolving to be teaching people to function in that hybrid mode...So, if the world is looking for that hybrid type of approach, higher education institutions are the ones that must do it and have to live by it. We do not want to be in this way where we are producing all these people that could*

*work from anywhere, yet we are all stuck on campus. Or you must make the change first. So, we can start changing the others for once.'* (P3)

### **HEI Sustainability and Ontario HE Sector Viability:**

The following selected participant's comments were explored:

*'[Sustainability] I guess, it will depend on how soon we run out of money at the government level. I think, we approached the idea of private colleges about a year and a half ago. We went through the process of looking at public-private partnerships. So, aligning ourselves or creating partnerships with private colleges, and in [HE] system and offering curriculum for some of the schools in our colleges, it made sense. We were looking at it as a college approach, as opposes to a school wide approach for my school [department]. It did not particularly make sense, from a finance point of view, the overhead of managing and ensuring quality, etc, was an increased overhead that we did not feel was going to be too manageable in the short-term. So, we opted out, not to do that. I think it will come back [as a proposition]. So, the quarte door system [25% Grants/HEIs funding], may serve the purpose for the next few years. I think, I am hoping, I am looking forward to it, doing some good in terms of the accountability and the rationalisation of services and creating more outcome-based activities.'* (P9)

#### **5.4.2. The Future of HE in Ontario**

The researcher intended to explore the opinions, perceptions, and perspectives of academic leaders in HE in Ontario with interview question 5:

**How do you envisage the future of HEIs in Ontario in five years' time?**

This question was supposed to be asked under a predictable environment, and within the reasonable and verifiable time span of five years, reflecting on the auditing forecasts and projections reports. The Covid-19 pandemic conditions, however, influenced the participants' perceptions and perspectives. Within this sub-section, the researcher has tried to capture the participants' fears and insecurities, as well as the need for change, innovation, and opportunities in the HE-sector.

P5 commented as follows:

*'Well, the way the system is set up in Ontario, the private universities have tried to make a goal of Ontario, but they cannot do it. They cannot generate the money. And they are just without government funding. They all left. The system in Ontario is going to be public for the foreseeable future. And I do not think that coming out from the pandemic things may be different. It all depends on the economy, and the immigration which is the real driver of university enrolment these days. So, I think, right now there is not much changing, more emphasis on indicators and data collection, some nudging by the public policy, by putting a bit of money in certain directions. But the real challenge is going to be at what point do they break away from this quarter system [25% government Grants] again, because I think, you can break away in a couple of different ways. You could [the government] modify it by just steering the system where you want it, by putting money in certain directions. Or you could do it in a global sense, where you affected the whole institution. But I think, the next five years are not very exciting. And it will be a period of stability. But whether it is or not, stability and innovation are in conflict. The university system has been healthiest when it is innovating. And the quarter [funding] system is not a great thing for innovation. It is treading water.'*

P4 has commented as follows:

*'There will be some attempt at rationalisation by cause trading graduate studies, with more universities that have faculties capable. That is not to say you would not have graduate programmes. But I think that since funding for graduate studies is expensive, we will see a redemption of that...health, which is provincial responsibility, is clearly going to eat up more of the provincial budget. So, you will see it at universities, is probably a shift towards health focus. Even universities without a medical school, like Waterloo Health Science studies become significant. And STEM [Health Sciences] fields will be more generously funded. And as far as foreign students go, universities depend on them. But I think there could be on the supply side, diminishing numbers from Asia particularly. And there may be a reaction that, my kids are turned down for the city programme, giving it up for somebody from wherever. This thing happens elsewhere, and it happens in Australia that is so much like us in so many ways. I think [privatisation] was accepted in the sense that if it remains [public], the foreign student [trend] remains an immigration sign that there is privatisation that occurs there, and closer relationship with the private sector. But in some cases, it will be NGOs and government rather than the private sector, with more experiential education. But I do not think and it's hard for anyone to start a private university.'*

P6 added:

*'So, there is commitment by the government for the stewardship of the system, there is no question about that. And I do not see that [the system] may change at all. The only thing is whether the public institutions will remain strong, as we move forwards. But there is not going to be any sort of space for private institutions to move here, as it happened in the US.'*

P1 participant commented as follows:

*'Hopefully, all institutions will be less and less dependent on [public] funding. And some of the institutions will be impacted more than others. I think, we need to be accountable to tax-payers, and at the same time, it is public policy to educate people. So, we want to make sure we do not privatise because it is public policy, having a well-educated society is important to the province. So, it needs to be affordable for all people in Ontario. So, however they make it all work, a lot of times it looks like a funding thing as they just shuffle money around. It is going to be an interesting five years.'*

P2 commented as follows:

*'There is too much at stake for the government to completely privatise the health care or the education in our country, and I think it would be a massive leap. ...the very first policy changes happen so slowly in our institution, that it is also driven by changes in government that tend to be slow. So, in five years, I cannot imagine that our institution will be 100% privatised, but I could foresee a hybrid model. But in my world, is about relationship building, strategic initiatives, business development, and working with industry and employers. So, what I am going to see, and I hope for the next five years is a balance between traditional world of academics being like in my world previously, it was like 95% focus on academics and maybe if I was lucky 5% alternative revenue generation. But because of sustainability, given our current times, is not going to allow us to be 95% focused on academics.'*

P3 shared the following:

*'So, where I see higher education evolving in five years, becoming a more hybrid model, a more common, a more accommodating [sector]. I have*



*looked at options for privatised institutions to deliver some of their curriculum. I do not have any metrics to see how successful that is or not. But I know, and we pride ourselves on quality and there isn't enough data there to show what impact they will have, positively or negatively [affecting the institution], by going that route. And some of that is due to lack of funding of various formats.'*

P7 commented as follows:

*'I think that some of the smaller institutions will be smaller than they are right now, they will have shrunk. I think they will be in a kind of financial stewardship situation with the province, so, what we are seeing with Laurentian we are going to see of these other institutions as well. Mostly, the remotely based universities... the larger institutions will become more powerful than they are right now. And so, you will get a kind of clearing of the sector in a way. So, the sector is kind of drawn into the centre, and I think, the sector is going to start to differentiate almost like they want it in strategic mandate, and you will get these smaller regional focused institutions and then [turn them into] large, more research-intensive institutions.'*

P8 expressed these thoughts:

*'I am worried. We will not see – I should not say it, certainly if this government is elected again – more funding coming. We will see a continued reliance on non-provincial sources of funding that will mean is either the sector must engage in a host of practices and behaviours that will affect students' experiences.'*

And P9 had these comments:

*'The way we have had to undergo some significant transformational change, and they are going to be faced with. They cannot go on [the government] doing traditional things like increasing taxes and levies and*

*these sorts of things. People will be going to continue to demand more for their dollar and more transparency, and they want to know where the money is going, why it is being spent in certain sectors. And why are doing that? What are the outcomes we are expecting as a result of that investment?'*

## 5.5. Summary of all Findings

This chapter presented participants' responses to the interview questions of this research study. The participants' responses were analysed after thorough examination of all challenges reported in the HE-sector in Ontario. Public policy reforms in HE are political changes and have influenced academic leaders' ability to lead and manage change. The challenges that the academic leaders are faced with were classified as macro-external and both meso- and micro internal. The key three challenges investigated in depth in this study were macro-external challenges more specifically: 1. Data, gaps in data, and measurement techniques, 2. Labour Collective Agreements, and 3. Political and Institutional leadership. Other meso- and micro- internal challenges were explored by the researcher, as most (all except Covid-19) seemed to feed back to these main key macro-external challenges.

Organisational management revealed that the participants are experiencing significant organisational change amidst public policy reforms and transformation changes. Considering the internal organisational perspective (meso-internal challenges), academic leaders have a clear New Public Management (NPM) mandate and are also vested with the interpretive powers to act on specific KPIs; they have been asked to sign the SMAs for and on behalf of their HEIs. The NPM mandate is a mirror image of the KPIs, and the two processes are well aligned and work harmoniously for the management of HEIs. The SMAs, however, have been hastily prepared by the government. As such they

are vaguely defined, untargeted, or generally applicable to all HEIs, and are confusing to academic leaders, who face “ambiguity and complexity” in HEIs in Ontario. That shows that however the government of Ontario wants to steer the HE-sector from a distance, the leadership gap should be filled by academic leadership.

Furthermore, the inability of the governments of Ontario and Canada to provide integral, purposive, reliable, accessible, and timely ready data has complicated matters further. As there are no data, or there are considerable gaps in the data observed, no research can inform the legislators about the appropriateness of public policy reforms in HE. Therefore, SALs sense that political leaders are more interested in what the HE sector should achieve, rather than promoting mindful set of criteria, informed by research on public policy reform, with well-targeted and measurable SMAs to be applied in HEIs in Ontario.

Moreover, Labour Collective Agreements are another source of conflict between the government of Ontario and the academic community. Generally, the government of Canada regulates labour agreements. However, the HE sector is the responsibility of the government of Ontario to regulate, but with agreement with the federal government. Attempts by the government of Ontario to bypass general federal regulation on labour issues may spark a constitutional debate and propel federal institutions and the Supreme Court of Canada to legislate further.

As the above-mentioned macro-external issues remain unresolved by both the government of Ontario and the government of Canada, public policy reforms are pursued in HE in Ontario with the directives issued by the MCU, for academic leaders to implement an ill-fated public policy reform. The attempts of the MCU, to pass on the blame to institutional leaders, accusing them of lack of institutional leadership, has been observed. The ball throwing between the MCU and the academic leaders on these macro-external challenges has received the attention of

legislators and political leaders both in the provincial and the federal level. As uncertainty can damage the HE-sector, clear political leadership is now required, both provincially and federally.

As the academic leaders and participants of this research study turned their perspective inwards (meso- and micro-internal challenges), they described a multitude of changes in the HE landscapes that are influencing their roles both as academics and as administrative managers. These influences included: the increase in online delivery of courses, demographic shifts with diminishing domestic student numbers, more liberal immigration rules contributing to an immense increase of international student numbers, demand for flexible delivery of courses and programmes, curricular development, training, examination processes to bridge the gap for labour mismatches or labour skills development, quality assurance, sustainability, viability, increasing competition by private institutions, changes in the MCU funding processes, pressures to generate revenues, and other issues.

All above-mentioned challenges will be interpreted in Chapter 6, Discussion, to provide answers to the research questions. The research responses are examined within the context and literature review theoretical perspectives and conceptual framework.

## 5.6. Synopsis of All Findings

The question-by-question analysis of participants' responses to the interview questions and the grouping into themes as described in sections 5.1. to 5.4., and the (inductive) open coding of responses to the questions were analysed from each code from the transcript according to organisational change theories as leadership evolutionary theories, identity and sensemaking social-cognition theories, teleological theories, and cultural and sub-cultural theories. The alternative approach (deductive) to the analysis of data was tested against the interview data of

the theoretical perspectives included in Chapter 3. Reduction of the codes to categories and finally to themes led to the thematic analysis of the study.

Three themes were presented for each and every one of the three key challenges and are summarised below:

- Academic leaders experience almost constant change.
- Academic leaders are leading amidst complexity and ambiguity.
- Academic leaders lead with strong sense of serving others.
- Research infrastructure base is incapacitated.
- Research infrastructure is unable therefore to inform public policy.
- SMAs cannot realistically be assessed.
- Labour bargaining (collective and differentiation agreements).
- Different categories of employees and precarity.
- HR and CSR policies.

These nine themes are interpreted in Chapter 6, Discussion, to provide credible answers to the Research Questions, in the context of the theoretical framework and conceptual model presented in Chapter 3, main literature review.

## Chapter 6 – Discussion

### 6.0. Discussion

The discussions of this study's findings connect the nine themes presented in Chapter 5, Findings, to the following organisational change theories: evolutionary leadership theories, teleological theories, social-cognition theories of identity and sensemaking, and cultural and sub-culture theories in an explanation and interpretation of these findings. The chapter begins with an opening summary of the background and the purpose of the study, research questions, and methodology in section 6.1.

Next, section 6.2 presents a detailed plan for discussing the nine themes in the context of organisational change theories. The plan engulfs some of the main categories of theories of change such as: evolutionary and leadership theories (Kezar, 2001; Kotter, 2014), teleological (Carnall & Carr, 1995, 1996), dialectical or political theories (Morgan, 2011), social cognition, identity and sensemaking theories, and cultural and subcultural theories (Schein, 2010). These theories were established as a key theoretical framework, and were further extended, added, or completed, and in any event cited by other scholars more recently. The Four Frame Model (Bolman & Gallos, 2011), is the conceptual model used in this study, of “reframing academic leadership challenges into four aspects of organisational life: building institutional clarity, managing difference, fostering productive working relationships, and enacting a powerful vision” (p.10).

This detailed plan expands in Section 6.3., to the preliminary conceptual framework (referred to in Chapter 2) and is used to discuss organisational change management in HE in Ontario. More specifically, this study uses the Bolman and Deal's (2017) **Four Frame Model** to interpret, in section 6.4., the main three challenges faced by the academic leaders,

specifically: 1. Political, 2. Symbolic, 3. Structural, and 4. Human Resource Frames. The Four Frame Model sheds light on different aspects of organisational change, reframing of organisations, and using organisational metaphors and leadership (Morgan, 2011). Furthermore, the model illustrates how assumptions from evolutionary, teleological, political, social cognition, and cultural models can be combined to investigate and understand change.

Throughout the chapter, comparisons are made to the literature.

## 6.1. The Study's Summary, Background, and Methodology

The landscape of HE in Ontario is changing as described in chapters 2 and 3. The government fiscal environment is changing. There are fiscal pressures on the federal state (of Canada) and therefore on the provinces (primarily in Ontario), brought upon by international economic trends, aging demographics, and labour-market demand changes. Global influences include “technological innovation, globalisation, mass communication, mass culture, and rising consumer expectations” (Mulford, 2008, pp. 4-5). Reforms are therefore deemed necessary by the government and have a greater effect on social and economic development in Ontario. There are provincial public policy reforms in Ontario, propelling OCM processes in HEIs.

Following the MCU of Ontario Differentiation Policy Framework and the renegotiation of SMAs signed with HEIs (OPSEU, 2016), the “quarter budget” funding model decisions are yet to be implemented by postsecondary institutions. The Covid-19 pandemic has delayed the implementation of these funding system reforms by at least three years. They are currently expected to be applied in Spring, 2023. However, fiscal restraint policies threaten to undermine the HEIs key role in addressing

Ontario's educational attainments aligned with labour market demands that can address critical skills mismatches and labour shortages.

OCM processes, lack of political and institutional leadership, revenue challenges, performativity pressures, data and gaps in data, research infrastructure issues, labour agreement differentiation, and overlapping mandates are examples of the experiences of academic leaders in HE. However, three major challenges and prerequisites for the changes in the public funding model on HE system in Ontario appears to trouble academic leaders: leadership both political and institutional, data and measurement, and labour agreements.

**Political leadership and institutional leadership** are at once the bigger challenges and greatest potential influences of HEI funding change. From the government's point of view, the decision to change the funding model, and their political leadership and willingness to execute it, are required to transform the way higher education is funded and how its outcome-based benchmarks are evaluated. Coming to an agreement with HEIs will be based on evidence, facts, and a solution that can be sold both politically and in the academic world. The government should consider both taxpayer and student perspectives when presenting a model (Pepin, 2015). In Ontario, over the last few decades, several task forces and system reviews proposed modification to the design (distribution by type of institution, location, and relationship amongst institutions) of its HE system by increasing institutional leadership and diversity. These modifications (that resulted in few policy changes) were suggested to increase quality (instruction and research) and accessibility in a cost-effective manner, and to meet the demands of an emerging global knowledge society (Piche & Glen, 2016).

While the importance of HE as a sector of public policy is increasing, Canada's national capacity to provide policymakers with data, evidence,



and policy research necessary for the development of informed public policy is in rapid decline (Jones, 2013, p. 2). While Canada has never had a particularly strong infrastructure for HE policy research, a few important components of this infrastructure have been either eliminated or effectively incapacitated. Canada's ability to develop informed public policy for the HE sector has been severely diminished by gradual erosion of this policy research infrastructure. This infrastructure includes the collection of reliable, timely data on the sector, the capacity to analyse this data and monitor the sector, the ability to conduct research on key policy issues, the capacity to analyse policy options, and the capacity to inform those who are responsible for public policy on the "state" of the system, policy issues and challenges, and various policy options and alternatives (Jones, 2013, pp. 1-18).

Another macro-external challenge is labour collective agreements with the faculty. These will be an important consideration to successfully advance outcome-based budgeting through differentiated mandates. In general, faculty tend to spend 40% on research, 40% on teaching, and 20% on administrative and other duties. To reach new outcomes defined through differentiated mandates, time spent on these activities may have to be reallocated (Pepin, 2015).

The aim of the current study is to explore senior academic leaders' perceptions of the challenges they encounter, while enacting their academic and administrative roles at HEIs in Ontario. The main research question of the topic is: What is the academic leaders' perception concerning the main three requirements and prerequisites of public policy reform, namely: political and institutional leadership, data, gaps in data and measurement, and labour differentiation agreements?

This is an interpretivist research study, employing a qualitative approach, borrowing extensively from a case study design. Semi-structured,

purposive interviews were conducted with nine senior academic leaders of HEIs in Ontario, and their transcripts were manually analysed and interpreted using a thematic analysis. Evidence-based reliable secondary data were also gathered for triangulation purposes, including the OPSEU report (2016), Jean-Luc Pepin report (2015), Canadian Journal on HE (2016), and other reliable secondary sources.

Inductive and deductive analyses of this study's data resulted in the themes presented in Chapter 5. Nine themes, three for each of the three challenges, are interpreted and discussed in the following sections. The analysis led to the interpretation of these three themes from the perspective of Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Model (1991), complemented by Bolman and Deal's (2017) pluralist reframing leadership model, and the great contribution of James Scouller (2011) and his book on *"The Three Levels of Leadership: How to Develop Your Leadership Presence, Know-how and Skill"*.

Recommendations are expected to be made to other SALs of HEIs who experienced similar challenges into their HEIs with the participants of this study. Revisiting the metaphorical roles introduced in Chapter 5, the Four Frame Model may be attributing a leadership frame to each of the three themes.

## 6.2. The Conceptual Framework of Interpretation

The data analysis produced nine themes: three can be characterised as expressions of leadership challenges associated with organisational change theories of identity and sensemaking:

- Identity
  - SALs lead with strong sense of serving others.
- Leadership challenges

- SALs experience constant change.
- SALs are leading amidst complexity and ambiguity.
- Shared leadership
  - SALs are in communication with other fellow colleagues in Ontario.
  - SALs practice shared leadership.

The identity question answers the question “Who are we?” and the two leadership challenges answer the question “How do we lead and manage change?” The theoretical perspectives of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashford & Mael, 1989) led to the development of the proposed conceptual model in Figure 6.1., which is explored in the following sections.

Furthermore, academic leaders are faced with social structural challenges associated with organisational change teleological theories:

- Teleological theories
  - Research infrastructure base is incapacitated.
  - Research infrastructure is unable therefore to inform public policy.
  - SMAs cannot realistically be assessed.

Moreover, academic leaders are experiencing labour challenges associated with sensemaking social-cognition theories, cultural and sub-cultural theories.

- Sensemaking, cultural and sub-cultural theories
  - Labour bargaining (collective and differentiation agreements).
  - Different categories of employees and precarity.

- Human Resource along with Corporate Social Responsibility issues.

Bolman and Deal's (2017) conceptual model, states that "reframing" of leadership challenges can be seen through the lenses of four commonly encountered elements of organisational life. The study findings are represented in the Four Frame Model as follows:

**Finding #1:** Sensemaking is a useful theoretical perspective through which to analyse leadership experiences in the context of identity and leadership challenges.

Shared leadership may be the way forward for SALs to resolve many of the challenges present in HE in Ontario. Sensemaking and shared identity leadership initiatives are particularly useful to retain a sense of common purpose and shared responsibility, building upon shared principles and values to guide decision making.

**Finding #2:** The data can be thematically presented to conclude that academic leaders lead with strong sense of serving others.

**Finding #3:** Leadership challenges can be represented by the following themes:

- SALs are experiencing almost constant change.
- SALs are leading with strong sense of serving others.
- SALs are leading amidst complexity, turbulence, and ambiguity.
- SALs are in communication with other colleagues in Ontario.
- SALs are practising shared leadership processes.

**Finding #4:** Social structural challenges are associated with teleological theories, and can be represented by with the following themes:

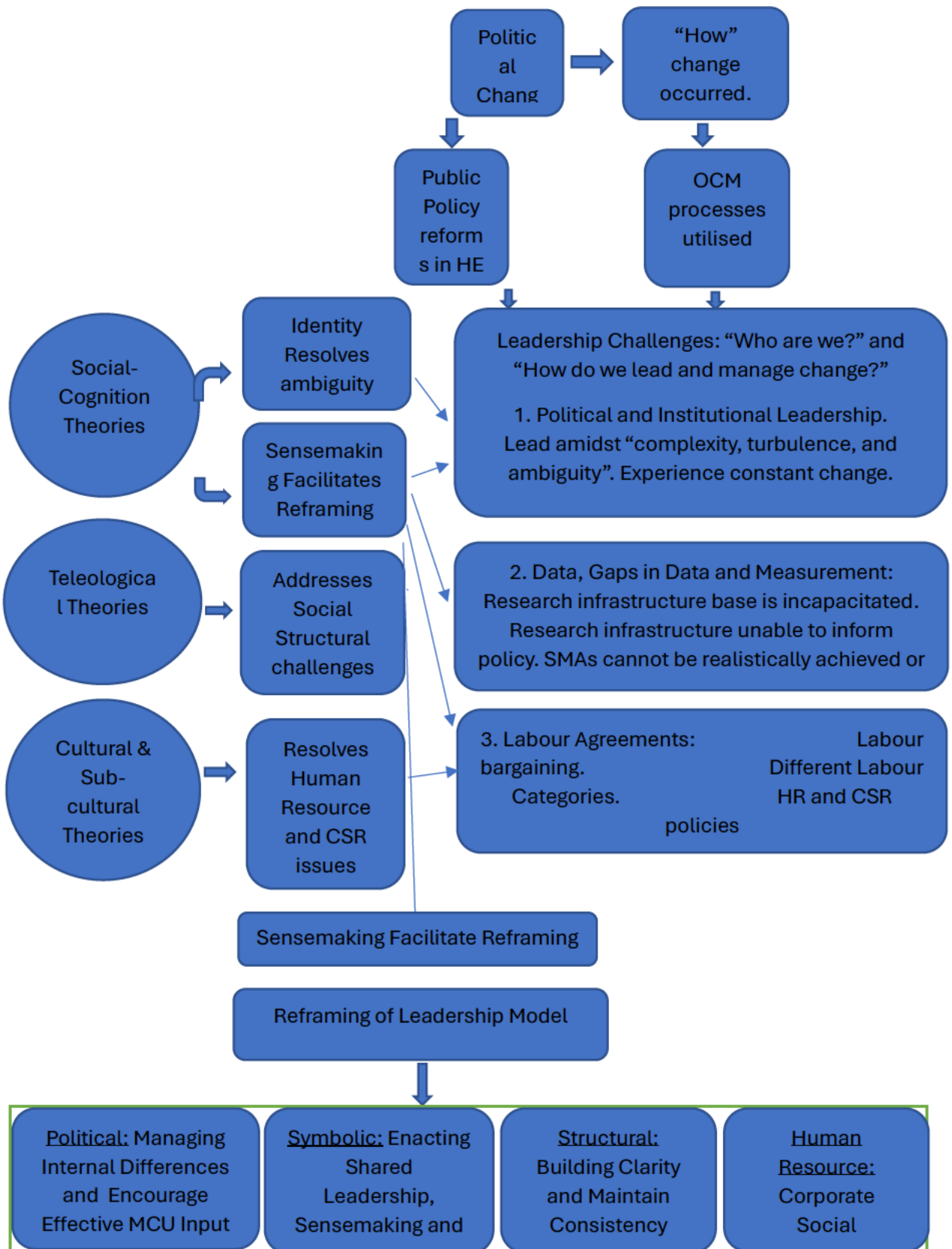
- Research infrastructure base is incapacitated.
- Research infrastructure is unable therefore to inform public policy.
- SMAs cannot realistically be assessed.

**Finding #5:** Labour challenges are associated with sensemaking and sub-cultural theories and can be represented by the following themes:

- Labour bargaining (collective and differentiation agreements).
- Different categories of employees and precarity.
- Human resource and corporate social responsibility policies.

**Finding #6:** Bolman and Deal's (2017) reframing model can be very useful as academic leaders can see opportunities to view challenges through different lenses. Figure 6.1. provides a visual representation of the six findings in the form of the proposed conceptual model.

The theoretical perspectives of selected theories of change as leadership evolutionary theories, teleological theories, social-cognition theories of sensemaking and identity, and cultural and sub-cultural theories is the contribution to knowledge for academic leaders to use appropriate theories of change in order to facilitate organisational change.



The Four Frame Model (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

**Figure 6.1.** Conceptual Framework for the Interpretation of Findings.

## 6.3. Social Cognition Theories and Challenges to Application

### 6.3.1. Sensemaking Processes

According to study finding #1, sensemaking is a useful theoretical framework and perspective. It assumes Weick's (1995) theory that sensemaking resolves identity ambiguities and is triggered by leadership challenges, such as the ones present in this study. The following argument supports this assertion.

Bolman and Gallos (2011) described sensemaking as "... the difficult art at the heart of academic leadership" (p. 18). Sensemaking has been defined as a process that occurs within and also between individuals as a cognitive process whereby individuals develop *within* themselves a mental model to make sense of their organisational environment (Weick, 1995), and alternatively, a social process that occurs as meaning is negotiated and mutually constructed *between* individuals (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

Weick (1995) also argues that people engage in sensemaking when they are confused by uncertainty due to "information load", "complexity", "turbulence" (p. 86), and/or "ambiguity" (p. 91) in their environment. Weick also stated that these triggers for sensemaking relate to such confusion, causing individuals to "initiate action to resolve the dissatisfaction" (p. 84).

Many authors have discussed identity and sensemaking theories of social cognition (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Ring &

Van de Ven, 1989; Weick, 1995). Ring and Van de Ven (1989) connect sensemaking processes and identity construction, by way of Turner's (1987) sociological theory of motivation: "Sensemaking process derive from the need within individuals to have a sense of identity – that is, a general orientation to situations that maintain esteem and consistency of one's self-conceptions" (Ring & Van de Ven, 1989, p. 180).

Moreover, Gioia et al. (2010) argues that when Weick developed the theoretical construct he called sensemaking, he emphasised the use of gerunds to focus the attention on dynamic "processes of becoming" rather than static "states of being" (p.1711), thereby "changing the conversation" (p. 1710) on the study of the *organisation* to that of *organising*.

HEIs faced upheaval as they found ways to respond to the urgent and rapidly changing situation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. In response to the crisis, many of us have also begun working together in new ways, unlocking a new capacity for collaboration and innovation that we did not know we had. Suddenly, the public sector HE "organisations" had to respond to the needs of the students and academics managed to "retain a sense of common purpose and shared responsibility, building upon our shared principles and values to guide decision-making" (p. 1), transforming "organisations" into that of "organising" HEIs, "infusing governance with the new sense of shared leadership purpose" (Elrod & Ramaley, 2020, p. 1). Shared leadership finds its roots in shared identity of the Social Identity Theory combined with the sensemaking theory and is practiced in response to changing situations and disruptions of public sector institutions including HE.

When assessing sensemaking processes in the current study, the theoretical codes used for the deductive analysis in Chapter 4, were:

Academic leaders have addressed the "how" of change, question 1, with the following statements:



- They experienced philosophical, ideological, and political change.
- They experienced public policy reforms in HE.
- They also experienced HE-funding system reforms.

As to the interview question 2 “how do academic leaders lead and manage change”, the following were recorded:

- Academic leaders experienced constant change.
- They experience performative pressures to comply with an outcome-based funding model.
- They employ OCM processes to transit their HEIs into the new era.
- They experience lack of clarity about public policy reforms.
- They lead amidst complexity and ambiguity.
- They lead and provide leadership.
- They experience structural social challenges.
- They are facing demographic changes.
- They are facing student labour skills development issues, to prepare them for the new era.
- They are committed to meeting students’ needs, promoting learning, and curriculum delivery mode change.

The above codes were used in the analysis of data in reference to sensemaking. The Four Frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Bolman & Gallos, 2011) proposes that sensemaking processes can facilitate reframing of the academic leaders’ challenges into Four Frames, according to four commonly encountered aspects of academic organisational life. Bolman and Gallos (2011) further argue that,

We’d all like instant clarity about complexities that we face and a clean slate to begin our academic leadership, but we are rarely that fortunate. Academic leaders bring their own ways of studying and

interpreting what they see. ... A key challenge for ... any academic leader is how to make sense of complex circumstances, recognise available choices, choose the best path forward, and convey all that to others in a propelling manner. (pp. 17-18)

There are three steps according to Bolman and Gallos (2011): “notice something, decide what to make of it, and determine what to do about it” (p. 18). However, Bolman and Gallos propose that the process is at the same time constrained by three futures: sensemaking is “incomplete and personal”, and it is “action oriented” (pp. 18-19). Emphasis is given to “reframing [which is] the deliberate process of looking at a situation carefully and from multiple perspectives, choosing to be more mindful about the sensemaking process by examining alternative views and explanations” (p.23). They argue that it requires leaders to slow down, to ask themselves “what’s happening here structurally? ... what people issues are at play? ... what are the political dynamics? ... what’s the meaning of this situation?” (p. 24).

Sensemaking processes were found in the study, as the development of codes, categories, and ultimately themes unfolded during the analysis of data. Next, the identity theme is explored concerning the question: “Who are we?”

### 6.3.2. The Identity theme: “Who Are We?”

The second assertion (findings #2) referred to Albert and Whetten’s (1985) definition of organisational identity as the characteristics of an organisation that are “central, distinctive, and enduring” (p. 265). These characteristics answer the question “Who are we?” (p. 265). Such “identity claims” (Whetten, 2006) are complemented by Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) Social Identity Theory, which is argued by Ashford and Mael (1989) to

explain the social classification process that offers the perception of belonging to a human group.

This research study presents findings that articulate an expression of shared identity of SALs which is consistent with Ashford and Mael's (1989) characterisation of the search for identity: it is informed by "existential motives ... including searches for meaning, connectedness, empowerment, and immortality" (p. 22). These themes of shared identity arose from the analysis of the participants' interviews, in which the participants reflected on their leadership experiences internal and external to their organisation, as well as their self-perceptions of their challenges and achievements. The SALs characterised their shared leadership identity in three ways: they are all committed to serving their students, their communities and their teams; they are committed to meeting students' needs, promoting learning, and curriculum delivery mode change; and they are connected to other SALs of HEIs in Ontario to communicate initiatives that may benefit their institutions.

### 6.3.3. Leadership Challenges: "How do We Lead and Manage Change?"

Findings #3 was the participants' leadership challenges: academic leaders are experiencing constant change, forcing them to lead amidst complexity and ambiguity. The "ambiguity" has been addressed in the identity challenge section. This study did not set out to explicitly explore any of these theories of complexity in organisation. Nevertheless, the notion of complexity arose as one of the three key challenge themes. This study reaffirms Stacey (1995), who contrasted this new way of conceptualising organisational change with traditional Newtonian and Darwinian scientific models of negative feedback processes that lead to stable states of equilibrium and predictability. Emphasising the implications for leadership that complexity science brings to the conversation, Stacey found that

much leadership research presumes that a leader can actually foresee where the organisation is heading. But given the unpredictability of complex systems, Stacey asks how leaders can be expected to foresee the long-term outcomes of their change intervention. Fris and Lazaridou (2006) developed a physical sciences metaphor to propose a physical science quantum paradigm of leadership where complexity, chaos, and unpredictability reign. Studies that explore the application of these paradigms of leadership in HEIs on the three key challenges could further enhance insight into conceptualisation of leadership complexities that academic leaders in this study experienced.

Maitlis and Christianson (2014) conducted a review on academic leaders' experience of constant change. They found that various authors, such as Mills, Bettis, Miller and Nolan (2005), theorised that organisational change is a potential trigger of sensemaking. The proposed link to the conceptual model of this study was presented in Figure 6.1. and is further supported by the understanding that organisational change is one of the drivers of sensemaking processes that aim to resolve identity ambiguity concerns.

Pamuk's (2008) finding that "the greater the perceived threat to an individual's self-concept, the greater the negative attitude to reorganisation" (p.103), explains the psychological effect on SALs in HEIs.

Kezar's (2005) eight-step model of collaboration and change processes, mirroring Lewin (1947), presented a three-stage model of change. Kezar's case study in a similar HE context to that of the present study, found that successful collaboration involves three stages: "building commitment, commitment, and sustaining" (Kezar, 2005, p. 103). The current study supports this model, as collaboration was an important element of the changes that academic leaders are experiencing and keep on leading.

Kotter (2014) distinguishes management from leadership in a largely definitional exercise. According to Kotter (2012), managers engage in

“planning, budgeting, organising, staffing, controlling, and problem solving” (p. 28), whereas leaders are “establishing direction... aligning people...[and] motivating and inspiring people” (p. 29) to overcome obstacles. As Kotter (2014) states:

Only leadership can blast through the many sources of corporate inertia. Only leadership can motivate the actions needed to alter behaviour in any significant way. Only leadership can get change to stick by anchoring it in the very culture of an organisation. (p. 33)

Rosenbach (2018) confirmed the Quantum paradigm emphasis on relationships and honouring individual's “emotional values dimension”, fostering the sense of community among followers as cited in Fris and Lazaridou (2006). Furthermore, Rosenbach states that however widely leadership is discussed and studied, it continues to remain an elusive and hazy concept. Although the study of leadership has emerged as a legitimate discipline, there is still little agreement about what leadership really is. However, it may be worthwhile to examine what leadership is not. Leadership is not hierarchical, top down, or based on positional power and authority. Although effective managers must practice good leadership and effective leaders must possess managerial skills, leadership is not management or some part or principle of it. Two crucial types of leader behaviour have been identified: behaviour centred on task accomplishments and behaviour directed toward interpersonal relations (Rosenbach, 2018).

In the aftermath of Covid-19, one way of working is through a shared leadership approach – an approach that appears to be emerging spontaneously or through emergency operations structures as we respond in this moment of crisis. It is one we must retain as we go forward in order to continue to be nimble, adaptable, and responsive to an even more rapidly changing world (Elrod & Ramaley, 2020). Kezar and

Holcombe (2017, as cited in Elrod & Ramaley, 2020) stated that shared leadership recognises the importance of leaders in position of authority but focuses on how those positions of power can delegate authority, capitalise on expertise within the organisation, and create infrastructure so that organisations can capitalise on the leadership of multiple people. Leadership is a process, not an individual, and can be supported by professional development, access to information, team-based work, and initiatives.

#### 6.3.4. Missing Data, Gaps in Data and Measurement, Incapacitated Research Infrastructure, Informed Public Policy, SMAs Application

Finding #4 was that social structural challenges are associated with teleological theories of organisational change and are represented with the following three themes:

- Research infrastructure base is incapacitated.
- Research infrastructure is unable therefore to inform public policy.
- SMAs cannot realistically be assessed.

As mentioned in the literature review on Chapter 3, missing data, gaps in data and measurements is one of the major challenges. According to Jones (2013), the importance of HE as a sector of public policy is increasing, Canada's national capacity to provide policymakers with data, evidence, and policy research necessary for the development of informed public policy is in rapid decline. While Canada has never had a particularly strong infrastructure for HE policy research, a few important components of this infrastructure have been either eliminated or effectively incapacitated (Jones, 2013, p. 2).

Canada's ability to develop informed public policy for HE sector has been severely diminished by gradual erosion of this policy research infrastructure (Jones, 2013, p. 2). This infrastructure includes the collection of reliable, timely data on the sector, the capacity to analyse this data and monitor the sector, the ability to conduct research on key policy issues, the capacity to analyse policy options, and the capacity to inform those who are responsible for public policy on the "state" of the system, policy issues, challenges, and various policy options and alternatives (Jones, 2013, p. 3).

The decline of Canada's HE research capacity can be seen as a function of three factors: 1. The degradation of the national data infrastructure, 2. A national policy research vacuum created by the withdrawal of support for arms-length agencies with HE research functions, and 3. The diminished capacity for policy research and analysis within provincial governments associated with government austerity and restructuring (Jones, 2013, p. 3).

Canadian nationally representative data sources, particularly on issues of education, are extremely limited. Large-scale assessment studies such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy) are conducted in Canada and scores of other countries, but their shortcomings for research questions beyond blanket comparisons with other countries are extensive. I will focus on PISA because it is the most known international education assessment, undertaken every three years on 15-year-olds across around 90 OECD countries (Robson, 2021).

Evidence provided by reliable sources (StatsCan.ca, University of Toronto, and OECD) suggests that data issues have been persistent in Canada since 2006, when the Progressive Conservative party of Canada

abolished the mandatory completion of the census. Recently, Census 2021 was only mandatory for 25% of the inhabitants of Canada required to submit the long-form questionnaire. However, the remaining 75% of Canadian were asked to voluntarily complete a short-form questionnaire (Statistics Canada, 2021). But voluntary response (self-interest) samples are not reliable statistical samples because only those with strong opinions will complete the survey (Gujarati & Porter, 2009). Further, if there is a systematic bias in the (non-) response rates across groups in Canadian society (i.e., rich or poor people, migrants or habitual residents), the increase of the sample size will not correct the accuracy level of the survey (University of Toronto Press, 2022). Much of the discourse on the lack of data related to education research – with a few notable exceptions – exists in informal conversations between researchers, and more recently, criticisms from the media. Every three years, the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are released, usually to a media frenzy. In Canada, the fixation is usually on how much better or worse reading or math scores are, compared to other countries. The last round of PISA from 2018 had the Canadian media occupied with reading scores (see, for example, Baxter, 2019; CTV News Staff, 2019; Journal Pioneer, 2019) in their jurisdictions. Invariably, the media also engages in the production of ranking tables, which demonstrate which countries are doing the “best” and “worst” (Anderson and Shendruk, 2019)). We learned from such recent accounts (by ranking the countries from best to worst scores on the reading standardized test, for instance) that Estonia and Macau were doing “better” than Canada. I wish to contribute to the small body of academic dialogue that is documenting this withering of Canadian education data infrastructure despite the very real need for it in order to create meaningful policy (Robson, 2021).

There are currently significant government requirements for universities to engage in quality assurance, strategic plans (such as the SMAs), and



other very teleological practices. It is extremely difficult to adopt an ateleological approach within a heavily teleological context. An extreme ateleological approach might lead to organisational anarchy, with no overarching plan for bringing together localised energies and initiatives (Jones et al., 2005).

The findings of this study corroborate this position discussed above, as most (88.8%) of the SALs agree that missing data, gaps in data are the most important of the challenges that they are faced with.

### 6.3.5. Labour Challenges

Finding #5 was labour challenges, which are associated with sensemaking and cultural and sub-cultural theories, represented with the following themes referred to below:

- Labour bargaining (collective and differentiation agreements)
- Different categories of employees and precarity
- HR and CSR policies

According to theory included in the literature review Chapter 3, culture and identity are described by Schein (1985; 2010) as organisational influences, where tensions may arise among and between subcultures as they seek alignment toward shared goals. Mitigation strategies may be necessary to address these challenges. The current study explores the external macro challenges for middle management level academic leaders to manage amidst organisational change management in a setting with identifiable subcultures.

Schein (1985) describes organisational culture as “the foundation of the social order that we live in and of the rules we abide by... and it is... created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated by leaders”

(Schein, 1985, p. 3). Additionally, Schein identified three major organisational subcultures that exist in most organisations: the “operators”, the “engineers”, and the “executives” (Schein, 1985, pp. 58-59). Within HEIs, these subcultures can be interpreted to represent the administrative support staff, the library, and the faculty departments (Lower management level), the academic Deans of faculties (Middle management level), and the MCU, the President, the Board of Governors, and the NPM administrators (Higher management level), respectively. Several “oppositional” pairings can also be seen in the community college setting: vocational versus academic programme focus; administration versus unionised labour groups; part-time versus full-time employees, and generally human resource management; and central main campus geographically dispersed smaller campuses (Schein, 1985, pp. 60-64) .

The challenges that these subcultural tensions bring to the organisation is one that HEI leaders must recognise. Leaders ought to mitigate the tensions and conflicts in order to facilitate alignment of these sometimes competing or diametrically opposed interests, to achieve shared and sound organisational goals. The present study explored the ways in which academic leaders experience these tensions, and their approaches to mitigating these challenges are corroborated by the findings referred to in this section. In particular, another macro-external challenge, labour collective agreements with the faculty, will be an important consideration to successfully advance outcome-based budgeting through differentiated mandates.

In general, faculty tend to spend 40% on researching, 40% on teaching and 20% on administrative and other duties. To reach new outcomes defined through differentiated mandates, time spent on these activities may have to be reallocated (Pepin, 2015). HEIs (hybrid corporations) in Ontario have introduced their own Labour Differentiation Agreement signed by the academic personnel directly with the institution they wish to

work for. However, there is a Labour Collective Agreement in place, regulated by the governments of Canada and Ontario, for several decades now, negotiated by the unions (OPS for universities and CAAT for colleges). Labour disputes and increased workload for the academic community are often observed, as noted in the context Chapter 2.

Within HEIs, Shults (2008) has cited Kezar and commented that setting, tension, and conflict can arise as a result of interactions between these various subcultures and require significant one to one and organisational trust to overcome. Cultural models demonstrate the importance of symbolism, history, and traditions, and institutional culture for facilitating change on campus (Kezar, 2001).

Studies of academic work in Canada suggest that Canadian universities have maintained a strong full-time tenure stream professoriate, in contrast to universities in some other jurisdictions. The number of full-time faculty with permanent appointments working in Canadian universities has grown since 2000, though not as rapidly as the number of students. Canadian faculty have relatively high levels of job satisfaction, are well remunerated, and are quite productive. However, it is generally assumed that while Canadian universities have protected the full-time professoriate, they have increasingly turned to the employment of part-time university (and college) teachers in order to increase institutional efficiencies (Jones, 2013).

Academic work in Canada has become increasingly fragmented along both the horizontal and vertical dimensions. The horizontal dimension refers to the natural fragmentation associated with the growth knowledge and the related specialisation of the professoriate. This is the fragmentation associated with disciplinary differences, and the increasing growth of sub-specialisations, that can be found within the academic units of the university. A second form of horizontal fragmentation is associated with the growth of professional staff engaged in forms of academic work

outside of the traditional academic units. Student affairs professionals, for example, play an important role in supporting student success through co-curricular educational activities and through counselling and guidance programmes. Educational developers orient and mentor new faculty in teaching and learning and play a range of roles in support of the improvement of teaching within the university (Hughes & Mighty, 2010). These are professionals who are clearly engaged in forms of academic work but who are usually located in horizontal positioned units outside of the traditional academic departments (Jones, 2013).

The vertical dimension refers to the emergence of new categories of academic workers within academic departments. While the traditional full-time professoriate in Canadian universities have responsibilities for both teaching and research, these new categories tend to focus on a specific function, usually teaching, and have very different salaries and conditions of employment than traditional tenure-stream appointments (Rajagopal, 2002). Given the very different terms and conditions of employment, these other categories of workers are generally regarded as lower status than the traditional professoriate – in fact, there may be a hierarchy of appointment categories with differences in salaries and job security. Despite these differences, they may all engage in roughly the same work. An undergraduate course may be taught by a full professor, but the same course may also be taught by an individual who has a full-time one-year contract, or by an individual who is employed for a single academic term only to teach that course (Jones, 2013).

There is a growing body of work that has helped us understand some of these broad changes in academic work in different jurisdictions. According to Jones (2013), while far from universal, the increasing use of “other” categories of academic worker (contingent faculty, teaching-only faculty in systems where traditional faculty engaged in both teaching and research) appears to be emerging in several HE systems as a response to broader

HE (structural) reforms, and to the new fiscal realities facing institutions of HE (p. 14). While research tells us something about these changes, we know far less about the implications of these changes for student learning, institutional governance, leadership, and the academic labour market. What has been the impact of the increasing use of new categories of workers (such as contingent faculty) on the quality of educational programmes and student learning outcomes? How do academic leaders make decisions on the allocation of work to different categories of university teachers, and what are the implications of these decisions? What are the implications of the increasing vertical and horizontal differentiation of academic work for university governance structures built on assumptions of collegiality? What are the implications for academic leadership of more complicated, multifaceted workplace with different categories of workers, different conditions of employment, and more hierarchical relationships? (p.14). It is essential to understand the implications of changes more fully in the structure of academic work and the emergence of new categories of academic worker for the overall operation of the university (and the college). What do these changes mean for students, in terms of their educational experiences and successes? What do they mean for the work of university governance and academic leadership? (Jones, 2013, pp. 14-15)

According to the findings, labour issues are classified as equally important as data challenges (88.8%) by the participants of this study.

Labour collective agreements are well regulated by the Ontario Ombudsman as HE is the responsibility of the provincial government, and Canadian federal labour laws further protect the rights of employees regulated by the Canada Ombudsman. HEIs have the freedom to set the standards and issue appointments to academics and administration staff (Canadian Labour and Employment Law, 2019).

## 6.4. Reframing Leadership Challenges

Finding #6, the sixth and final assertion, arose from the juxtaposition of themes of identity and leadership against the innovative, diverse individual participants, as seen in the metaphorical representation of participant leaders' roles presented in Chapter 5. A similar juxtaposition of diversity against commonly experienced challenges led to the reframing model (Bolman & Deal, 2017), which emphasises the variety of approaches that academic leaders are employing in order to address their shared experiences of leadership challenges.

### 6.4.1. The Rational for Reframing

The analysis of data in Chapter 5 was performed inductively and deductively using a-priori codes with topics of investigation, along with the thematic linkages of selected key authors. The analysis included sensemaking and identity theories and led to four initial themes of leadership challenges that emerged from the context of the questions that were focused on external macro- level challenges that were investigated. These challenges were:

- Political leadership/Maintaining strategic vision
- Institutional leadership/ managing tensions
- Structural challenges (data, gaps in data and measurements)
- Labour agreements

Leadership themes that were also identified through the analysis of data:

- Leading change and provide leadership.
- Breaking down institutional barriers/ Introduce institutional leadership.
- Developing the right strategy with effective and measurable SMAs
- Establishing effective and socially aware teams using shared leadership.

Furthermore, the metaphorical analysis of the data gathered in Chapter 4 led to unique metaphorical representation of leadership roles for each participant with emphasis in their diversity of leadership approaches, that are described as follows (in alphabetical order):

- Caring Chaplain
- Competitive Coach
- Developer/ builder
- Entrepreneurial
- Explorer
- Master Taylor
- Music Composer
- Navigator
- Nomadic Shepherd

The value of such a metaphorical representation is a symbolic (institutional) representation of identity, characterised with the role that metaphorical academic attributes were assigned to them, and were expressed for the perception of themselves in their roles of the creative cameo.

However, Morgan (2011) uses specific metaphorical representations, articulated in the context of the style, or approach to leadership, in the present study the metaphor is based on form of representation role or position.

Stephenson (2010) conducted a qualitative study of education leaders with HE, using allegory and symbolism to explore the experiences of Continuing Education leaders in the university setting. Stephenson proposed a means by which academic leaders can construct meaning from their roles. Furthermore, he proposed six styles of leadership as symbolic representations of the academic leaders who participated in his

study: “colonial, educational, facilitator, hybrid, mediator, melange, and radical” (p.64). Although Stephenson’s representations are articulated in the context of a style or approach to leadership, the metaphorical references assigned in the present study personify the metaphor in the form of a representative role or position. Despite these methodological differences (CE academic leaders and context in Stephenson’s study), there are a lot of similarities in the findings of SALs of the present study, in the characterisation of the diversity of leadership that exists in the HE environment.

Two reframing models have been presented by Bolman and Deal (1991, 2017) and Bolman and Gallos (2011). In both models for interpreting aspects of organisational life in a thematic grouping, the following four commonly encountered leadership challenges in HE are:

- Managing difference
- Enacting a powerful vision
- Building institutional clarity
- Fostering productive working relationships

There are progressive theory building differences between the seven editions of Bolman and Deal and Bolman and Gallos’s models, but mainly the two models complement one another, “reflecting the first and second/second order, the scale, the foci, the timing, and the degree of change. The three models examine the adaptive/generative, proactive/reactive, active/static, and planned/unplanned change” (Kezar, 2001, p. 2). Specifically, the 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2017) is practically the same model, assigning four frames: political, symbolic, structural, and human resources. Bolman and Gallos (2011) refer to these four frames as: jungle, theatre, machine, and family respectively.



Both models acknowledge that sensemaking facilitates reframing the perspective lens through which the leader may approach leadership challenges (Bolman & Gallos, 2011).

There were difficulties for the researcher of this study, to first acknowledge the existence of a model, and understand it only through theoretical referencing of Kezar (2001) and Van De Ven & Poole (1989; 1995). In particular:

The findings of the present study demonstrate an affinity of Bolman and Deal (1991; 2017) models that SALs may have, as evidenced by the nature of participants' commonly shared leadership experiences, particularly in the context of leadership achievements and challenges. At no point during the interviews or any of the recruitment material did the researcher introduce the Bolman and Deal model of interpreting leadership challenges in HE.

The main assumption underlying evolutionary theories is that change is a response to external circumstances, institutional variables, and environment faced by each organisation (Morgan, 1986). Social systems as diversified, interdependent, complex systems evolve naturally over time because of external demands (Morgan, 1986). Teleological theories or planned change models assume that organisations are purposeful and adaptive. Change occurs because leaders, change agents, and others see the necessity of change. The process for change is rational and linear, as in evolutionary models, but individual managers are much more instrumental to the process (Carnall, 1995; Carr, et al., 1996). Life-cycle models evolved from studies of child development and focus on stages of growth, organisational maturity, and organisational decline (Levy & Merry, 1986). Change is conceptualised as a natural part of human or organisational development. Dialectical models, also referred to as political models, characterise change as the result of clashing ideology or belief systems (Morgan, 1986). Conflict is seen as an inherent attribute of

human interaction. Change processes are considered to be predominantly bargaining, consciousness-raising, persuasion, influence and power, and social movements (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Social-cognition models describe change as being tied to learning and mental processes such as sense making and mental models. Change occurs because individuals see a need to grow, learn, and change their behaviour. In cultural models, change occurs naturally as a response to alterations in the human environment; cultures are always changing (Morgan, 1986). The change process tends to be long-term and slow. Change within an organisation entails alteration of values, beliefs, myths, and rituals (Schein, 1985).

Some researchers suggest using several models or categories, as each sheds light on different aspects of organisational life Van de Ven and Poole (1989, 1995, 2013). The advantage to multiple models is that they combine the insights of various change theories. Bolman and Deal's (1991, 2017) re-framing of organisations and Morgan's (1986, 2011) organisational metaphors illustrate how assumptions from teleological, evolutionary, dialectic/political, cultural, and social cognition models can be combined to understand change. While the researcher was not familiar with the Bolman and Deal model from prior reading, when attempted to align emerging themes performing coding and data analysis, the realisation that Kezar (2001) writing were indicating the existence of a model, was the 'eureka' moment as the researcher was writing the findings and noticed that the leadership challenges and achievements themes that initially emerged from the data were remarkably similar to the four themes that Bolman and Deal (2017) present.

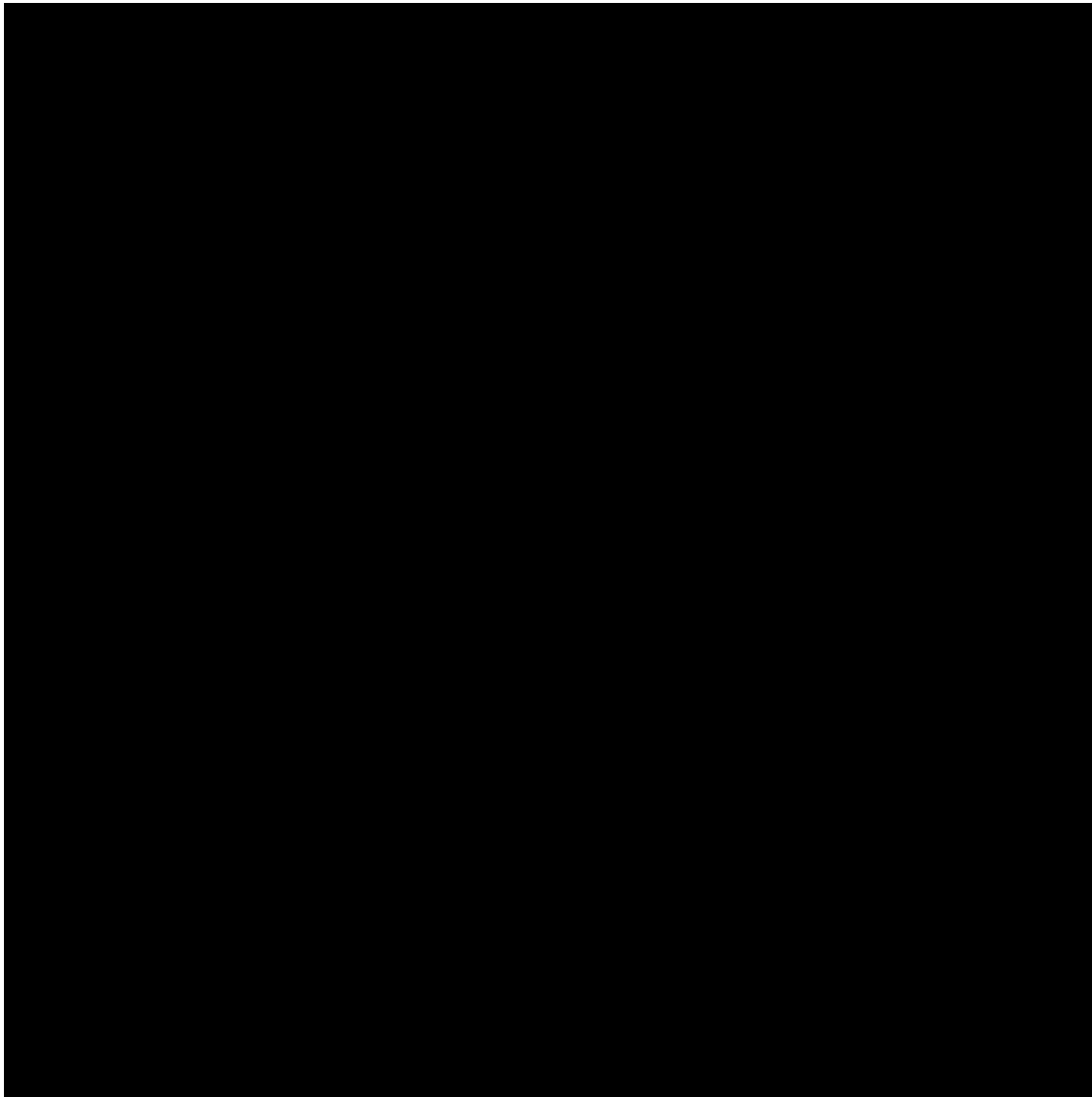
However, the researcher faced difficulties in employing the model and using the appropriate frame to interpret the findings of this study. In particular, the researcher believes that social structural reforms are the responsibility of both governments of Ontario and Canada, and attention should be given to the Political frame. However, based on supervisory

advice, the researcher realised that the study could be derailed, as the findings are indicating the structural and the human resource frames as prominent. Similar problems were observed with other researchers as well. In “issues associated with the Bolman & Deal model” the following were noted:

... there is no guide or blueprint to follow when it comes to choosing the frame that will provide the right focus. This means that leaders must use multiple techniques to consider the frames and choose the one that will successfully bring about the change they're looking for. This can introduce room for error, and if the wrong frame is chosen, it could damage or even destroy an initiative that once had potential. (Martin, 2020, p. 3)

However, SALs will be able to assign prominent frame(s) depending on the need(s) of the HEI, without neglecting the other frames. In the view of Scouller and Chapman (2018, p. 1), “if a leader works with only one habitual Frame (frame of reference), the leader risks being ineffective” (Scouller & Chapman, 2018).

The leadership achievements mentioned earlier in this section can form the basis under which the leadership challenges can be resolved. Indeed, while the researcher believed that the search of commonly shared challenges would have been the way of presenting one or more models, the commonly shared achievements were the ones that led the researcher to recognise the models that are suitable for this study. This pluralist model of leadership is well suited to support the reflective practices for academic leaders in HEIs in Ontario, such as the academic leaders who participated in this study.



**Figure 6.2. Metaphorical Leadership Roles Aligning with the Reframing Leadership Models (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Bolman & Gallos, 2011).**

#### 6.4.2 Leadership Frames Aligned to Shared Experiences

The leadership Four Frame Models (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Bolman & Gallos, 2011) within the context of the HE organisational environment have their origins in the leadership reframing model introduced earlier by Bolman and Deal (1991) for the broader leadership audience and played

a vital role in refining the model and reframing academic leadership. Figure 6.2. indicates that the structural frame is the most important frame, followed in priority sequence according to the participants views, by the human resource, the symbolic, and political frames. The frames are discussed in more detail below.

#### 6.4.2.1. Structural frame: Building Institutional Clarity.

The structural frame mirrors the rules, goals, and technology of HEIs. This frame focuses on fundamental pillars, goal direction, and operation accomplishment of HE. In this light, the HE implements rules that are to be followed students, staff, and/or the lecturers. Failure to adhere to the standards means that the organisational goals are not met (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Further, McDonald (2019) in her writing for the *University Affairs*' 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, she refers to the dreams for universities that better represent the world scholars strive to understand, about their concerns around finances, how the students they serve inspire and teach them, and about the opportunities, and risks, posed by the onslaught of rapid technological change. Most of all, scholars such as Jones, Steele, Sauvageau, Gagnon, Smith, Hemani, Timmons (2019), affirmed that universities have a vital role to play in helping society navigate through the deepest challenges of our time, from climate change to the dangers of misinformation and rising intolerance (MacDonald, 2019, p. 1).

As presented in Chapter 4, data, gaps in data and measurements is a structural challenge, and is therefore addressed through the lens of the structural frame. Data seems to be the most important challenge for academic leaders in HE in Ontario (priority code: 1, representing 88.8% of the participants). Challenges that contribute to a lack of institutional clarity include overlapping mandates and meeting the SMA requirements for the funding of HEIs, and academic leaders are called to mitigate these challenges.

The frame also involves task accomplishment within the HEIs. The frame entails the distribution and allocation of tasks, and how the assigned parties manage their duties in the allocated time (Shephard et al., 2017).

The frame also answers the question of academic leaders “Who are we?” Senior academic leaders across the HE system who are seeking institutional clarity from the MCU, and who are voicing the institutional clarity tensions, suggest that this frame plays a key role in the organisational life of HEIs.

The use of the structural frame will aid in the building of the consensus among the SALs’ direct report. However, their reports can cause division when people within different parts of the hierarchical structure disagree. Making a decision and expecting compliance afterwards therefore forms an integral component of the structural frame. The frame gives credence to the notion that the decisions must be made, and the authority must also be respected (Shephard et al., 2017).

#### 6.4.2.2. Human Resources Frame: Fostering Productive Working Relationships.

The human resources frame of a corporate model focuses on providing employees with power and the opportunity to do their job well while still addressing needs such as personal growth, human contact, and job satisfaction. In other words, the human resource is all about what people need. The metaphorical representation of the human resources frame is the “family” and represents the “symbiotic relationship between individuals and organisations” (Gallos, 2008, p. 166). It is through this lens that the academic leader experiences the tensions between “autonomy and interdependence ... [and] meeting individual needs and meeting organisational needs” (Gallos, 2008, p. 174).

The second most important challenge in priority (priority code: 2, representing 88.8% of the participants) was labour issues. While labour issues are well regulated by both the Canadian and the Ontarian governments at the Ombudsman level, changes from the public sector to a corporate model of HE have affected the wider academic community. The collective bargaining consisting of labour collective agreements and the recently added differentiation agreements with HEIs requires further regulation. The emergence of different categories of academic positions both vertical and horizontal, and the flexible criteria of hiring professionals not within the academic community are some of the issues interpreted out of the interviews with the participants of this study. A major issue of concern is the high level of precarity (over 50%) in the HE system, which is described by the previous PM of Ontario Wayne as an “unfortunate reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” concerning labour conditions (OPSEU, 2016, p. 6). Academic freedom and other Social & Citizen’s Rights Charter issues are also addressed under the human resources frame, and depending on the issues of concern, are addressed as Corporate Social Responsibility issues.

Internally oriented relationships include members of academic teams within the faculty and the departments, but also interrelated with other faculties such as Information Technology, Marketing, Program Advisory Committees, Contract Training, etc. This is intended to enhance shared organisational goals in providing excellent academic programming and student experiences.

The general purpose of applying this frame in HEIs is that external relationships must be considered important elements of the relational environment that impacts academic leaders’ experiences. External relations described by the participants of this study involved the MCU, the

labour unions, the industry, the communities, and other co-operative or representative offices of the HE organisation.

#### 6.4.2.3. Symbolic Frame: Enacting a Powerful Vision.

The symbolic frame is focused on inspiring people by providing the organisation with a direction that's distinctive and significant to its members. It enables a company (corporation) to celebrate its victories, creating a motivating vision for the organisation. In other words, the symbolic frame is all about responding to people's needs for purpose, meaning, and fulfilment in their work. The symbolic frame is metaphorically represented by Bolman and Gallos (2011) as the "theatre"; it is here that innovation and individuality bump up against tradition and shared vision.

As presented in Chapter 4, leadership is of utmost importance (priority code: 3 representing 77.7% of the participants of this study). Participants expressed the challenges they are faced with, namely the difficulty in providing a strategic direction for their HEIs and reinvigorating HE with a new vision. The gap of political leadership, which is now on the stewardship and steering HE from a distance, has to be bridged by academic leadership. This new vision may range from new curricula, programmes, courses, and modules with increased use of information technology and more associations, cooperations, or affiliations with other HEIs and private providers' programmes offering variety and specialisation to students. This new vision is meant to enhance their ability to make a difference to the lives of the students, provide them with the labour skills required in the new era, and bridge the labour gap. Further, this new vision is meant to contribute to their communities' economic well-being.



The participants revealed the passion they felt for the work in which they engaged, in the context of the symbolic frame, and derived meaning from their service to their teams, students, industry and commerce, and the wider communities of their province and country.

#### 6.4.2.4. Political Frame: Managing Difference.

The political frame focuses on interest groups about sharing scarce resources. The alliance is formed, usually based on divergent ideas of actuality, with organisational goals surface from developing processes of negotiation and bargaining for posts between individuals in HE and groups (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The political frame is represented by the “jungle” in which the tensions were described between the contrasting “similarity and diversity...empowerment and control ... individual and collective” (Gallos, 2008, p. 174).

The political frame is meant to address the problem of different and often hidden agendas people may have under one organisation. This is a particularly useful frame when the budget is limited, and difficult choices must be made. The frame was also helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic, with emergency measures taken, and shared leadership practices for the implementation of new online curricula delivery and student evaluation processes. In other words, the political frame is all about internal conflict resolution, building a coalition, and supporting the initiative of the leader through power-base building (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

From the findings of this study presented in Chapter 4, participants expressed their experiences with themes of tremendous public policy reforms, complementary purposes of education, leadership contrasting managerialism, and intense organisational change processes, especially under the Covid-19 pandemic.

The literature has provided explanations of the HE environment in Ontario and the change of HE landscape in the context of the political frame. The publicly funded HE transitioned to publicly assisted HE, then HE became corporatised with a “quarter” budget funding and the stewardship of HE under the government control.

However, educational leaders do not think of themselves as political figures, yet it is the ability to bargain and negotiate with competing stakeholders that secures power and the ability to control scarce organisational resources (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

## 6.5. Summary

The aim of the study has been met. The primary purpose of the study was to explore the SALs’ experiences and perceptions in relation to the challenges they encounter while enacting academic and administrative roles at HEIs in Ontario. Suitable methodological and methodical assumptions were introduced in Chapter 4 (Methodology), along with a research design for acquiring appropriate data. A variety of challenges and concerns were found: the Covid-19 pandemic, a globalised environment, application of neoliberal public policy reforms, increased expectations of measurable performance criteria, unaccomplished social structural reforms, shifting demographics, growth of the knowledge economy, technological advances in online learning, AI, and curricular changes are impacting HEIs’ visions, missions and day-to-day operations. These challenges were categorised by the researcher into macro-external and meso- and micro internal challenges. While SALs have successfully managed to respond to meso- and micro-internal factors affecting their institutions, macro-external challenges remain unaccomplished by both the governments of Ontario and Canada.

In Chapter 5 (Findings), the research questions explored the three key challenges: political and institutional leadership, data gaps in data and measurement, and labour agreements. In Chapter 6 (Discussion), these research questions were answered. Institutional leadership was proven enduring for HEIs, and SALs have successfully transited the institutions to the new era during the difficult times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sensemaking, Social Identity Theory, and Shared Leadership practices were identified as useful theoretical perspectives through which to analyse the experiences of SALs in HEIs in Ontario. Government assistance was provided during the pandemic and the political leaders should be praised for their input. However, social structural reforms remain unaccomplished and are yet to be resolved by political leaders both on the provincial and the federal level. Missing data, gaps in data and measurement shows that public policy is informed by a weak research infrastructure and the SMAs cannot realistically be measurable. Although the Canadian government issues mini-censuses every couple of years, the main census every ten years is not mandatory and cannot provide purposive, integral, accessible, timely-ready, and accurate data. Furthermore, both the provincial and the federal governments ought to regulate labour agreements to protect the academic community from the perils of precarity, addressing therefore the issues of tenure-track teaching and research academic positions, horizontal and vertical categories of academic personnel, and other academic categories of professional standing that enter the HEIs.

Chapter 6 fulfilled three of the four research objectives set in this research study. Specifically, the identification of the three key challenges has been accomplished and is representative of all SALs interviewed; SALs' experiences dealing with social structural reforms and various other challenges were explored; and both the context and literature review were taken into account to discuss and further critically analyse SALs' strategic

responses to policy reforms in HE, in what is described as a contested regulatory environment in Ontario.

The following Chapter 7 brings the study to a conclusion. It presents the implications of the study's findings, its contribution to knowledge, and its contribution to practice in the field of academic leadership and organisational change in HE in Ontario, as well as limitations of the study. Recommendations are made to academic leaders in HEIs in Ontario and other provinces of Canada, fulfilling therefore the fourth research objective of this study, which may propel future research. The DBA requirements for conducting this research study are fulfilled. Final remarks draw this study to a close.

## Chapter 7 – Conclusion

### 7.0. Introduction

The aim of the study was to identify and further explore the key challenges that SALs are faced with in HEIs in Ontario, amidst public policy reforms. This aim led to the research objectives that were developed from the following questions: “How was change initiated?”, “Who are the academic leaders?”, “How do academic leaders lead and manage change in their HEIs?”, and “How can fellow SALs in HE in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada benefit from the shared experiences of the academic leaders and participants of this study?”

Globalisation, demographic changes, technological advantages, growth of the knowledge economy, and performative measures have impacted HEIs’ visions, missions, and operations. SALs turn their attention to macro-external, meso-, and micro- internal factors. The main focus of this study is the macro-external key challenges that academic leaders are most concerned about. The three key macro-external challenges are social structural reforms that the governments of Ontario and Canada should have accomplished prior to initiating public policy reforms. The unfulfilled social structural reforms have created tensions within the academic community, and academic leaders are leading through these tensions and dilemmas to manage change. SALs have employed OCM processes to transit their HEIs into the new era; nevertheless, the three key challenges have undermined the efficient and effective application of these processes. This study captured SALs’ experiences as they lead amidst complexity, turbulence, and ambiguity.

But OCM processes cannot be strategically applied and implemented properly as more leadership challenges are present, such as data, gaps in data and measurement. Three themes were examined: the research

infrastructure base is incapacitated; it is therefore unable to provide policymakers with the most needed data to inform public policy; and the SMAs cannot be realistically assessed for the application of funding system reforms. Furthermore, labour challenges were investigated using three thematic representations: collective and differentiation agreements; “horizontal”, “vertical”, and other labour positions created; and precarity, academic freedom, and other Citizen’s Charter issues.

The academic community face these macro-external challenges in their day-to-day operations in HEIs in Ontario. The SALs need to act swiftly using leadership skills to firstly address the issues at hand, and then formulate a meaningful strategy that can be practically implemented to fulfil their NPM mandate vested to them by the MCU and the Higher Management Leadership level and the Board of Governors.

### 7.1. Contribution to Knowledge

The data collection process revealed concerns expressed, statements made, but also questions raised by the participants. The study’s findings presented in Chapter 5 suggested that the participants realise that change is inevitable and in most instances necessary. HEIs have faced upheaval as they found ways to respond to the urgent and rapidly changing situation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. The study’s participants shared many of the questions that may lie before us: “How can we infuse shared governance with a new sense of shared purpose?”, “What will it mean to be an academic leader in this changing world?”, “How will leading a HEIs following, and collaborating be different?”, “What can we learn from our experience?”, and “How can we maintain this spirit of collaboration?”

This study provides some answers to the above questions. Starting from the two key purposes of education: first, the efficient preparation of skilled workers who will achieve personal success through contribution to market

economics, which views high-quality preparation for the “citizenry of life” through education as a public good; and second, preparing “citizens for life” through education, which can be viewed as a private benefit (Greene, 2001, pp. 10-11). The challenge for today’s academic community is to find balance between these two paradigms. While both purposes of education are equally important – contributing to global competitiveness and economic stability while also contributing to the individual’s self-actualisation and empowerment (Young et al., 2021) – they create a tension between the seemingly divergent and at times conflicting purposes of education. However, the researcher of this study views the two purposes of education as complementary. As demand for HE soared since the last decades of the twentieth century, the state simply could not afford to provide HE for everyone who wanted and needed it, and thus the involvement of the private sector became inevitable (Altbach, 2016). An argument in support of non-state providers stems from the recognition of their inevitability and appreciation of their contribution in complementing the efforts of the state, especially in providing access. Non-state providers are already part of the HE system in almost all countries, and globally they account for roughly a third of student enrolment (Levy, 2018). Thus, the debate about private institutions is no longer focused on their necessity or relevance, but on how regulatory frameworks can be best used for maximum results in achieving broader societal goals and benefits for students and graduates. Non-state providers continue to play critical role of complementing the provision by the state, particularly in the face of competing demands for limited public resources, forcing governments to take various measures of austerity. While many feel that non-state institutions should provide an increasing proportion of HE as well as new and innovative models, few, if any, argue that the non-state sector should be the only provider of HE or the other way around (Altbach et al., 2021, p. 8).

Next, sensemaking was found to be the most useful theoretical perspective to analyse SALs' experiences. Leadership challenges were found to be represented by three commonly held themes: "turbulence" due to constant public policy changes, "complexity" of coping with the changes implemented, and "ambiguity" as outcome-based criteria (SMAs) are not realistically measurable or practically applicable. Sensemaking of social cognition theories (Weick, 1979, 1995) was the theoretical perspective through which SALs' experiences were analysed. Over the past few decades, the environment for organisations has been frequently described using the acronym VUCA: volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. In recent years, organisations have faced large and unexpected events, such as financial crises, the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, and war, with a large impact on the world at several economic and societal levels, and the acronym VUCA has been frequently used by scholars and practitioners to try to understand such environmental dynamics (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Codreanu, 2016; Du & Chen, 2018).

One more thematic representation of SALs' identity experience emerged in the findings: academic leaders are committed to serving their students, their communities, and their teams. Identity theories (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashford & Mael, 1989) were also incorporated as theoretical perspectives. According to Whetten (2006), there is the need to acknowledge the "chicken and egg" question lurking in the shadows: which comes first, organisational practices or organisational identity claims? Broadly viewed, this issue pervades the whole of organisational studies, as reflected in micro-level behavioural consistency theory (Salancik, 1977; Weick, 1995) and macro-level structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Within the organisational identity literature, it is picked up in the distinction between sensemaking –constructing shared views of an organization from members' experiences – and sense giving – making



members' experiences sensible through the application of extant shared views (Fiol, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2000; Gioia & Chittipedi, 1991). At the heart of the claim that a capacity for knowledge co-production is grounded in the dynamic apprehension of shared group membership, such that the success (or otherwise) of the educational process is contingent upon educational participants seeing themselves as sharing social identity (a sense of 'us') (Haslam, 2017, 2022, p. 21).

Furthermore, two shared leadership themes emerged: SALs are in constant communication with fellow colleagues in HEIs in Ontario, and practice shared leadership to deal with emergency situations such as Covid-19, but also incorporate innovation and curricula changes to address the labour skill mismatches in order to transit their HEIs into the new era. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, many academic leaders have also begun working together in new ways, unlocking a new capacity for collaboration and innovation to address the “new normal”, a capacity they did not know they had. As they traverse the terrain of this crisis, by thinking about how to retain a sense of common purpose and shared responsibility, building upon shared principles and values to guide decision making, shared leadership became prominent as the leading leadership strategy. Academic leaders are embarking on a “new abnormal” without knowing what lies ahead, but they assume that it won't be like the “old normal” (Elrod & Ramaley, 2020).

## 7.2. Practical Implications

The researcher has made provisions concerning the “insider-outsider” position during the selection process of participants, to avoid over familiarisation with solely networked institutional participants. The potential of superficial or pre-conceived conclusions was therefore reduced, if not completely eliminated, from these processes.

The data were analysed to provide a thematic representation of the leadership, structural, and human resource challenges investigated in this study. Interpretation of the data through the lens of sensemaking processes facilitated the development of the 'modified conceptual model' and serves as a tool for initiating discussions and self-reflective processes to get a better understanding of the roles of academic leaders. The study explored the leadership challenges in depth, through the new lens of the conceptual model modified by the researcher.

The study is not a study about sensemaking per se, but rather a study about leadership challenges interpreted using sensemaking (and sense-giving) theory, identity theory, and which provided the suggested conceptual framework and the reframing of this model. Leadership challenges required actions such as those taken by the SALs applying shared leadership practices. It requires the collaboration of politicians, policymakers, government agencies both in the federal and the provincial level, and external bodies that can assist with their expertise. Indeed, according to Kezar and Holcombe (2017), shared leadership recognises the importance of leaders in positions of authority but focuses on how those in position of power can delegate authority, capitalise on expertise of multiple people. Leadership is a process, not an individual, and can be supported by professional development, access to information, team-based work, and incentives (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017, p. 3).

More specifically, concerning the missing data, gaps in data and measurement challenges, SALs should pass on the responsibility to the Higher Management leadership level (Presidents, Vice Provosts, Board of Governors, the MCU, etc.), involve community leaders and business leaders to persuade the political elites and the policymakers to provide purposive, integral, reliable, accessible and timely ready data through the government agency of StatsCan (Statistics Canada). For this to happen, it requires legislative processes to re-instate the mandatory completion of

censuses at least every 10 years. Mini-censuses carried-out every couple of years are useful but they ought to be mandatory as well. However, the above actions may be absolutely necessary from now on; more work is required to “leverage” the gaps in the existing data from reliable sources as Data Bank sources, municipality data, etc. Furthermore, it requires the input of external bodies such as Statista (Canada) or other information providers to provide essential information and “tilting” techniques to fill the missing data between 2006 and 2023 inclusively. At the least it will re-instate the image of Canada, a G-7 country, with the OECD and other international bodies, but it would most importantly provide essential data, thereby enhancing the research infrastructure and informing public policy. Policymakers and the MCU can then re-apply realistically measurable SMAs for implementation in the HE sector.

Moreover, labour disputes concerning collective and differentiation agreements require more regulation on the federal level (Ombudsman Canada) and the provincial level (Ombudsman Ontario). The labour unions need to demand regulation on issues such as precarity, “horizontal”, “vertical”, and “other categories” of academic personnel, human and democratic rights, academic freedom, etc. Labour unions have been trusted by their paying members to act on issues such as to protect and preserve the tenure-track of academic personnel. Further, and according to OPSEU (2014) “*Report on Education in Ontario Colleges*” in the *Quality in Focus* section (p. 62), external professionals constitute more than 50% of the academic teaching and research personnel. Therefore, the labour unions should try to negotiate with the government of Ontario, the MCU, and the HEIs in Ontario for a minimum of 75% tenure-track academic positions, restrict the contracts of professionals entering the HE sector to the maximum of two years’ probation period, and require these professionals to undertake graduate studies or research on their field of teaching. They should provide all the above services to their members,

rather than seeking a role in the new era of corporatised HEIs and acting as “rent seeking agencies”.

### 7.3. Theoretical Implications

This study frequently referred to both Four Frames models (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Bolman & Deal, 2017), and particular reference was made to the theoretical perspectives employed in different circumstances.

Van de Ven and Poole (1989) suggest using several models or categories, as each sheds light on different aspects of organisational life. The advantage to multiple models is that they combine the insights of various change theories. Bolman and Deal’s (1991) reframing of organisations and Morgan’s (1986) organisational metaphors illustrate how assumptions from teleological, evolutionary, political/cultural, social-cognition, and lifecycle models can be combined to understand change (Kezar, 2001). But that linkage satisfied the first (unfreeze) stage of Lewin Model (1947), combined the first 4 steps, initially described in the Kotter’s *Harvard Business Review* titled “*What Leaders Really Do*” (Kotter, 1991), which are similar steps referred to Kotter’s (2004; 2012) models. Later, Van de Ven and Poole (1995) made the same linkage with the second stage (transition/ moving) of Lewin’s model (1947), combining steps 5, 6, and 7 of Kotter’s (2004, 2012) models, which are linked by the researcher with the renewed Bolman and Gallos (2011) four-frame model. In most recent times, Van de Ven and Poole (1995; 2013) renewed efforts to combine several models, as the Kotter model (2012) to Lewin’s (1947) model; and several categories of theories of change, as to combine traditional teleological tools such as establishing vision, planning, or strategy with social-cognition, cultural, and political strategies (Kezar, 2001, p.3), which effectively led to the Bolman and Deal’s (2017) four-frame model. Errida and Lotfi (2021) had combined the third stage

(refreezing) of Lewin's (1947) model, with the final step 8. of Kotter (2012).

The researcher contributes to knowledge with this study by enhancing Errida and Lofti's (2021) theoretical perspectives and model, by further linking Lewin's (1947) final third stage (refreezing) and Kotter's (2012) step 8 to the Bolman and Deal (2017), as illustrated in Figure 7.1 below:

Lewin's 3-Stage Model	Kotter's 8-Step Model	Bolman & Deal Models
<b>Stage 1: Unfreezing</b>	Step 1: Create a sense of urgency	Initial Change Stage (Unfreeze). Lewin's 3-Stage Model.
	Step 2: Build a large, powerful coalition	Combine the 4 First Steps of Kotter's Model (2004).
	Step 3: Develop a vision and strategy	Use the older (Bolman & Deal, 1991) Model, to describe change.
	Step 4: Communicate the change vision	
<b>Stage 2: Moving (transition)</b>	Step 5: Empower broad-based action	2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage on Lewin's Model (Moving/ Transition).
	Step 6: Generate short-term wins	Take Steps 5, 6, & 7 of Kotter's Model (2012)
	Step 7: Consolidate gains and produce more change	Use (Bolman & Gallos, 2011) Model, and (Gallos, 2008) to describe the transition process.
<b>Stage 3: Refreezing</b>	Step 8: Embed changes into the culture	Final Stage of Lewin's Model (Refreeze). Take Step 8 of Kotter's Model. Apply (Bolman & Deal, 2017)

**Table 7.1. (as per Table 3.2.)  
Conceptual Framework Synthesising Three Conceptual Models (Lewin's, Kotter, and Bolman & Deal).  
Source: Based on Errida and Lotfi (2021) (Lewin's and Kotter's Models Processes) and added by the author for the appropriate use of Bolman and Deal's (2017) Model.**

The social cognition theories referred to by Kezar (2001) are mainly sensemaking theories but also identity theories. The combined organisational change theories (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995) led the researcher to Bolman and Gallos's (2011) conceptual model. In "Reframing Academic Leadership", Bolman and Gallos applied a conceptual framework to the HE arena, addressing four challenges commonly faced by academic leaders in HEIs: "building institutional clarity, managing difference, fostering productive working relationships, and enacting a powerful vision" (p. 10). For the four challenges, an organisational metaphorical frame of the "machine", the "jungle", the "family", and the "theatre" (p. 11), respectively, was applied, each describing distinct aspects of organisational life. However, this four-frame model provides the theoretical linkage to sensemaking theory, but the organisational metaphorical frames of Morgan 1986, can also be rather confusing to researchers. It is the bad experience of the researcher that, "... it can introduce room for error, and if the wrong frame is chosen, it could damage or even destroy an initiative that once had potential" as cited by (Martin, 2020, p. 3).

Thus, the researcher selected that Bolman and Deal (2017) model as the appropriate model for this study that represents the final third stage (refreezing) of Lewin's (1947) model and the 8<sup>th</sup> step of Kotter's (2012) model. In the four frames model: political, symbolic, structural, and human resource frames have been significantly changed or varied from the original Bolman and Deal (1991), reflecting the different "forces and sources" and examined the "why" of change" according to Kezar (2001, p. 2). Further, Kezar (2001) referred to the priorities "first and second/second order, scale, foci, timing and degree all refer to the 'what' of change. Adaptive/generative, proactive/reactive, active/static, and planned/unplanned refer to the "'how' of change. Last the target of change refers to the outcomes. As the campus begins to engage in change

process, members of the organisation needs to first examine why they are about to embark on the process, the degree of change needed, and what is the best approach to adopt” (Kezar, 2001, pp. 2-3).

The latest Bolman and Deal model directly links the frames examined to the leadership challenges faced by the academic leaders. Indeed, the SALs faced political leadership examined by the political frame, institutional leadership related to the symbolic frame, data, gaps in data and measurement examined under the structural frame, and finally, labour issues examined under the human resource frame.

It is noted that the political frame has been diminished in its importance, as the government of Ontario wishes to steer HE from a distance, maintaining stewardship of HE at this stage in order to protect the HE sector from perils of competition from the private sector. Political discussions in HE are usually about power and funding, and leadership with followers who are favoured by their leaders (Huisman, 2009). According to Scouller (2011), the High Management level (Presidents, VP, and Executives of HEIs) are more inclined to form coalitions with district leaders and educational authorities who control access to funding and initiatives. Macro-politics refers to the relationship between the organisation and its external environment. Within the international context, the ability of a corporatised board of Governors to form alliances with local government authorities is essential for ongoing success. The ability to anticipate changes in the external conditions adds considerable advantages an organisation. Educational institutions are in constant phase of reform and as new organisational leaders emerge, with them comes new power bases that enable new educational initiatives (Shafritz & Ott, 2001). In contrast, micro-politics is concerned with the implementation of reform procedures within the organisation performed by the SALs of HEIs. Shafritz and Ott (2001) make the point that reform will ultimately win, however the political alliances made by the SAL can aid a



smooth transition or increase levels of conflict. The role of an SAL is not to remove conflict, rather to manage the conflict in a way that benefits the organisation (Owens, 2004).

Therefore, when employing a pluralistic conceptual model, such as Bolman and Gallos (2011) or Bolman and Deal (2017), which the researcher suggests are complementary, leadership skills that consist of mostly pluralist SALs were confirmed in the findings of this study as indicated in Chapter 5. A variation of the four-frame model may assign the structural frame as prominent frame to explain data, gaps in data and measurement challenges using teleological theories, followed by human the resource frame using subcultural theories to explain labour issues, and the symbolic frame to address leadership challenges both political and institutional, as the ones identified by the participants of this study.

As the importance of the political frame is diminished in significance, the frame may be addressed as part of the symbolic frame. Therefore, the modified '**three frame model**' suggested by the researcher serves its purpose and further contributes to knowledge but also to practice. SALs could employ the modified by the researcher 'three-frame model' from the Bolman and Deal (2017) main model, to transit their HEIS in Ontario into the new era. Further research may be propelled in order to establish this 'three-frame model' as a theoretical guide to leaders across the public sector agencies as healthcare, social services, citizen and immigration services, etc.

This study presented the 'modified conceptual three-frame model' introduced by the researcher, well-suited for applying OCM processes to address leadership challenges that academic leaders are experiencing in HEIs in Ontario. The researcher believes that this is the first study to integrate the 'modified three-frame conceptual model' with the theoretical perspectives of sensemaking, social identity, and shared leadership into a

comprehensive “modified theoretical framework” for interpreting leadership experiences in HEIs.

This study’s findings extend understanding of leadership challenges in HE in Ontario. The macro-external challenges were explored, but an exploration of the meso- and micro external challenges was well beyond the scope of this study. Further research could be initiated for meso-internal challenges in HE in Ontario, such as the issue of funding system reforms, the Covid-19 pandemic. The study could also be extended to address micro-internal issues such as day-to-day operations’ management of faculties and departments of HEIs in Ontario.

Ontario was the first of ten provinces and three independent territories of Canada to attempt transiting its HE sector into the corporate model under neoliberalism. Another attempt made in the French province of Quebec ended in failure. The hierarchical French system of education in Quebec may be the reason for this failure, indicating a structural frame deficiency. British Columbia had also attempted to transit its HE system in a similar fashion as Ontario; however, it is still in the initial processes of transition. Alberta’s Progressive Conservative political elites have introduced the Ontario model as well. The British-influenced provinces in the West of Canada could transit their HE systems using neoliberal processes, and this transition could probably be proven successful. Reservations, however, have been raised that the East Canadian and Atlantic Canadian provinces may require a slower pace to adapt, and structural renewal of their HE base, in order to transit their HE-sector to the new system.

The findings of this study therefore extend understanding of contemporary experiences in HE in Ontario to other provinces of Canada’s HE system that may be willing to pursue public policy reforms under the neoliberal political movement. However, the communities of these provinces will empower their political elites for this change according to their regional development policy respecting indigenous communities, linguistic

diversity, and other regional policies. The researcher has not and will not encourage public policy reforms in other provinces with this study.

However, if the decision for change on the political level of provinces is constitutionally observed, the researcher has a “modified conceptual model” to suggest, in order to facilitate the reframing of the model which makes easier the transition to the new era.

Finally, the study rather encourages the strengthening of the provincial Heads of HE in each province to establish contact and a network that will adapt a provincial voice which is heard as expert, addressing the various challenges and issues in HE in Canada. The researcher expects it will further encourage the creation of a strategic vision for HE in Canada, addressing the main issues of “globalisation, technological innovation, mass communication, mass culture, rising consumer expectations” (Mulford, 2008, pp. 4-5), “along with increased skill requirement, are the origin of our current and future labour force challenges ...and success will ultimately require concerted and cooperative efforts between businesses, governments and educational institutions to address and resolve these problems” (Miner, 2014, p. 3).

Performativity measures as accreditation and quality standards are some of the issues that provincial academic Heads may be discussing between themselves to further enhance the development of programmes, courses, and modules. Blackmore and Sachs (2007) speak about the “emotional impacts” on academic leaders in HE who must manage the paradox of increasing performativity measures in tension with the evident desires of leaders to feel that they are serving their students, communities, and teams.

The current study suggests a confirmation of Weick’s (1995) theory that “turbulence, complexity and ambiguities” lead to questions concerning identity. Organisational change, purposes of education, changing demographics of Canadian students, blurring boundaries between

colleges and universities but also between private and public HEIs, performativity measures, and overlapping issues may all constitute good examples of complexities and ambiguities bringing about sensemaking (and sense giving), identity, and shared leadership questions such as those directed by the participants of these study. Blurred boundaries and overlapping mandates are suitable questions that bring about tensions of ownership and duplication of effort, triggering academic leaders' sensemaking theories related to identity constructs and inducing collaborative initiatives such as shared leadership.

#### 7.4. Limitations

Methodological decisions have introduced some limitations on the generalisability of the findings. First, according to Guba and Lincoln (1981), four aspects of trustworthiness should be addressed: true value (internal validity), applicability (external validity and generalisability), consistency (reliability), and neutrality. In the current study, the true value of the participants' 'lived experiences' has been respected by treating the participants as subjects. Qualitative researchers rarely discuss **generalisability** of their data, arguing that their goal is a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, and not statistical generalisation. The purpose of the research, the sampling method, the data analysis method, and the coding strategy are discussions on generalisability and the standard for qualitative reports is that the research question is phrased to demand a general answer.

Second, as reported in Chapter 5, some findings were associated with participants' attributes. Twenty-seven matrices were formed and analysed in addition to eleven inductive and deductive coding analyses. These supplementary matrices were analysed using question responses and theoretical codes against participants' attributes. These matrices included some interesting themes concerning leadership experiences that may

indicate the presence of leadership skills, or dealing with organisational structures, type, size or name of institution, position held, and years in position held. These findings were not included in the report of findings in Chapter 5, in order to protect the participants' identity, as disclosure of personal characteristics and attributes revealing the participants' identity, thus, protecting participants' anonymity, preserving and respecting the ethical integrity and confidentiality clauses for anonymity of the participants of this study. That did not affect, however, the analysis of data by the researcher, as the demographic information was analysed without revealing the participants' information (name, name of institution, position held etc.), and it is hereby confirmed that there were no missing data reported.

The third limitation concerns the use of Bolman and Gallos's (2017) conceptual model. In particular, the wrong (political) frame was followed by the researcher. According to Martin (2020), "...there is no guide or blueprint to follow when it comes to choosing the frame that will provide the right focus. This means leaders must use multiple techniques to consider the frames and choose the one that will successfully bring about the change they are looking for. This can introduce room for error, and if the wrong frame is chosen, it could damage or even destroy an initiative that once had potential" (p. 2). At one point, the researcher believed that it is solely the responsibility of both the federal and the provincial governments to provide purposive, integral, accessible, reliable and timely ready data, and therefore the political frame was the right one to pursue. The findings and data analysis, however, indicated that the structural frame is the prominent frame, followed by the human resource frame, and finally the symbolic frame.

Finally, the fourth limitation is that the model used simplifies the different leadership styles into a single approach when the truth is that sometimes several approaches are required to explain change. Evidently, the

researcher utilised sensemaking theories, social identity theories, and shared leadership styles to address the leadership challenges explored under the symbolic frame of Bolman and Deal's (2017) model.

### 7.5. Recommendations for Future Research

Upon completion of any study, ideas and suggestions for future research have always emerged. The researcher believes that further studies can be initiated either by the participants of this study or by other academic leaders that may have the passion to identify, explore, or investigate leadership challenges in HE. Considering that challenges are classified as macro- external, and meso- and micro- internal, a wide variety of choice has opened for potential studies. The analysis of data and the findings presented may also encourage academic leaders to take up the task for future research. Furthermore, the conceptual framework proposed by the researcher may find interested researchers to re-examine the conceptual framework models used in this study. The limitations of using the conceptual models and issues that arise from their use at different stages of the model application may also provide enough incentives for researchers to pursue further research.

Methodological and methodical changes could probably reduce the number of limitations or eliminate all of them. Due to the small number of HEIs in Ontario, a relatively small sample (nine participants) was used to address leadership challenges in HE. A number of similar studies could be initiated with larger population sizes in a wider area, either geographical areas of Western Canada, Central, Eastern Canada, or even from the whole of Canada. These proposed studies would not require the same provisions of protecting confidentiality and anonymity as in this study. Nevertheless, nine participants were adequate for the purpose of the current study, and the sample size is approximately one-fifth of the 45 HEIs in Ontario. A larger subsample could have been selected,

representing more departments and faculties of these HEIs. Due to small population, and the selected sample size, there is always the risk associated with the analysis of data presentation that correlated participants' attributes with responses and subsequent themes, to reveal the participants' identity.

During interviews, participants expressed their views and perspectives concerning HE leadership challenges in Ontario and how these challenges have affected the HEIs. Many participants commented about the "gap" of this research study and its impact on HE. To remind the reader, unaccomplished social structural reforms by the governments of Ontario and Canada can damage a well-functioning HE sector and could eventually destroy it. The researcher initially thought that he could pursue a study as a Social and Economic Development (SED) study in the HE environment in Ontario. Although a proposition by the researcher to the mentors and supervisors of this programme was made, the study was not approved as it was beyond the DBA areas of specialisation, and a PhD programme in the related field of sociology, political sciences, or economic studies would have been the appropriate fields of studies to pursue. Therefore, a number of studies in the related fields, referred to above, can be initiated as a result of this study's outcomes.

As the number of participants sceptical of pursuing public policy reforms in HE in Ontario is almost half of the total number of academic leaders who participated in this study, a number of research studies could be initiated to address HE leaders' reservations. Educational leadership studies may well be extended to forces and sources to explain the "why" of change as academic leaders may express discontent in a number of issues in HE. SALs are sceptical of change and have expressed concerns about the priorities (first and second/second order), scale, foci, the timing, and the degree that refer to the "what" of change in HE. Last, SALs need to

examine the target of change, which refers to the outcomes, and what is the best approach to adapt (Kezar, 2001, pp. 2-3).

Furthermore, studies about HE, and particularly leadership experiences, show that sensemaking theories may prove vital to link the theoretical perspectives to the conceptual framework of the study. Exploring the ways SALs respond to sensemaking triggers would build on the findings of a study. Social Identity Theory was also useful to explain the SALs' roles, both administrative and academic. These experiences then inform academic leaders about their leadership practices. The academic community responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by working together in new ways, unlocking a new capacity for collaboration and innovation that did not know they had. Shared leadership styles and SALs retaining a sense of common purpose and shared responsibility, building upon shared principles and values to guide decision-making may be the way forward. A narrative analysis that more deeply studies the language used by participants in order to describe their experiences may prove to be the appropriate methodological approach.

A further extension of this present study's findings could have been to introduce Bolman and Gallos's (2011) model during the interview process. The latest simplified version of Bolman and Deal's (2017) model could have also assisted in the detection of the right frame to pursue. Prior to their published model in 1991, Bolman and Deal (1990) presented The Leadership Orientations Survey (LOS) to obtain perceptions of the leadership frames (Bolman & Deal, 1990). Such initiatives may reduce the risk of choosing the wrong frame in a study, and while this LOS initiative was applied to quantitative techniques, similar initiatives in qualitative techniques could also be employed.

Moreover, the exploration or investigation of leadership experiences in HEIs in Ontario, through the prism of social cognition theories as



sensemaking processes, could be extended to sense-giving perspectives according to Gioia and Chittipeddi (1999). The research question(s) may ask “in what ways” do academic leaders “provide meaning for their teams and for the organisations by way of their sense-giving leadership actions?”

Finally, the conceptual framework based on Bolman and Gallos (2011) and Bolman and Deal (1991, 2017) may be found to address other processes such as identity theories, questions and/or challenges that may be present in an organisation. Shared leadership styles were practiced by SALs in HEIs in Ontario, addressing the symboling frame of the above-mentioned conceptual models.

Recommendations were presented for further future studies. The next section summarises a few final thoughts that emerged from this present study and draws to a close with the researcher’s reflections on his experiences of pursuing this study.

## 7.6. Summary and Final Remarks

The thesis completion after more than four years of study was enlightening for the researcher as he faced a lot of challenges and cherished the achievements and the new opportunities from his experiences in this DBA programme of studies with Edinburgh Napier University, along with the HEIs that he was employed by during this journey. A number of outcomes were derived through this journey:

1. An outward perspective of the researcher who gained amazing insights of the running of HE systems both in Ontario, Canada, and the UK. Every change may be unsettling and destabilising for many individuals. Some academic leaders try to maintain the status-quo as it gives them familiarity with the system (HE) and knowledge of how the system operates. However, “bad habits” could develop from a prolonged exposure to a system that some individuals are using to their benefit and abusing their

right to democratic values. The Greek philosopher Isocrates refers to “Abuse of Power” (Cawkwell, 2022). These “social habits”, according to Lewin (1947, 1951), require a “new equilibrium” that can be geared up by change. Moving the system to a new equilibrium that “enables groups and individuals to move to a more acceptable set of behaviours” (Burnes, 2004a, p. 313) may be the right initiative. Changes happen all the time, and individuals should not feel that in a stable predictable environment they are privileged or entitled for services for which society has to pick up the bill. However, drastic changes can deprive individuals from pursuing HE, as many social programmes are cut, and the issue of inequality may arise. A fair balance between these two perspectives must always be struck.

In respect of the first outcome, the researcher reflected on the beginning of his journey, when authors such as Olssen (2000) appealed to his beliefs. In particular, Olssen traces the welfare mode of liberalism to John Stuart Mill, who articulated an “ethical” qualification to classical liberalism in response to the inequitable conditions of the mid-nineteenth century competitive society. For Mill, this “ethical liberalism” entailed a role for the state in increasing the possibility of self-development. An ethical view of liberalism argues for an extension of the state based on its potential for self-determining freedom and equality. Olssen also refers to Ruth Jonathan (1997), who offers a contemporary articulation of “ethical liberalism” that is “impressive” from the standpoint of educational inquiry... [since it] provides a philosophical critique of the New Right reforms in education under Thatcherism and a defence of public provision of education (p. 494). In his critical evaluation of Jonathan’s overview of the New Right’s rise, Olssen argues that the advent of neoliberalism must be explained within the context of the contradictions of the capitalist economy and the welfare state economy. For Olssen, Jonathan’s assertion that “... the state’s retreat from regulation represented a populist demand for

reduction of bureaucracy, an increase in democracy and a renewed concern with the rights of the individual” (p.505) does not constitute a suitable explanation of the “... transition of the welfare state to the free market” (p. 504).

2. The second outcome, and an inward perspective, is the better understanding about the application of the sensemaking theory to leadership challenges in HE, experience that is valued by the researcher in his capacity as an academic in a HEI. Weick (1995) related sensemaking to problem setting as a key component of professional work. He asserts that, “Problems... must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain... Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend them” (Weick, 1995, p. 9).

Weick also argues that people engage in sensemaking when they are confused by uncertainty due to “information load”, “complexity” and/or “turbulence” in their environment and/or “ambiguity” arising from multiple interpretations of their environment. Weick describes these as triggers for sensemaking, or “threshold[s] of dissatisfaction” related to such confusion, causing individuals to “intake action to resolve the dissatisfaction” (Weick, 1995, pp. 84-91).

According to Pratt (2022), who cited in response to (Elrod & Ramaley, 2020) journal, “HEIs have faced Covid-19 as a requirement to make adjustments in the say collaboration is the key to survival amongst the “new normalcy”. As shared in the article of shared leadership do we use Birnbaum’s four models of organisational functioning? Or do universities/colleges take an approach and allow internal and external input towards change? Even though shared leadership is key, the time

frame to act now and impact the future is also key to sustaining institutions, staff, faculty, and students after Covid-19.

These outward and inward perspectives conclude this study. As the research questions provided answers, and the findings can be applied into HEIs OCM processes, that is an accomplishment to the researcher as member of the academic community, a final statement is made:

**“Our future is a shared one, so let’s take a shared leadership approach to get there. After all, we are in this together”** (Elrod & Ramaley, 2020, p. 3).

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## APPENDIX A – Letter of Ethical Approval

Edinburgh Napier  
UNIVERSITY



The Business School  
Edinburgh Napier University  
Craiglockhart Campus  
219 Colinton Road  
Edinburgh, EH14 1DJ  
SCOTLAND

14 September 2020

**Application reference:** ENBS-2019-20-054

**Title of proposed research:** "Researching of Key Challenges but also of Great Opportunities for Senior Academic Leaders in Higher Education in Ontario; Excelling under a Neo-liberal Policy Reform".

Dear Philippe,

The application you submitted to the Research Integrity Committee has been approved.

Please use the above application reference if you need to demonstrate that you have received ethical approval from the Business School Research Integrity Committee.

Good luck with your research.

Regards,



Matthew Dutton  
Convener, Research Integrity Committee



## APPENDIX B – Letter of Information and Consent

Project Title: Researching of Key Challenges but also of Great Opportunities for Senior Academic Leaders in Higher Education in Ontario; Excelling under a Public Policy Reform.

Document Title: Letter of Information and Consent

Principal Investigator + Contact : Philippe Liberakos, DBA, Edinburgh Napier University

Additional Research Staff: N/A

Invitation to Participate.

You are being invited to participate in this research study about the key challenges but also of great opportunities for academic leaders in the changing landscape of higher education, due to public policy reforms implemented by the government of Ontario. Your experiences and your perceptions are relevant to the impact policy reform may have on organisational change management, the main theme of this study.

### **Why is this study being done?**

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences and the expectations of academic leaders of higher education institutions, as they navigate through the organisational change management and, the tensions, dilemmas and opportunities that arise as a result of the public policy reform introduced by the government of Ontario.

The purpose of this interview is to explore your leadership experience in light of any organisational change management and/or higher education

institutional changes that your institution has undergone in the past 20 years. This interview will include questions about your professional reflections, your perceptions, views, perspectives, motivations, and strategies you had to implement, in order for you to enact your role at the middle-management level, in this changing environment, and the impact these reforms may have on Organisational Change management at the institutional level.

### **How long will you be in this study?**

There will be one study remote Microsoft Teams meeting for the purpose of conducting a 60–90-minute interview with you. You will also have an opportunity to review our interview recording and transcript within one month of the interview.

### **What are the study procedures?**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in one semi-structured interview remotely, using Microsoft Teams, at a time convenient for you. The interview should take between 60 and 90 minutes. With your permission, I will be recording our interview on the Microsoft Teams voice recorder. You can ask me to stop the recording at any time during this remote interview, and of course, I will not resume the recording unless you agree. With your permission, I may be writing some notes during our remote interview as well. You can of course record this remote meeting as well to review your interview data at a later date.

### **What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?**

There are no known risks to participate in this study. This remote Microsoft Teams meeting is meant to comply fully with COVID-19 safety conditions, in accordance with community and Ontario provincial guidelines as well as with the instructions of Edinburgh Napier University.

**What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

Participation in this study may provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on the meaning that they derive from their work, and to reinforce positive experiences associated with serving students, faculty, and their community through their roles in higher education institutions.

Participation in the interview process may prompt self-reflection that reveals an increasing sense of self-worth, awareness and identity associated with the role you enact through your work as an academic and/or administrative leader of the institution.

Potential benefits to society may result from providing evidence of the effects of the organisational change that the institution is undergoing to meet set criteria reforms implemented by the Ministry of Ontario's Colleges and Universities. This study may propel further research studies in the area of organisational change as they may relate to the institution's specific mandate, outcome-based evaluation processes and changes in socio-economic development environment in Ontario.

**Can participants choose to leave the study?**

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you. If you wish to have your information removed please let the researcher know.

**How will participants' information be kept confidential?**

Your privacy will be protected in the following ways:

You will not be identified in the reporting, publication, or presentation of this research; as a researcher, I will assign pseudonyms to each participant and their institution. Every effort will be made to ensure your



anonymity. Note that because of the small pool potential participants, and despite my best efforts, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Personal information (name, institution of employment, and email address) will be collected for the purpose of arranging interviews and returning transcripts for your review. These personal details will be recorded in a schedule of interviews on a calendar which will be stored independently from any personal or work-related calendars and will store electronically in an encrypted file on my laptop. You will only be identified on field notes and transcripts by pseudonym and/or coded identifier. A master list cross referencing names and institutions with pseudonyms and coded identifiers will be stored separately, in an encrypted file on a memory stick stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. Scanned copies of the original signed consent forms will be also stored in an encrypted file on a memory stick, stored in a locked cabinet in my home office.

I will keep the audio recordings and written notes from our interview in a separate locked cabinet in my home office. Data without personal information will be stored on my laptop computer, which is password protected. This laptop computer is backed up on a hard drive in my home office; this back-up hard drive is also password protected. Data without personal information will also be backed up on a memory stick that will be stored in this locked cabinet in my home office.

In accordance with Edinburgh Napier University policy, these data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years. Only the Principal Investigator and me will have access to the information collected for this study. However, while unlikely, it is possible that representatives of Edinburgh Napier University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Also note that while I will do my best to protect your information as described above, there is no guarantee that I will be able to do so. If data are collected during the study, which may be required to report by law, I have a duty to report.

After 5 years, all paper documents will be shredded. All electronic documents will be destroyed by deleting them from my laptop, and by physically destroying backup memory sticks that had been stored in the locked cabinet in my home office. All audio recordings will be physically destroyed as well.

**Are participants compensated to be in this study?**

You will not be compensated by participating in this study.

**What can participants expect of any publication of this study?**

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact me and I will provide you with the copy of the published material.

**What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. I will provide to you, any new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

**Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have any questions about this study, please contact: Primary Contact, Principal Researcher: Philippe Liberakos, BA, MBA, DBA

Candidate at Edinburgh Napier University [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact: The Office of Research Ethics, [ethics@napier.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@napier.ac.uk)

Thank you for your participation in this research. Please keep this letter for future reference.

## APPENDIX C – Statement of Consent

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. All my questions have been answered. By signing this form, I am agreeing to take part in this remote research study.

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
Signed		(and time)

### Researcher's Consent

I have personally explained the research to the participant. I have answered all the participant's questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this informed consent and consents to participate.

Name of Person Obtaining	Signature	Date
Signed		
Informed consent		(and time)

## APPENDIX D – Email Script for Recruitment

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research.

You are invited to participate in a study that I, Philippe Liberakos (Researcher), am conducting. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and expectations of academic leaders in higher educations in Ontario, concerning the key challenges and but also, the great opportunities that they encounter, enacting their academic and administrative roles, under the neoliberal government policy reform impacting Organisational Change Management at the institutional level. Please review the attached Letter of Information and Consent for information about the study.

Your participation would involve one 60-90 minutes remote interview meeting, using Microsoft Teams at a time of your choosing. I would also follow up with you to review your recorded interview data with you, after the interview. You would not be compensated for your participation in this study.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please indicate so in a reply email to me, the researcher. If you do agree to participate, you can provide me with the signed consent form prior to our arranged remote interview meeting.

If you would like more information about the study please contact me, the researcher Philippe Liberakos at the contact information provide below.

I look forward to hearing from you in the next week.

Thank you,

Philippe Liberakos, (BA, MBA, DBA Candidate and Researcher)

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## APPENDIX E – Interview Protocol

Project Title: “Researching of Key Challenges but also of Great Opportunities for Senior Academic Leaders in Higher Education in Ontario; Excelling under a Neo-liberal Policy Reform”.

Researcher: Philippe Liberakos BA, MBA, DBA (Candidate)

### **Introduction:**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of the study is to explore academic leaders’ perspectives, experiences, views, perceptions, motivations, and strategy implementation concerning public policy reform initiated by the government of Ontario and its impact on Organisational Change Management at the institutional level as a main theme.

The purpose of this interview is to explore your experiences of institutional responses to international trends under neoliberalism, resulting to changes in Organisational Management. Your role as an academic leader is pivotal, and I am examining also how these changes have affected the higher education institution department or faculty you administer.

Questions will relate to your perception of enacting your academic and administrative roles, at the organisational management level and the meaning that you derive from your work.

This interview should take between 60 and 90 minutes. I will be recording our interview on the Microsoft Teams voice recorder. You can ask me to stop the recording at any time. I will be writing some notes during our interview as well. I will keep the audio recording and written notes in a locked cabinet in my home office. You will not be identified in the reporting of this research; I will give pseudonyms to each participant and their institution. Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity.

Questions: (Semi-structured the order may vary, depending on the participant's responses).

### **Interview Questions**

General questions and information to show relevance and position of the senior academic leader (the participant) of the institution in this study.

- What is your professional title and position in the institution?
- How long have you been with the institution?
- How long have you held office under your present position and title?

The following questions deal with the impact that public policy reforms have on the OCM, and the implications these changes may have on middle-management level of HEIs in Ontario:

1. What are the greatest challenges that you are facing at the institutional level?
2. In your view, how can academic leaders manage reforms at the organisational level?
3. Which organisational strategic responses will you employ for the institution's transition to the new era?
4. In your opinion, how can organisational change management enhance operational performance in the faculties and the departments of HEIs in Ontario?
5. How do you envisage the future of HEIs in Ontario in 5 years' time?

**Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study with me.**

## APPENDIX F – Participants’ Responses Using Metaphors.

**Participant 1.** *‘What is the right economical model for education is always a challenge for any public institution...as revenues versus expenses is always an issue [challenge]’, ‘we are [acting] with an entrepreneurial spirit. But we are still publicly directed, especially in Ontario, we are under the direction of the ministry. And, you know, funding is always a challenge as it is around the world for institutions. So, we probably found great solutions, international students, and creative ways to deliver programmes. And there is not a hurdle that cannot be overcome. So, I do not have any issues with the policy direction and [during] the last 20 years in education [my experiences are], that is different with each government, but we manage, and move forward’, ‘[reform] is the world we live in, there is reform, and we are outdated. I mean, the education system needs drastic reform. I mean with this that we spend a lot of taxpayers’ dollars. And so, I am for reform....’, ‘So, I think if anything, we do not change quick enough, where I think, the system is outdated. And I think, too many people are unwilling to change that’, ‘That there is no hurdle that cannot be overcome’, ‘drastic changes are required, and public policy reforms are not pursued quickly enough by academic leaders in Ontario.’*

The participant, using metaphorical referencing, was characterised by the researcher as the **‘entrepreneurial’** SAL who pursues public policy reforms. This leader possesses great initiative and radiates powerful leadership skills that may help to achieve the set goals for the institution. The ‘entrepreneurial’ participant uses the unitary managerialist approach to power, focusing on achieving goals and objectives. This participant



doesn't believe that mediation between the academic community and the Board would be an appropriate function for a dean; they believe exercising unitary power after communicating with the Board would be more appropriate. "Leadership skills and providing leadership" would best describe the roles and functions exercised.

Furthermore, this participant acknowledges that a dean is responsible for acquiring the necessary funding and distributing it to different departments for projects and initiatives. They use persuasion, informal negotiation, relation building to pursue public policy reforms. Therefore, this 'entrepreneurial' SAL was clearly classified Code F by the researcher, as one who favours change and pursues public policy reforms. The participant stated that the HEI complies fully with the corridor system; however, the funding received was based on the funding formula.

**Participant 2.** *'I think [change] it occurs on a regular basis, whether it be new policies being implemented, or revisions of existing policies. But my experience with policy development or policy change at my institution, is relatively slow. Their [MTCU] process is what do you talk about change, change happens rapidly, but the policy change from an institutional perspective do not equate to the rapid speed of the changes that are occurring, the policies tend to be an after effect.'*

Regarding policy reform: *'Usually, I take an institutional direction first, myself, I also tried to keep abreast to any ministerial or government issue documentation or research, but the institution does a pretty good job of sort of keeping administrators in the know and communicate on a regular basis, whether it's a memo or a directive that comes from the ministry, usually, when the ministry asks for something or gives an announcement, it's pretty, pretty quick for our admins to know, to be able to support, or react, or respond. So, I would say it is both internal and external for me.'*

The above participant has experienced significant organisational change. They see great potential for growth, but they are frustrated by the lack of policy clarity and constrained by organisational resistance to change. Metaphorical references included *unit/teamwork*, *navigating through change*, and therefore the researcher envisioned this participant as the ‘navigator’. The attributes assigned to this participant were thoughtful, taking prudent steps forward, engaging in teamwork, and making the right suggestions to satisfy the academic community’s concerns. The researcher characterised this ‘navigator’ participant as a cautious and at times sceptical SAL concerning policy changes; and one who addresses key challenges that required specific directives by the MCU to proceed with the policies. However, the participant is uncomfortable with the role of the mediator, interpreter, or moderator, preferring the role of communicating, clarifying unclear aspects of a policy with the policy sponsor, consulting with higher management to confirm the rollout or questions around how to execute that policy, and finally executing the policy as directed. The pluralist approach to leadership appeals to this participant; therefore, the researcher classified this leader as Code: S, indicating they are sceptical about the order, scale, foci, degree, and timing of change. The ‘navigator’ has handled probable conflict with accommodation by giving way, and collaboration by solving the problem together, most probably using dialectical models in organisations.

**Participant 3.** *‘Right now, our mandate is to serve the community as such, but, and this is a Canada-wide problem, a world-wide problem, not as much just generic to our institution, is the domestic student growth levels are declining, as people are not having, more and more, less children...’, ‘So, over the past a few years, which also aligned with some initiatives that the government of Canada are putting in place, is the increase of immigration and the attraction of international students, which*

*helps the institutions in many different ways, financially, culturally, and so forth.'*

The participant addressed the public policy change as a necessity due to demographics and changes in social and economic development conditions. The participant positively viewed the influx of more international students and examined the flaws of international students enrolling to HEIs in order to acquire permanent residency which, negatively affects the quality of HEIs. Although there was some scepticism about some of the public policy implementation processes, the researcher felt that this participant was Code F: Mostly in favour of change and public policy reforms. The participant's suggestions for restructuring their education team and the years of persistence have strengthened their resolve to continue to improve synergies between academic departments in their centralised structure. They felt that institutional obstacles could be overcome if strong leaders view flexible deliveries as untapped potential for their institution and encourage creative pairings of previously unrelated activities integrated across all academic departments. This participant's use of expressions such as *'...it is all in a standardised fashion, ...sample size screen to how effective this size would be... and multiple dimensions too, so not just from one side, you need it from all angles, ...pivot to accommodate..., tailor, right, tailoring our offerings to that,'*

led the researcher to characterise this participant with the leadership role of the **'master tailor.'**

**Participant 4.** The following passages were selected from this participant's responses:

*'Well, the public policy change started to come in the 90s. And I was a member of parliament, and an academic during that. And I strongly supported and encourage the internationalisation of Canadian*

*universities. I had seen, what it had done to British universities, that was wonderful. I was there many times in the 90s. I saw their classes...’, ‘...it was remarkable to see, and I think, was one of the reasons, pretty sure, universities have remained.’*

Clearly, this academic leader supported the public policy change and the HE reforms; therefore, the researcher assigned Code: F, as the participant is in favour of change and public policy reforms.

This participant recalled experiencing significant organisational change over the last 30 years. They were eager to optimise opportunities for HE reorganisation according to British standards, and strongly supported and encouraged the internationalisation of Canadian HEIs. The enjoyment of challenges, the fast-paced nature of leading HEIs, and use of phrases such as:

*‘The competitive edge, and great opportunities for HEIs, winning, rankings, and (university) spots, progressive point of view, in the game, etc.’*

led the researcher to characterise this participant with the leadership metaphor of the ‘**competitive coach**’. This is in line with cultural models according to which change occurs because individuals see the need to grow, learn, and change their behaviour. As described in Chapter 3, in cultural models, “change occurs naturally as a response to alterations in human environment; cultures are always changing. The change process tends to be long-term and slow. According to Schein (2010), “change within an organisation entails alteration of values, beliefs, myths, and rituals” and Schein further describes organisational culture as “the foundation of the social order that we live in and of the rules we abide by...and it is created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated by leaders” (Schein, 2010, p. 3). However, although some of the challenges addressed were considered of utmost importance, this SAL has

approached these challenges with mediation, caution, informal negotiation, relation building, and careful planning prior to executing public policy reforms using the pluralist approach to middle and higher levels of HEI management levels. This SAL was keen to fight for funding and the funding of initiatives.

**Participant 5**. The following comments were transcribed through the interview:

*'Because I used to describe the Ontario system as three circles. Okay. So, what happens if one circle are the bigger universities in the inner circle does something, it is like, hitting a strobing string on a guitar, it ripples throughout the system', '...so, once you have got somebody that isn't trumping the University of Toronto's praise, okay.'*

The experience of this participant within the HE system in Ontario is expressed through the '**music composer**' metaphor. The 'composer' participant radiates practically driven leadership approaches that have supported their team through recent fiscal challenges. Statements such as:

*'Okay, this was a masterful [HE] system, where everybody could basically have their cake. Okay, and the government never was that anxious about getting too involved in universities. But it allowed them to say to the public, okay, we have got a system on, I used to say, Ontario's got the most diverse system of universities in the world, considering it's not a system, but so it's slowly becoming that way'*

hit the 'keynote' for the researcher, to classify this participant as Code: F, in favour of change and public policy reforms. 'Tuning and refinements' are the suggestions made by the music 'composer' concerning the challenges of SALs in HEIs. The participant seems to be in favour of

sensemaking theories which changed the literature from the study of “the organisation” to that of “organising”, using mental models (Weick, 1995). The participant may also favour, culture and identity theories as organisational influences and tensions may arise among and between subcultures, as they seek alignment towards shared goals. Mitigation strategies may be necessary to address these challenges.

**Participant 6.** The following statements were selected from this participant’s interview session. Concerning the metrics fulfilment requirement attached to funding processes of HEIs by the government the participant had commented:

*‘There is no change there. I think (change) has not been implemented because of Covid... There were discussions, but no, nothing has been put forward. So, as I understand it, we are back in the drawing board. I think everything with all these discussions about implementing, evaluation, and all, they are not on the table anymore. I think things have been pushed back until we are back into normalcy.’*

There are currently significant government requirements for universities to engage in quality assurance, strategic plans, and other very “teleological” practices; however, under the present circumstances (Covid-19 pandemic), none of these plans have been implemented according to this participant’s understanding. They also have no knowledge of an overarching plan for bringing together localised energies and initiatives, which might lead to organisational anarchy.

This participant’s years of experience were grounded in a value-driven leadership approach. They have supported their faculty team through recently suggested changes, such as the metrics-based funding changes and more accountable and transparent governing of universities. A prevailing sense of optimism informs this participant’s positive attitude towards community and individuals. Comments such as *‘obeys what, at*

*the end of the day...I do not want to make any predictions...public institutions will remain strong as we move forward', are all metaphors that led the researcher to characterise this leader as the 'caring chaplain'.*

*'Fortunately, in Canada would not have privatisation at all. So, this [HE] is a public product that we offer, and will remain that, there is no question about that.'*

The researcher classified this leader as Code S, so sceptical about change that this SAL is in denial of any public policy change. A cognitive process whereby the individual develops a mental model to make sense of the organisational environment may appeal more to the 'caring chaplain' leader. The participant also appears to believe that sensemaking between individuals, which is a social process, occurs between people as meaning and is negotiated and mutually constructed.

**Participant 7.** The following comments were made by the participant:

*'The challenges that are facing the university are myriad. So, let us get the obvious out of the way. The obvious is the budget challenge and you will hear that from everyone, I am sure. Of more interest to me is a kind of existential challenge to what it is that we are doing, so, the systems and the structures by which we are operating', '...one of the challenges that we face related to that is increased competition for training from the private sector.' There are other drivers [of change, – meaning the metrics] that ... make no sense to anybody, ... the whole thing will crumble under the weight of the process that the ministry and this kind of thing happened in Quebec, ... it is too difficult for us to define some of these metrics, ... so, the thing will pull apart.'*

The above statement led the researcher to clearly classify this participant as Code: S, Sceptical about change and public policy reforms, this participant also believes that the suggested changes are bound to

collapsed, providing the example of Quebec HE public policy change attempt.

The leader has enjoyed relative stability in organisational structure, albeit a structure that reinforces a separation of HE with the enrolment-based funding model and which imposes metrics evaluation for acquiring funding. This participant nurtures their team's independent spirit with practical guidance that reinforces the benefits and advantages of independence. Metaphors heard in the interview included *'holding the whole thing together, maintaining boundaries, fighting complacency, observing a changing landscape, grey zones, they don't understand the culture, impose discipline to the institution, just show us the path, the ministry tail wagging the university dog or to use another metaphor, it's like a leash that the ministry is trying to use to pull us in different directions, and at some point we say, well, now we're going to pull the other direction.'*

The researcher envisioned this SALs' role with the metaphorical representation as a **'nomadic shepherd'**, tending to guard their flock, protecting them from predators and guiding them to market. This SAL acts as a mediator between the higher and the lower levels of management, fights for most needed funding, and assigns funding to projects and initiatives. Acts of de-prioritisation, passive resistance, and avoidance may have been practised by the participant for issues that, according to this leader are absurd, vague, make no sense, or not properly addressed by the higher level of management or the government itself. The participant appears to believe that conflict arises whenever interests collide. As described in Chapter 3, there are any number of combinations of experiences that can lead to conflict as confusion within oneself or among a few people, ideas, allocation of resources, value and purpose of work, organisational structures, and so forth.



**Participant 8.** The following passages have been used to identify this participant:

*‘Top of my mind, it was served even whole bunch of other, more politically oriented goals. And so, we are sitting here trying to navigate. A world that has imposed a system... You know whether or not one believes conceptually that performance based funding is a good thing or a bad thing, I would say, even if you believe in it, would have to recognise that this particular implementation of that concept has a number of very serious problems with it, including your observations around the fact that, we neither have been collecting the data that can support this in a good way, nor that the government seemed to be really investing seriously in an effort to generate these data.’*

This participant raised concerns in relation to the government public policy reforms ‘*imposed upon*’ and presently implemented. The participant is classified by the researcher as Code: S, sceptical about change and about the public policy reforms implemented by the MCU.

These creative, thoughtful, exploring, analytical, and at times critical views, well focused and in detail, made the researcher characterise this SAL as the ‘**explorer**’. This participant acts as a mediator between the lower and the higher levels of management, fights for funding, and prioritises funding according to the needs of the department after consultation with fellow team leaders. Indeed, comments as ‘*navigate, seek out other sources, room for improvement (in HE), we must make this hard decision, we must choose this difficult option*’ may well describe the ‘explorer’ participant. “Conflict arises whenever interests collide” (Morgan, 1986, p. 155). There are any number of combinations of experiences that can lead to conflict within oneself or among a few or many people, such as ideas, allocation of resources, value and purpose of work,

organisational structures, and so forth. Different people handle conflict management in different ways. Morgan cited the following styles: avoidance, compromise, competition or rivalry, accommodation by giving way, and collaboration by solving the problem together (Morgan, 1986, p. 192).

**Participant 9.** This participant's comments are echoed as follows:

*'We are trying to come up with this (public policy reform), the solution that's going to work for all of us. But at the same time organisational alignment and overall mandate is going to be still the prime concern. And people are going to have to understand that sometimes they will not get what they want, and they may have to accommodate the change as best they can.'*

The participant realises that there are gaps and issues of major concern; however, as an academic leader, regards change as inevitable and tries to accommodate it. Therefore, the researcher has classified this leader as Code: F, mostly favouring change, and pursues public policy reforms with some reservations.

*'... the ability to create, ultimately, a shared vision, initially a vision, and then you sell it, right. I keep the well-being of my personnel in mind first, so I tried to make sure that certainly in this environment, there are a lot of factors to keep in mind, the isolation, mental health, all those sorts of things, depression, the increasing demands of the institution and the students, but creating a go forward vision.'*

Another experienced SAL who has enjoyed relative stability in organisational structure, albeit a structure that requires adjustments, strategic responses, and constant consultations with the academic community, the Board (of Governors) and the MCU. The participant recognises challenges that such a strategic shift brings to leading teams

through the transition. Metaphors such as '*... constant process of communication and negotiation, ... keeping people on board,*' led the researcher to categorise this leader as the '**developer/builder**'. Change occurs because SALs, change agents, and others see the necessity of change. Change processes are predominantly bargaining, consciousness-raising, persuasion, influence of power, and social movement.

The process that the researcher has followed in analysing the participant's responses from the interviews conducted, is to effectively analyse the findings from question 1 of all nine interviews. If question 1 was not addressed, or answered by the participants in a different context, the overlapping responses of the participants to prompt and probe questions of questions 2, 3, and 4 may be referred to, in order to clarify, add/or substantiate the findings in completion.