

**PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN MEXICO REGARDING NEEDED  
ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETENCIES**

A Dissertation

by

ELSA MARIA GONZALEZ Y GONZALEZ

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2004

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

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**ABSTRACT**

Perceptions of Selected Senior Administrators of Higher Education Institutions in  
Mexico Regarding Needed Administrative Competencies.

(December 2004)

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Higher education institutions have an important role in changing societies; those in developing countries present an ample spectrum of differences, particularities, and needs. The role that senior administrators play as managers of those institutions is fundamental in the decision making process; consequently, it is very important that those administrators possess the needed attributes during the development of their endeavors. The purpose of this study is to identify the competencies needed by senior administrators in higher education institutions in Mexico, as current administrators project them.

The naturalistic paradigm of inquiry was used to frame the study and acquire and analyze data. The sample consisted of twenty senior administrators from eight Mexican higher education institutions. The researcher visited those campuses on three trips between June 2001 and March 2002. Data came from three sources: interviews with respondents; observation of participants before, during, and after the interview sessions;

and analysis of records and documents. Data from interviews were unitized and sorted into categories. Some of the conclusions of the researcher included:

- Social forces and trends inside and outside of Mexican higher education institutions are pushing the need for a senior administrator with a broad understanding of the national situation, with the resources to support the national initiatives, and with the ability to make appropriate responses in their own institutions.
- Identified needed competencies for the future higher education senior administrator are organized by personal characteristics and skills, administrative competencies, competencies of social responsibility, and institutional competencies.
- Public university leaders believe that they face more difficult situations in their institutions than their private institution counterparts in order to adapt and change.
- Differences between and within public and private higher education institutions in Mexico make evident the need for specific training for their senior administrators to achieve professional development necessary to the specific needs of their institutions.

## DEDICATION

I give my thanks to those who have helped me in many ways throughout this study. To my mother-in-law, Angelina Cervantes Medina, for her love and encouragement and for being there for me when I needed her the most.

To my parents, Victor Manuel González de Luna and Elsa María González Baltierra, who since my youngest years taught me to do my best, and inspired me in the idea that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to. They are the foundation of this journey; and they have taught me the most valuable lessons in my life: to love, to have faith, to be honest, and to believe in people. Thank you for all the many things that you have done for me. *Los quiero mucho.*

To my brothers, Victor Manuel, Juan Manuel, and Luis Manuel whose personal qualities have always inspired me to continue pursuing greater goals and to be a better person. Thank you for always being there; you all are very close to my heart. I love you all.

To my “little angel”, Elsa Angelina... the love, the miracle, and the beauty of my life.

And especially to my husband, Juan Carlos, without whose support and encouragement I would not be here. He has been the one who most believed in me, many times more than myself. Our bond dates back more than eleven years ago when we first met in the University of Guanajuato. It was serendipity that brought us together, but

it is love that has kept us together. To my partner in this and many other adventures, to my friend from life, my love always. *“Tú pequeña”*.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank and show my appreciation to the senior administrators from eight Mexican higher education institutions who enthusiastically participated in this study. They opened not just the doors of their institutions, but also their hearts, and in some way they showed me their eagerness and also their disappointments, their dreams, and, as one executive put it, their “academic adventures” that they are willing to talk about. Without their interest and assistance, this research effort could never have been accomplished. The participants of this study are current and former senior administrators of the following Mexican institutions:

- Coordinación General de Universidades Tecnológicas
- Instituto Politécnico Nacional
- Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México
- Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey – Campus Querétaro
- Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes
- Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro
- Universidad de las Américas Puebla
- Universidad Iberoamericana – Campus León.

I want to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the co-chairs of my committee, Dr. Yvonna S. Lincoln and Dr. Kenenth E. Paprock.

Dr. Yvonna S. Lincoln has been so kind to share with me her wisdom, has always provided me with mentorship, moral support, empathy, and generosity throughout all the years that I have been so fortunate to know her. Since the beginning of this research, Dr. Lincoln showed a deep interest on the study, encouraged me to go beyond my mindsets,



and trusted my judgments. I have had the honor to work closely to Dr. Lincoln, and through out this experience I have learned to love the academic profession.

Dr. Kenneth E. Paprock has been very important in my learning process; he has shared his experiences which have been very helpful for me to be an independent thinker.

I would like to thank my committee members for their support, inspiration and guidance: Dr. Don Seaman, and Dr. Clifford Whetten; and a special thanks to Dr. Maricela Oliva, who attended my dissertation defense meeting and provided me with advice and guidance in the last part of this journey. All of your comments, observations, and suggestions have supported enormously the beginning of this study and the continuation for future research.

I also want to thank all my friends that during this journey encouraged and supported me through the years, many of them already former students, and some others doctoral students in the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development, thank to all of you for your valuable friendship.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the important support received from the National Council for Science and Technology of Mexico (Conacyt).

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The world is facing important and rapid changes with the advance of scientific and technological knowledge. In the case of Mexico, the university as well as other educational institutions can contribute to this transition, a process of change (Patlan, 1997).

Universities are recognized as both maintenance organizations because of their roles in the socialization of people and the transmission of culture, and adaptive structures because of their roles in creation of knowledge (Katz & Kahn, 1978). The need for higher education institutions to better adapt to the demands of rapidly changing societies is recognized in many countries, especially in developing countries such as Mexico. Adaptation and change in higher education institutions could be facilitated by the presence of clear goals, where the assistance of higher education senior administrators can contribute enormously. Consequently, the achievement of organizational goals in higher education institutions depends greatly on the ability of administrators to work together effectively and professionally. Changes in society require a new type of professional higher education senior administrator, one who can deal with rapid change.

Some of the reasons that justify the study of higher education senior administrators in Mexico are: the important role that higher education institutions have in changing societies; the important roles that administrators of these institutions actually play in the

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The style and format for this dissertation follows that of *The Journal of Educational Research*.



decision making process, as managers; and, the identification of specific needs based on the different kinds of universities and different student clienteles.

Competencies for senior administrators in higher education institutions in Mexico have been studied; one of these studies has been carried out for the National System of Technologic Institutes (Felix & Saul, 1999). Another is a study of competencies for directors of the University of Guadalajara. Related to these studies, the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) proposed the professional development of senior administrators with training programs that ANUIES organizes, either alone or in conjunction with other programs. The need to identify competencies by criteria such as location, type of higher education institution, and specific characteristics of executives, is also documented by Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior (1999). However, there has been thus far no comprehensive research. This last statement and the fact that there is not enough research in this area, make this study an exploratory inquiry.

Higher education administrators in Mexico utilize different titles, depending on their position. “Rector” refers to the president of the university, and “director” may refer to provosts, vice-presidents, and/or chief senior administrators. For the purpose of this study, I have used the term “senior administrators” and “executives”, trying throughout the text to explain the position of the person whose reference is presented.

This study is based on the perceptions, opinions, and interpretations of Mexican higher education senior administrators regarding how their institutions look and function in the present; what they will look like and how they will function in the future; how

their own roles have been affected by the changing situations they face in their own contexts, and consequently, what are the competencies that senior administrators will need in their universities in the near future. Special emphasis is placed on the differences between public and private institutions. Following the pattern of most of Latin America, the distinction between public and private higher education is more marked in Mexico than it is in the U.S. In Mexico, public universities are almost exclusively financed by subsidies from state and federal governments, whereas private universities are almost completely funded from private sources and tuition (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1995).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although research and literature are available regarding the general roles, skills, and competencies of the educational administrator in Mexico, there is no consensus about the competencies that educational administrators in higher education institutions need in order to face the challenges of the new millennium. Neither is there evidence of enough research in this area in Mexico. Rapidly changing societies require professionals with new competencies and the professional in higher education administration is no exception. Therefore, the need to identify those competencies that Mexican higher education senior administrators require in order to face challenges of the new millennium in their specific kind of institutions is critical.

Some strategies have been proposed in order to address this need (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior, 1999). Among them

are the use of professional development programs offered by ANUIES, and other national and international organizations. However, these programs do not offer specific programs for institutions tailored by the kind of institutions, their culture, and the specific needs that developing countries represent.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify the competencies needed by senior administrators in higher education institutions in Mexico. In addition, it was necessary to gain an understanding of trends, constructions, and the cultural understandings of these senior administrators based on the perceptions that they have of their own institutions and the competencies needed for their positions.

The researcher began this research study with the following assumptions:

- Respondents will be able to identify and articulate both the present and future situations of their institutions in a changing environment.
- Respondents could identify social forces and trends that are affecting those institutions.
- It was also assumed that there are differences between public and private higher education institutions in Mexico.
- In a qualitative approach, the context in which the study was conducted has a large influence on the findings; and finally, the applicability of findings is limited to these institutions.

## **Research Questions**

Five research questions guided this study:

1. What social forces and trends are provoking recognition of the need to identify competencies for the professional effectiveness of senior administrators in Mexican higher education institutions?
2. What do current senior administrators think are the competencies that future senior administrators should have in order to be prepared for changing higher education institutions in Mexico?
3. How do senior higher education administrators in Mexican institutions feel that they are prepared to change? To adapt?
4. Are there differences between private and public higher education senior administrators in Mexico relative to their perceptions about the kinds of senior administrators that the future higher education institutions in Mexico require?
5. Are there differences by gender of higher education senior administrators in Mexico relative to their perceptions regarding competencies that future higher education directors in Mexico will require?

## **Definition of Terms**

Bureaucracy is “the type of organization designed to accomplish large-scale administrative tasks by systematically coordinating the work of many individuals” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 107).

Competencies are conceived as “complex structure of attributes (such as knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes) needed for intelligent performance in specific situations. It incorporates the notion of professional judgment” (Gonczi, 1996, p.12).

Higher education senior administrator is the educational senior administrator who is usually reporting directly to the president of the higher education institution in Mexico. He/she supervises numerous departmental directors or coordinators. The senior administrator usually “has policy making authority and sits on an executive team with the president” (Tillotson, 1995, p.36).

Gender is “a cultural term; it describes the characteristics we ascribe to people because of their sex, based on our cultural expectations of what is male and what is female” (Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry, 2000, p. 258). According to this study, gender is the sex (male, female) of a respondent.

Private University in Mexico is “the university that is almost completely funded from private sources” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1995, p.5).

Profession is “the activity characterized by two broad features: acquisition and especially schooled application of an unusually esoteric and complex body of knowledge and skill, and an orientation toward serving the needs of the public, with particular emphasis on an ethical or altruistic approach toward clients” (McGaghie, 1999, p. 3).

Public University in Mexico is a “university that is almost exclusively financed by subsidies from state and federal governments” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1995, p.5).

### **Significance of the Study**

The identification of these competencies can help in the preparation of future senior administrators in higher education institutions in developing countries, but in particular it could assist in their professional development by kind of institution. The next cadre of leaders is coming with a recognized need for professional development. Consequently, it is important to understand the context and particularities of higher education institutions where they are situated.

The need for this research is also identified by Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior (1999) in one of their most significant documents, “Higher education in the XXI Century”. In this document, ANUIES proposed 14 programs to improve higher education in Mexico according to the vision that the association has for the higher education system in the year 2020. One of these programs is focused on institutional administration. In this program, ANUIES affirms the need for improving the efficiency of the people who are in senior administrator roles. The document comes from the analyses of perspectives of higher education institutions in Mexico, where the association recognizes the diversity of the institutions, and therefore it proposes that each institution develop its own strategic development plan tailored to its own situation, culture, and needs.

### **Contents of the Study**

This study will be reported in five chapters. Chapter I is an overview of the problem. Chapter II includes a review of literature, which took into account the description of the

Mexican higher education system, its Mexican context, and the role of higher education senior administrators, their competencies and their unique situations in the Mexican context. The methodology used in the study is described in Chapter III. Chapter IV is the report of the data analysis from the interviews to the higher education senior administrators studied; and likewise, from observations and analysis of documents made during the research trips. In addition, it includes a thick description of campuses and participants in the study. The last chapter includes a summary of the findings as well as conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The particularities of higher education system in Mexico and some of its differences alongside the U.S. system will be described in this chapter. In addition, some of the historical, political, economic, and cultural differences that developing countries have and that consequently affect their higher education institutions will be explained in the subsequent pages. All of this serves as a framework to understand the situations that Mexican higher education senior administrators live in their institutions and how those situations affect the way they perform their roles and the needs of professional development.

#### **The University**

##### *A Brief Historical Review*

As one reflects on the long and colorful history of higher education, the temptation runs strong to conclude by drawing parallels between past and present, between what once was yesterday and what is today. The impulsive is to try to link events separated from one another in time, to draw out broadly defined thematic connections, to locate basic continuities and patterns in the flow of things. Admittedly problematic, the enterprise is hazardous if carried too far. Straining after precedents, for example, readily lends itself to distortion, as does didacticism of any sort in historical inquiry. Respecting the historical autonomy of past events, treating their unique, contingent identity on their



own terms, so to speak, is an obligation that must always be borne in mind (Lucas, 1994, p. 299).

In order to understand the current situation that universities face, it is important to be aware of the historical development that these institutions have had. The first idea of a university is during medieval times, where a community of masters and students get together in order to learn and advance learning as apprentices. Through out the history, great centers of advance learning have existed at various historical points, in many different cultures around the world (Lucas, 1994). Until the nineteenth century, universities were solely teaching and training institutions; then research started playing some role with the university founded by Humboldt in Berlin, and later emulated all over the world. The German research university model was emulated in the United States, particularly by the private universities such as John Hopkins, Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Chicago (Husén, 1996).

Husén (1996) described how until the mid-twentieth century, the university in Europe was an elite institution. In the United States the Morrill Act of 1862, and the founding of the so-called land grant colleges, opened the doors of universities to “practical” studies relevant to agriculture and industry.

The change from an élite institution to a mass institution happened in the following century. From 1950 to 1975, university enrollment “exploded” in several European countries, the United States and in some developing countries. The enrollment increase was accompanied by the diversification and specialization of training programs and research activities. “Practice” entered a scene that had previously been dominated by

“theory”, which had enjoyed much higher prestige. During the last few decades a new role for the university has been considered, which consider to provide recurrent education regarding a strategy of alliance between the world of employment, the government, and the education service (Husén, 1996). However, talking about the history of higher education is always ambiguous. Considering that “different types of knowledge have enjoyed varying degrees of status, prestige, and authority, and their hierarchical rankings have changed enormously over time as a function of a diverse array of social factors” (p.312).

### *The University Today*

Higher education today is how Morsy (1996) put it talking in terms of a kaleidoscopic reality. He explains:

Higher education throughout the world reveals a wide range of academic systems, from the highly centralized (China and France) to those which are almost completely decentralized (India and Canada); from federal systems (Germany and the United States) to systems where the private sector is in competition with the public sector (Latin America and Japan); from systems which, until quite recently –and even today—are fragmented, with numerous and overly specialized establishments (the former Communist countries of Europe) to systems that are virtually carbon copies of others (some countries in Africa and the Arab States) (p.ix).

The diversity described above is increased because of the broad array of contrasts that each country presents. Universities are among the oldest organizations in the world and have proven resilient over several centuries of socioeconomic and political change. Nevertheless, institutions of higher education around the globe were facing unprecedented challenges as the new millennium approached. Among those are the extraordinary growth in enrollments, present lately in most Third World countries; the

sanctity of autonomy, in its many facets and claims; and the gap between the knowledge and skills produced by higher education and the needs of the societies around it (Morsy, 1996). Scholars and administrators have been cautioning about misfits between external demands and current responses to change (Sporn, 1999).

In her study, Sporn (1999) claims how successful organizational adaptation for college and universities requires new and innovative strategies to respond to the changing environment for higher education. She found a number of factors driving the requirement of change, such as:

- a) The increasing persuasiveness of technology in many different areas of public and private life. Throughout society, the use of computers is being extended for writing, accounting, learning, or playing; in addition, new patterns of communication and learning are emerging.
- b) The economies of many countries have forced state governments to reconsider how to allocate funds to higher education.
- c) Demographics are changing as well. The population entering universities and colleges now consists of increasing numbers of students from different age groups, ethnic backgrounds, and varied experiences prior to their entry into higher education.
- d) Globalization has led to the increased mobility of faculty, students, and staff and to a stronger need to standardize services and performances.

Consequently, these forces have led to an institutional environment dominated by claims for public accountability and more responsibility on the part of institutions of higher education. These new environmental demands are triggering an internal response

from universities around restructuring, because “a responsive campus is one where efforts at change are encouraged and implemented” (Tierney, 2000, p.20).

Higher education institutions recognize the urgent need for change, innovation, and reform; however, they keep facing barriers in this process. Five major obstacles for change are identified by Tierney (2000): a) lack of agreement; b) unclear timeframes and structures; c) lack of evaluative criteria; d) inability to articulate changes to the rest of campus; and e) cultural exhaustion and rigidification of the system. Tierney cautions us that not only is the identification of problems important, but also the understanding of how to overcome those obstacles, and how institutions with particular cultural realities plan to respond.

Higher education institutions around the world are facing these realities. Each has its own vision of how to address the problem. A broad explanation of the particularities of the higher education system in Mexico is presented next, in order to introduce the reader to an understanding of the system and how higher education institutions in this country are being affected.

### *Mexican Higher Education System*

Universities in the Third World countries have usually been patterned on European models. The “eurocentric” system of university education has been hampering universities in these countries in releasing endogenous creativity and seeking their own cultural roots (Husén, 1996). Latin American higher education was organized during the period of independence mainly from Spain, in the early nineteenth century. Growing

slowly for about 150 years, higher education went through a period of explosive growth in the 1960s and 1970s, and leveled off again in the 1980s. Those are the main stages in the development process of universities in Latin America (Schwartzman, 1996).

Historically, the Catholic Church was the founder of colleges in Mexico, as a part of the Spanish colonizing enterprise before independence in 1821. The struggle for political independence was manifested in ideals of secularism, appreciation for technical knowledge, and a general attack on the traditional university institutions (Schwartzman, 1996). Many of those colleges later were transformed into the current public universities in Mexico with the support of public money. The first colleges of Mexico were founded as an expansion of the Spanish universities during the Mexican colonization in the sixteenth century. The first university in Mexico, the Real Universidad de México, was created on September 21, 1551 by the authorization of King Carlos of Spain. The first courses started on June 3, 1553. The university started following the same statutes as the University of Salamanca, in Spain, and does so until 1645, when the university started following its own laws and rules. The first library of the university was founded in 1761, with more of ten thousand volumes and manuscripts. With the Independence War in 1810 and many other social and political movements in the country during the century, the university was closed and reopened several times. It was not until September 22, 1910 that the Constitution Law of the National University of Mexico was approved by the Congress of Mexico (Silva-Herzog, 1999).

Article 3 of the Mexican Constitution says that education must be secular. However, even with this law, and because of the need of education in the country, the Secretary of

Education allows religious groups (such as Catholics) to open schools, mainly at the pre-school, elementary, and high school level. All these institutions have to follow the same curriculum as the public schools, which is determined by the Secretary of Education. In addition, there are some universities, for instance the Universidad Iberoamericana, which was founded and organized by Jesuits priests.

The university in Mexico is based on the French model, which influenced the autonomy movement in the university in the 1920s, pushing for a social education meaning education for social welfare and the benefit of the society. Silva-Herzog (1999) described, the autonomy of the National University of Mexico was authorized in 1933, being the movement promoted by President Abelardo L. Rodríguez. The initiative establishes that the federal government would provide financial support for the university, but that it would respect the institution's autonomy regarding its internal governance and organization.

In Mexico, college education is found in two and four-year options. Undergraduate instruction in the so-called "Technologic Universities" (a system that opened approximately 10 years ago) offers a similar model to two-year community colleges in the United States. This option is much aimed at the workforce and designed according to the needs of the community. This system is public and fully funded by federal and state governments.

The second type of higher education instruction is four-year model, which can be either private or public. The big difference between these last two types is in the source of their funding; private institutions do not receive any funds from the government. They

are financed by tuition, projects, and funds from the Board of Directors. Public education, on the other hand, is almost totally funded by federal and local moneys. These institutions also received money from projects but usually from the Secretary of Education (SEP) or the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) – which depends of the federal Government—, but rare is the project funded privately. Tuition in public universities is most of the time "symbolic"; based on Article 3 of the Mexican Constitution that says, "the education must be free". There is a tremendous amount of controversy nowadays, because it is becoming impossible for the Government to support public higher education that is growing and wants to maintain quality. Private education is based on market theory and other American ideologies; public education is based in the idea of free and equal education for everybody. However, independent of the type of institutions, higher education in Mexico has been challenged by the pressures of the market (Ireta, 2003).

The Mexican higher education system shares many of its singular characteristics with the rest of Latin American universities (Bond, 1997):

Latin American universities, while sharing basic premises about the fundamental nature of the institution, carry out the academic activities in many ways. Many new, private universities have been established. Most institutions have reeled under the multiple assaults from continuing massification of higher education, instability of wider economies, insecurities associated with political upheaval, and increasing public demands for accountability and excellence. However, the specific ways in which the individual institutions have responded to these larger social transformations and those required of their own internal policies and practices differ. These differences are, in part, reflected in the participation patterns of women in higher education (p.3).

Some figures regarding higher education in Mexico will show its disadvantaged position: only 1.7 percent of the population is enrolled in a bachelor's or graduate degree program in a Mexican university (National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education, 2000). Additional data in this regard are presented next in the description of the economic and demographic context of higher education in Mexico.

### **The Context of Higher Education in Mexico**

Rowley (1997) studied the importance of taking account of the context in which leadership is exercised. He recommended pursuing this kind of research by geographic areas of the country, which can allow a better and deeper understanding of those institutions and their leaders. Rowley talks about the predominant administrative style of higher education because of its embedding in a given context.

In this section the focus is on a broad description of the context that surrounds higher education in Mexico as a way of introducing the reader to the context that the participants from this study face every day in their institutions. Many factors influence higher education in Mexico; their actors, their process, the institutions, and consequently the complexity in how they interact have become object of study for many scholars (Rodríguez Gómez & Casanova Cardiel, 1994). In order to understand and analyze the current situation of higher education in Mexico, it is necessary to present some demographic, economic, political and social data pertaining to the Mexican context. As a developing country, Mexico experienced many changes during the last decade that still are impacting today's society: (1) economic changes such as the economic crisis in



December, 1994; (2) commercial changes such as NAFTA in 1994, and the beginning of negotiations between the European Union and Mexico in November, 1999; (3) political changes such as the emergence of new political parties in the last local, state, and federal elections; (4) and technological changes. Even with all these changes, there is no doubt that many traditions, cultural customs, and norms from the past are present in Mexico.

Higher education institutions in Mexico are not indifferent to or untouched by this reality, and one thing is true, that these institutions are no longer the traditional universities that they used to be (Ibarra Colado, 2001b). Rodríguez Gómez (1999), talking about higher education in Mexico, claims “it has developed into a system which its academic, social, and political functions became highly complex as well as diverse, given the variety of institutional options and professional development schemes” (p.53). Public and private institutions face many challenges because of the larger changes in the country. Two notable tendencies are present in these institutions: One is the increasing enrollment of students; the second is the insufficiency of governmental funding for higher education (Martínez Rizo, 2000).

In addition, it is important to understand one of the essential characteristics that differentiate these institutions in Mexico. Following the pattern in most of Latin America, the distinction between public and private higher education is more marked in Mexico than it is in the U.S. In Mexico, public universities are almost exclusively financed by subsidies from state and federal governments, whereas private universities are almost completely funded from private sources (Secretaría de Educación Pública,

1995). The issue of public versus private education has its roots during colonization, and it is explained by Schwartzman (1996):

In colonial times, when the only universities in the continent were those organized by the Catholic Church, in close alliance with the Spanish Crown. Political independence, in the early nineteenth century, led to the establishment of secular higher-education institutions, usually based on the Napoleonic model of state-controlled professional “faculties” or schools (p.123).

### *Demographic and Economic Context*

Demographic and economic data related to social and educational development in Mexico, serve as the context to analyse higher education and understand its reality (Cuétara, 2001). According to the most recent census during 2002, the Mexican population is more than 97 million; it ranks eleventh among countries with the highest world population, and it is considered to be mostly young, with a median age from 15 to 19. The proportion of females in the population is above 50%. Another important piece of data is that the illiteracy rate in Mexico, in 2000, was 9.57% (7.48% male illiteracy vs. 11.48% female illiteracy).

Ireta (2003), based on information from the National Institute of Geography and History, presents a good overview of the economic and demographic context that affects higher education in Mexico.

At the time of 2002 census, the population of Mexico was 97.5 millions of whom 33.7 million were economically active. Three regions are the key to the national economy: the central zone, whose pillar is Mexico City, has seven states that contain 33.8 percent of the total population of the country; the west, represented by the city of Guadalajara, consists of four states with 12.0 percent of the population; the northeast, anchored by the city of Monterrey, has three states that make up 9.1 percent of the population. These three regions and their 14 states (out of 32) account for 68.2 percent of the official employment (p.102).

Data about higher education students say that the number of enrollees in Mexican universities was 1,627,340; 875,824 of them were men and 751,516 were women. The great majority of the Mexican population, which is a “young” population, remains outside of the higher educational system. Thus only 16.64% of Mexican between 20 and 24 years of age had access to it (INEGI, 2000).

Following the “zones” that Ireta (2003) describes, of the total 1,585,408 students studying for a bachelor’s degree, the central zone has 39.3 percent, the west has 10.7 percent, and the northeast has 12.7 percent. Those students studied social sciences (49.8 percent), engineering and technology (32.4 percent) and health sciences (9.0 percent). Those three areas represented 91.2 percent of the bachelor’s degree candidates.

The context creates significant but subtle differences in the way we understand the reality of these universities. ANUIES is the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions in Mexico; according to Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior (2003), only 20% of the population between 19 and 23 years attended higher education in the 2000-2001 academic year. These figures are low considering the standards set by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and other international organizations; however, this compares favorably to the data from a decade before. In 1990, only 12.2% of the population in the 19-23 range was attending school.

According to the statistics of the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) in Mexico, about 68% of students were enrolled in public institutions and 32% in private in 2000.

However, there are important differences between levels, for example. In undergraduate education, one could find that 68.6% attended public institutions and 31.4% attended private institutions; in teacher preparation, 60% were studying in public institutions and 40% in private; and in graduate school, 59.4% enrolled in public institutions and 40.6% in private.

As a trend, enrollment in higher education (and other levels) has grown steadily (even during the economic crisis years of the 1980s and 1990s). From 1950 to 2001 the enrollment in higher education (including associate degree, teacher preparation, undergraduate and graduate programs), public and private, grew 72 times (from 29,892 to 2,156, 470 students). A study conducted by Martinez (2000) showed that while in 1950 there were only eight private institutions in Mexico, in 1989, there were 327 and in 1999, one could find 873 institutions. The ratio of institutions (public to private) shifted dramatically, from an 80% public – 20% private ratio in 1950, to a 43% public to 57% private in 1999, to a 31% public –69% private ratio in 2002. However, this growth has not been even across public and private subsystems. From 1970 to 1995 private enrollment grew 10 times while enrollment in public institutions grew only 5 times. The biggest force behind this growth is the proliferation of non-university higher education institutions or low profile universities.

### *Political Context*

Historical antecedents to the current political context of higher education in Mexico are described by Schwartzman (1996):

In the early 1960s, the contrasts between the modernization drives of Latin American societies and the narrowness of their political regimes led to intensified political activism, followed by unprecedented levels of repression. Political repression came from the confrontation of students, and sometimes teachers, activism against the military regimes that emerged more or less at that time in many countries; not forgetting the massacre of students in Mexico City of 1968 (p.121).

The cycles of expansion, repression and insurrection came to an end and opened the stage to more calm in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In Mexico, as in any other country, many activities are undertaken because of politics and political realities. We can identify a specific action program in higher education for each one of the last presidential periods since 1970. Every Presidential period in Mexico (six-year term) produces different programs and activities, including those addressed to education and higher education. ANUIES, even as a non-governmental institution, is capable of being influenced by these presidential periods, for practical reasons such as budgets, planning, and elections.

The year 2000 represented a Presidential change for Mexico, and all those changes began to affect society and its institutions. This was a crucial moment for identifying the senior administrator that the new reality in the country requires.

### *Social and Cultural Context*

In Latin American countries with “expansion of privatization, higher education remained homogeneous horizontally, but became increasingly stratified vertically. Expansion could be expected to lead to different institutions doing different things, responding to varying needs of different people” (Schwartzman, 1996, p.124). This tendency is checked and analyzed by different groups because it can become a way of discrimination by classicism, a form of racism.

The literature is clear in their analyses, explaining how horizontal homogeneity has not led to more equality, but to increased stratification. In addition, Schwartzman (1996) explains how the society and the labor market are classifying degrees and schools:

There is little incentive for less prestigious careers like teaching and technical work, and extremely high rates of failure and frustration in the competition for the most prestigious degrees, now supposedly accessible to all. Where in the past, a secondary-school diploma was an achievement, today anything less than a four-year university degree is a failure (p. 124).

However, besides these situations, society demands more and more higher education institutions. Many Latin American authors support the phenomenon, with the idea that in the end, education supports the development of democracy, the preparation of society, and the economic development of the population (Rosales, 2000).

### **Senior Administrators in Higher Education**

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) are now operating in a rapidly changing environment, given economic, societal and technological developments. Other factors such as cost containment and lifelong learning are forcing these institutions to adopt flexible structures that can adapt quickly to market demands (Sporn, 1999). Changing institutions require a new type of professional in the upper echelons of higher education administration. Altbach (1996) explains: “as academic institutions become larger and more complex institutions, there will be increasing pressure for a greater degree of professional administration. The administration of higher education will increasingly become a profession, much as it is in the United States” (p.30).

*International Perspective*

Higher education senior administrators, in order to maximize organizational goals, must give particular attention to rational activities such as collecting and analyzing data, calculating cost-benefit ratios, establishing systems for communicating directions to those who will implement the decisions, collecting information from others to ensure accountability, and constantly comparing outcomes to objectives. In addition, from a cultural perspective, many roles of administration may largely consist of symbolic actions (Birnbaum, 1988).

During the World Conference on Higher Education, in November 1998, the goal of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was to create favorable conditions for a sweeping debate and to increase awareness of the principal issues in this important field. Twelve thematic debates were organized. “Higher Education Staff Development: A Continuing Mission” was one of the themes of those debates. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1998). During this debate, UNESCO (1998) proposed that in businesses there is a wide recognition that staff skills need to be continually strengthened and enhanced. However, the question emerged: “Should not the same be true of our institutions of higher education?” UNESCO answered, explaining that these institutions are crucial to national aspirations for economic development and, if such capacity building aims are to be achieved, the institutions will have to make the most effective use of all of their human resources.

In the case of higher education senior administrators, UNESCO mentioned that their challenges are immense. They engage decision making and strategic re-direction in new and very uncertain environments. Some of the competencies that UNESCO found necessary for HE senior administrators are leadership skills, which will be essential, as will communication and persuasive skills in convincing academic and administrative colleagues of the need for changes in long established habits. Leadership roles will center on the management of change and on reconciling the essential need to adapt what elements and characteristics are usually present in conservative institutions, with the opposition and uneasiness that such change causes.

Throughout the world, many experienced voices have expressed their opinions about the need that higher education institutions have regarding the professionalization of their senior administrators. The Secretary of State for Education and Skills (2003) presented an analysis of the present and future of higher education in England, and concluded recognizing that “their universities need the full range of professional skills among their managers and administrators”. Moreover, “excellent leadership and management will become increasingly important”, as a result of more complicated environments, exceptional challenges, and organizations with a vast array of different functions and components (p.78).

*Competencies for higher education senior administrators.* Many studies have been conducted around the topic of leadership in higher education; one of the most solid is that done by Kouzes and Posner (2003). In over twenty years of research, they have studied leadership in many different settings and organizations. One of the results of



their research is the “Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership” model. This model challenges two of the most widely-held myths of leadership: 1) leaders are born, they are not made; and 2) leadership is associated with position; when you are on top you are automatically a leader. This model challenges these myths and claims that leadership is “an observable set of skills and abilities that are useful whether one is in the office” (p.97). “Any skill, like leadership, can be strengthened, honed, and enhanced, given the motivation and desire, through practice and feedback, and with good role models and coaching” (p. 97). With this premise they present leadership as an identifiable set of skills that are available to each of us; this is not the exclusive province of a “few charismatic men and women” (p.1). The model is based on five practices: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. They have found that these practices are common whatever one’s position on campus. Kouzes and Posner’s research also nominated characteristics and qualities that people look for in their leaders. There are four key ones that have been constantly found during the last two decades of research: honest, forward-looking, competent, and inspiring. In their book, the authors observed that the “Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership and the characteristics of admired leaders are complementary perspectives on the same subject” (p.13).

Throughout their book (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) they mention other skills that emerge from administrative practices; these skills include patience, listening skills, perseverance, understanding of the needs, innovation, teamwork, collaboration, and trust building. They place special emphasis in the credibility and humility of the leader as the

foundation of leadership. Their research leads us to the conclusion that “leadership is learnable”. The study and identification of what skills in specific contexts and positions are needed is important in order to promote the development of these skills among leaders (Kouzes and Posner, 2003).

Rowley (1997) claims that the traditional concepts of academic leadership are closely associated with individual excellence or personal academic achievement. This idea was found and recognized repeatedly during the interviews of this study. The importance of academic leadership in managers at all levels in higher education is asserted by Rowley. This research supports the idea of collecting data from managers at different levels of the universities in this study.

The author claims that the future of academic institutions depends on the development of effective leadership skills at all levels in the organization. Leadership skills are identified from different authors as characteristics that can be cultivated and improved. Rowley (1997) presents theories that identify personal characteristics of leaders. However, a common idea shared by many authors is that the emphasis on simply individual personality and talent is no longer viewed as the sole determinant of a good leader. One theory includes the following characteristics: intelligence, initiative, self-assurance, self-confidence, and ability to understand a situation at different levels of detail. Another theory identifies five areas of leader expertise: cultural representatives, communication, skilled managers, planners/analysts, and advocates of the institution. Those theories are important because they seek a framework based on the qualities of exceptional leaders in terms of personal characteristics and skills; additionally, they can

help to identify potential leaders. In other words, leadership skills can be learned; they are not exclusive to those individuals with special talents or who were born with leadership characteristics.

Tillotson (1995) studied top-level student affair administrators, where the importance of their skills was identified; her results involve an analysis of technical, human and conceptual skills. This analysis is based in Katz's approach, which actually looks for the selection and development of administrators based in skills used in doing their job effectively.

In addition, UNESCO identified a set of needed competencies, although not specific to Mexico, as the following: people management skills, such as team building and helping staff to develop themselves; academic and professional skills; understanding of financial and cost issues; sensitivity to new developments in the external environment, such as competitive threats; customer consciousness; strategic awareness of the institution's position; and understanding how to use institutional decision making processes in a collegial environment. With respect to developing countries, UNESCO says that there are particular problems that affect the ability of administrators at all levels to acquire the skills described.

The need for professional development of higher education administrators, and the need for research around the topic, is no new. These needs have been identified for many authors during the last three decades (Wilson, 1980; Ennis, 1976).

*Women higher education senior administrators.* Through the years, the importance of women leaders in higher education institutions has been recognized by UNESCO in

different ways, one of which is the Special Project on Women, Higher Education and Development (1986-2001). UNESCO claimed that in order for women be more present in higher education institutions, their skills as leaders must be recognized and further developed (Bond, 1997). Singh (1998) proposed several ideas regarding developing countries and women in higher education institutions, claimed that the need to upgrade the qualifications of administrators must necessarily continue receiving priority in developing countries. There remains a significant difference in the qualification profile between developed and developing countries. For example, in 1991, most developing countries' higher education administrators with doctoral degrees ranged from 10 to about 40 percent compared with 50 to 60 percent in developed countries.

The other discussion point for Singh was the presence (or absence) of women in education administration in developing countries, which she identifies as under-represented in higher education administration. Administrative leadership remains the domain of men in Latin America and all over the world, by the year 2000, "only 7 per cent of universities worldwide are led by women" (Munford & Rumball, 2000, p.92). The Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLASCO) in 1995 presented a report to UNESCO where at the level of institutional leadership in a senior administrative capacity, the numbers of women participating in the life of the university are significantly less than men. Bond (1997), in her study for UNESCO, concluded:

Basic numerical data available make it apparent that while women are exercising a wider range of choice in their own lives and careers at the entry level of university study and academic work, the very important domain of administrative leadership remains primarily the domain of men (p.4).

Additionally, as women continue to advance in every field of endeavor, the impression that equality has been reached and that gender issues no longer pose real problems has naturally gained ground. Yet, many cultural, economic, and social barriers remain. Although as many women as men possess the skills necessary to shape social and economic development, women are still prevented from fully participating in decision-making processes. Universities are one of the essential institutions that provide women with the education and leadership skills necessary for their advancement (Kearney, 2000). The way has been long but it has been worth it; the first woman to head a collegiate institution was appointed to a public college in the United States in 1872. From then to now, the assumption that the presidency “is not a woman’s job” has no place in higher education either now or in the future (Tisinger, 1991). By 1990s, the appointment of women occurred so frequently that it ceases to be news in developed countries (Touchton, Shavlik, & Davis, 1991).

Women are an essential force in administrative positions, in view of all the obstacles that are taking place in higher education institutions, as well as in other organizations. A metaphor to suggest why so few women attain leadership positions despite their credentials is the term “glass ceiling”, used first in a report from the *Wall Street Journal* in 1986. The glass ceiling “graphically describes the relative scarcity of women leaders throughout the entire social structure” (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, p. 143). But again, besides all the barriers, thanks to the women that are facing those, the way is now open, and other women will travel it, finding the going a little easier, and moving beyond (Fretwell, 1991).

Perry (2000) claims that women “based on their natural skills for conciliation and negotiation, can uphold and inculcate values for a more equitable and human society, their innate traits can be brought to the areas of social and business leadership” (p.40). Their particular traits influence the way feminine styles of leadership can be carried out in universities from developing countries, changing the tendency of mainly males in senior administrator positions, and asking them to cover the specific needs that women in those positions have for professional development. A new kind of leadership style has been introduced by many women in senior administrator positions in universities, a style being described as democratic and interpersonal oriented (Ronning, 2000; Diez, Valle, Terrón, & Centeno, 2003).

Several studies have stimulated the research on the leadership styles of women. Specific reference has been made to the field of educational management, based on the fact that education is numerically dominated by women, but managers in education are predominantly male although there is some evidence of a growing willingness of women to take up leadership positions in education (Pounder and Coleman, 2002). However, some authors claim that research on the leadership styles of women is new, mainly those written in Spanish or/and regarding Spanish speaking countries (Diez, Valle, Terrón, & Centeno, 2003). The affirmation regarding the lack of this kind of studies might be expanded to most developing countries.

Pounder & Coleman (2002) mentioned studies where no significant differences were found in the competencies that male and female managers display. Another study by Gillet-Karam in 1994, researching men and women presidents in two-year colleges,

concluded that leadership skills are more apt to be situational than gendered (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). The present study includes data from some women senior administrators in higher education institutions, and it supports the importance of going deeply into the study of differences in gender-leadership styles, especially in different contexts, including international ones.

### *Mexican Perspective*

There is no certainty that higher education institutions are prepared to move as rapidly as they will need to, in order to help to prevent Mexico from being left behind in the global economy. Higher education senior administrators play an essential role in their institutions in order to face the current demands to which their universities must attend.

In developing countries such as Mexico, it is important to understand the link between bureaucracy and decision-making processes, professionalization, and the differences between public and private institutions. Likewise, historical, political, religious, and cultural differences determine how these institutions look today. Clarifying these particularities will make it easier to understand the reasons why, in many cases, important positions are occupied by persons without all or some of the required competencies (Cleaves, 1987).

Some authors claim that Latin American universities present very low efficiency by almost any indicators, and some of the reasons they pointed out are the lack of norms on efficiency measures, and the lack of a tradition of careers in university administration.

Some of the identified suggestions for improvement include: the introduction of modern information management systems to allow for the assessment of costs and productivity, the establishment of evaluation mechanisms, and the training of university administrators in the use of these tools (Schwartzman, 1996).

Consequently, professionalization in important positions of university administration, where important decisions are made, is another highlighted issue. McGaghie (1991) claimed that professionals are individuals who use technical or specialized knowledge and skills in service of the public welfare. He explained the importance of evaluating the competence of professionals in order that the services delivered by professional persons are effective and safe. Cleaves (1987) presented important information to assist in understanding Mexico's situation in the area of professionalization in higher education. He outlined the historical development of professions in Mexico, and the differences from the American system. Even though higher education systems differ in almost all aspects, there is a common rising interest between Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. to reduce the effect of these differences vis-à-vis academic mobility and collaboration (Secretaria de Educación Pública, 1995).

Changes in society are requiring a new professional in higher education administration, one who is prepared to deal with rapid change. The situation gets complicated when to the lack of professionalism in higher education administration is added very different and often contradictory notions of the role of universities. Different efforts have been carried out in order to support the solution of this problem. Some of the most important, because they affect all the institutions of higher education in



Mexico, are those of the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions of Mexico (ANUIES), a non-governmental association that includes most of all higher education institutions in Mexico. Its objective is to improve the functional quality of associated institutions. The agreements undertaken in the association serve as suggestions and recommendations for the institutions.

In the literature are identified different actions carried out by ANUIES during the last three decades in order to improve the performance of higher education administrators. Among them are: the Open Course of Administration of Universities and Higher Education Institutes in August of 1975 (Phelts & Rodriguez, 1977), the Integrated Program for the Updating, Specialization, and Development in Higher Education Administration in October of 1984 (Pantoja, 1984), and the National Program for the Improvement of the Administration of Higher Education Institutions (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior, 1990).

Some authors pointed out that it would be naïve to expect that Latin American higher-education institutions make changes on their own, but it would be worse to pretend that those changes come through government imposition (Schwartzman, 1996). However, whatever Latin American universities do in the future with regard to higher education; it is good always to have strong universities, competent scholars, and professional administrators in the well labeled “renewed university” (Ibarra-Colado, 2001a).

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in this study was primarily exploratory and descriptive, with the intent to generate a clear, accurate portrayal of the perceptions of one group in a particular context, without looking for generalizable conclusions. The study sought the perceptions of higher education senior administrators in Mexico regarding the competencies needed in order to efficiently perform their roles.

#### **Using Naturalistic Inquiry**

The naturalistic paradigm of inquiry was used to frame the study, and to collect and analyze data. The naturalistic paradigm was chosen because, as Merriam (1988, p.6) states, “the selection of a particular design is determined by how the problem is shaped, by the questions it raises, and by the type of end product desired.” Once the problem was identified, and the research questions established, then the methodology was designed.

The problem in this study was to understand the competencies that senior administrators identified as key in the development of their endeavors in Mexican higher education institutions. Because educational trends and initiatives are different between countries, it is not surprising that developing countries, such as Mexico, present specific needs dictated by their cultural realities, and specific institutional criteria including location, kinds of institutions, and gender of the senior administrators. It is critical for these institutions to gain an understanding of trends, abilities, constructions, and cultural understandings of current managers who are living the process of change in both public

and private institutions. As Jarvis (1999) mentioned “—our individual collection of knowledge, action, and feelings associated with specific set of conditions—is social, and because people rarely work in total isolation, they are exposed to the social pressures that are operating in their social situations” (p.64).

The naturalistic (or constructivist) paradigm subsumes five axioms or assumptions inherent in this study. First is the axiom that “there are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). These concepts best can be understood through a holistic research approach that takes into consideration the complexities of the administrative experience, personal and professional developments, and the adaptations required during the senior administrator experience. Because these experiences are subject to the vagaries of the human condition, they require the use of a methodology that “automatically assumes the existence of multiple realities” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 72).

The second axiom states that the researcher and the researched interact to influence each other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the researcher necessarily must have influenced the respondents. Merely expressing an interest in the senior administrator’s opinions created an interaction that influenced the study’s outcomes.

The third axiom rejects the possibility of generalizations, stating that “only time-and context-bound working hypothesis are possible” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). Indeed, the experience of senior administrators whose shared constructions exist in a few universities cannot be translated as representative of all higher education senior administrators’ experiences in Mexico. While some of the research findings may be

transferable to other, similar institutions, that determination is not incumbent on the original researcher, but instead on the individual who later seeks to apply the findings in a different context and time.

The fourth axiom concerns the possibility of causal linkages, and assumes that “all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). Thus, linear causality is rejected as explanatory for such studies.

Finally, the fifth axiom refers that “inquiry is value-bound” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37); the study is influenced by the values of the respondent, and likewise by the context of the higher education institution.

Lincoln and Guba call the paradigm that brings the investigators together into conjunction with one another, “constructivism” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Constructions

come about through the interaction of a constructor with information, context, setting, situations, and other constructors (not all of whom agree), using a process that is rooted in the previous experience, belief system, value, fears, prejudices, hopes, disappointments, and achievements of the constructor. To fall back on the terminology of the philosophy of science, constructions come about by the virtue of interaction of the knower with the already known and the still-knowable or to-be-known (p.143).

Background knowledge of each university enabled the researcher to frame questions about current happenings in the course of the interviews. The need to establish a shared understanding of context with the interviewees is a confirmation of the groundedness of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

No a priori theory could anticipate the many realities that the inquirer will inevitably encounter in the field, nor encompass the many factors that make a difference at the micro (local) level. Local theory is an aggregate of local understanding that without

the intervention of the researcher would remain isolated, and we may presume, tacit (p. 205).

### **Research Design**

The population for this study was all senior administrators from higher education institution members of the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES). According to Sudman (1976): “If... individuals within institutions are the members of the population, these institutions become clusters for sampling” (p. 146).

ANUIES is a non-government association that represents a guild of the most important Mexican higher education institutions which are nevertheless diverse in character and legal structure. The Directory of ANUIES includes a total population of 2,569 higher education institutions in Mexico (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior, 2003). Out of these, 1,044 (41%) are public and 1,525 (59%) are private institutions. Only 123 higher education institutions are members of ANUIES; these institutions are the most representative of higher education institutions in Mexico (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior, 1998), and they are also the most visible.

### *Sites, Respondents, and Sampling*

Purposive sampling was used to identify senior administrators in Mexican higher education institutions from the ANUIES’s directory. Respondents from public and private universities in Mexico were interviewed and asked to suggest other potential

respondents, thus creating a loop of purposive “snowball” sampling that identified participants who otherwise might have been overlooked (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Natural settings already established and functioning were selected, using dimensional sampling to select the institutions from which data was obtained (Arnold, 1970; Paprock, 1986). Dimensions used for these purposes were geographic location of the institution, kind of institution (public or private), and gender of the director. Arnold (1970) claims that “the goal of dimensional sampling is to provide a framework for drawing a purposive sample representative of the universe to which one wishes to [transfer the findings]” (p.147).

Purposive sampling is a nonrandom method of choosing respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher “begins with the assumption that context is critical” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 200) and purposely selects a sample (people to interview, events to observe) which are expected to provide a rich array of information. The object of purposive sampling is to assure that a multitude of points of view is experienced (Manning, 2000). The purposive sample of the institutions is determined by several criteria: geographic location, diversity, and accessibility to the researcher. This last was determined by selection of the contact person, a senior administrator that the researcher already knew in those institutions.

The sample consisted of twenty senior administrators from eight Mexican higher education institutions. The researcher visited those campuses during three trips between June 2001 and March 2002. These institutions are good examples of different kinds of higher education institutions: One of the institutions is the second largest public

university in Mexico; four of the institutions are very widely recognized private universities; and the rest of the institutions included in the study are public universities very representative of their regions.

The intention of the researcher was to have an equal number of interviewees by gender, but because of the circumstances (time constraints, previous commitment of the interviewees, and limitation of the financial resources estimated for this study) during the collection of data; the study included only two women senior administrators out of the twenty interviewees. Research question number five attempted to determine the presence of differences by gender in senior administration position; this is based on the importance of already identified differences that women and men experience in these positions (e.g., Bond, 1997; Singh, 1998; Pounder & Coleman, 2002).

Table 1 presents information on the higher education institutions selected for this study, including where the institutions are located, number of interviews per institution, type of institution, and trip during which the interviews were made.

**Table 1.-- Higher Education Institutions That Participated in the Study**

	<b>Location of the Institution in Mexico</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>	<b>Data Collection Trip</b>
1	Center	Private	3	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Center	Private	3	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	Center	Public	4	2 <sup>nd</sup>
4	All the country	Public	1	2 <sup>nd</sup>
5	Southeast	Private	4	2 <sup>nd</sup>
6	Center	Public	1	3 <sup>rd</sup>
7	Center	Private	1	3 <sup>rd</sup>
8	Northwest	Public	3	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Total</b>			<b>20</b>	

### *Instrumentation*

The investigator was the primary data-gathering instrument, in accordance with the constructivist methodology that states, “the researcher, by necessity, engages in a dialectic and responsive process with the subjects under study” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 44-45). The researcher entered the inquiry as a learner on par with the senior administrators that she interviewed and observed. Flexibility and training in constructivist research allowed the researcher to adjust to the respondents’ varied and numerous realities, evaluate the interactions, consider respondents’ tacit values and beliefs, and guide the study as it took place.

### *Introducing the Study to Respondents*

In order to contact the senior administrators and complete the interviews, a series of steps was followed:

1. Invitation letters to participate in this study were mailed to one senior administrator in each one of the institutions selected for this study. Examples of this correspondence in Spanish and its translation to English can be found in Appendix E. The letter explained the purpose of the research and the researcher asked for cooperation in this study. In addition, the approximate duration of the interview, which would be audiotaped with the consent of the participants, was set at one hour. A telephone contact to those who accepted the invitation was made to establish the time and date for the interviews.



2. In order to select three participants in each institution, the researcher contacted one senior administrator from each of the institutions. The selection of the second and third participant was based on the nominations by the first person. The second and third interviewees had to meet two requirements: extensive knowledge of the institution, and the ability to articulate his or her perspective.
3. In May 2001, the researcher confirmed the interview appointments at the first institution. These interviews took place June 12, 2001. The second data collection trip occurred August 13-18, 2001, during which interviews were conducted at four additional institutions. The final data collection trip took place March 1-4, 2002 and included interviews at three more. Time limitations precluded scheduling interviews with more than one senior administrator at those three institutions, but collection of data through observation techniques completed the data collection.

### *Developing Interview Questions*

An initial interview guide was developed in order to frame the most general questions to the participants. Each participant was asked slightly different questions, as appropriate. A sample of the initial interview guide is shown in Appendix A, and a sample of the last version of the guide is presented in Appendix B. Both appendices present the guides in Spanish, the way the document was used, and their translation to English. The interview guide was reviewed during the second data collection trip to permit the researcher to analyze the research progress up to that point. Two questions

regarding interest in the research and previous professional development were added to the final version of the interview guide.

### **Data Collection**

Data came from three sources: interviews with respondents; observation of participants before, during, and after the interview sessions; and analysis of records and documents.

#### *Interviews*

The human instrument was used in this study for data collection purposes, because:

Only the human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of that differential interaction; because the intrusion of instruments intervenes in the mutual shaping of other element and that shaping can be appreciated and evaluated only by humans, and because all instruments are value-based and interact with local values but only the human is in a position to identify and take into account those resulting biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.39).

The data, including perceptions, forecasts and constructions, were collected via unstructured interviews. One of the purposes for conducting interviews was obtaining here-and-now constructions of persons, events, activities, organizations, feelings, motivations, etc. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interviews also helped the researcher to understand and put into a larger context the interpersonal, social, and cultural aspects of the environment (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

The researcher used an open-ended interview protocol, which was expanded and revised as the research progressed. In addition to the interview guide, the researcher also collected demographic information from the interviewees, including but not limited to,

years of professional experience, education, experience in public or private institutions, gender, and age. These data constitute an important analytic source to understand the context and reality of each participant and their responses.

Interviewing proved to be an important data gathering technique because of its flexibility; opportunities to observe nonverbal behavior such as interaction among administrators; interactions with students, faculty, and staff; and working environment. Interviews also afford the investigator control over the direction of questioning, spontaneity of the participant, length of the interview and other conditions, and the level of complexity of questions and their interrelatedness (Spradley, 1979).

Relatively semi-structured interviews elicited responses that were most likely to identify the respondent's actual thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences involving higher education in Mexico and their projections of the required competencies for higher education senior administrators. Each interview ended with an informal member check in which the participant was asked to verify, amend, and extend the constructions, reconstruction, and speculations offered.

Most interviews lasted an hour and half, although two lasted more than two hours. Interviews were carried out in Spanish. The researcher mailed a formal letter of thanks following each session.

Interview responses were audiotaped, and informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. The consent form contained information specifying: 1) the study's purpose; 2) intent and measures taken to ensure confidentiality; 3) specification of voluntary participation; 4) notice of the right to withdraw from participation at any time;

5) agreement to allow quotation without attribution, and; 6) permission to contact later if additional clarification or information was needed (see appendix C). Consent to be audiotaped also was obtained. Appendix D presents an example of this consent, in both Spanish and English.

Conducting interviews is not always easy, and the difficulty increases in proportion to the interviewer's familiarity with the interview subject. The interviewer/researcher sometimes found it very difficult to restrain herself from interjecting her own comments and "leading" the interviewees rather than letting the participants have the opportunity to draw their own conclusions without interference.

### *Observations*

Observations and interviews were conducted at the institution sites during normal office hours. Observations of participants were conducted at the same time of interview sessions, as well as before and after the meetings. Detailed field notes were kept throughout each visit to the different campuses. Observations of people, places, facilities, offices, and reactions were recorded in reflexive journals (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A different journal was kept for each one of the three data collection trips.

Non-verbal factors recognized through observations provided additional information beyond that acquired during the interviews in regard to social transactions that occur during ordinary day-to-day activities in those universities. These observations also helped the researcher become more aware of the differences among institutions.

The reflexive journals included, in addition to the researcher's experiences while conducting the research project, a description of people on the campuses, participants, events, places, and a general description of each institution's culture. Analysis of the observations provided fundamental data necessary to understand the cultural contexts of the participants and their institutions (Spradley, 1980). "Beneath the surface, hidden from view, lies a vast reservoir of cultural knowledge" (p.6), which is difficult to understand if considerations in this regard are not taken.

#### *Record and Documents*

Documents such as institutional policies and procedures, institutional plans, organizational charts, president's memoirs, etc., were vital in formulating a conceptual sense of each organization, its staff members, and its past, present, and future. See Appendix G for a complete list of documents utilized.

In reference to the use of documents, Jarvis (1999) mentioned, "Researchers do have the opportunity of using documents both to help understand practice, and even more, to understand the situation within which practice occurs" (p.111).

Observation of senior administrator activities, document reviews, and broad consultation on the topic were all activities that assisted the researcher in exploring and assembling a contextual foundation sufficient for accurate interpretation.

### *Researcher Reflexivity*

The researcher kept a reflexive journal describing in great detail her experiences during this research project, as well as a methodological log. Three journals are the result of the three data collection trips to Mexico. These tools were kept throughout the research project to help ensure trustworthiness and to document the researcher's decisions (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Specifically, the journals included a daily schedule and record of logistics (when, where, and with whom interviews and observations were conducted); the elaboration of personal values, beliefs, frustrations, joys, and speculations that emerged as greater insight was gained; a thick description of places, people, and facilities in each institution; a detailed description of peculiar events during each trip; and rationales for using the chosen methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### *Peer Debriefing*

A debriefer must be "someone who is in every sense the inquirer's peer, someone who knows a great deal about both the substantive area of the inquiry and the methodological issues" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Given the previous consideration, a peer debriefer was selected for this study. A doctoral candidate who was in the process of finishing his dissertation was selected. His seven years of experience as associate director in a public university in Mexico, his clear vision of public and private higher education institutions in Mexico, and his familiarity with the dynamics of university administration made him the ideal debriefer for this study.

The researcher met with the peer debriefer following each interview, observation, or discovery of documentation. Most debriefing sessions involved conversations, discussion, and question-and-answer periods, but documentation was provided as requested to substantiate the topic of discussion. See Appendix G for a complete list of documents used in this study.

#### *Assurance of Confidentiality*

Confidentiality was important in assuring that information was freely given. It was provided in compliance with the consent form signed by each respondent (see appendix C for a sample of the consent form in Spanish and its translation to English). The researcher followed these standards to assure confidentiality: 1) identification of all participants by a code; 2) omission of details that could attribute quotations to specific individuals; and 3) omission of details that could identify any of the participants.

#### *Member Check*

Member checks, in which responses were clarified, amended, expanded, and confirmed, were conducted after all interview data had been transcribed from tape records to computer files. Files were mailed to each participant; ten out of twenty responded and subsequently confirmed the data. The others did not respond. One respondent sent additional comments, which were transcribed and included with the original data. These last data supported that collected in the initial interview. The technique supports the trustworthiness of the study through testing categories,

interpretations, or conclusions (constructions) (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected (interviews, observations, and document reviews) in this study were primarily subjected to qualitative analysis. With a naturalistic paradigm, the design emerges as a result of a continuous data analysis and was determined by the context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that emergent design “implies the presence of a continuously interacting and interpreting investigator. At times only simple refinements in procedure or a simple adjustment in questions to be asked may be called for” (p. 102-103). In this study, after having interviewed eleven senior administrators whose data had been going through a process of continuous data analysis, it was considered a good time for reflection and analysis of how research questions had been answered and how questions during the interviews had been adapted. Over the course of the study, it became apparent what “emergent design” meant; as much as the researcher anticipated in the proposal, changes were inevitable once the data collection began. See Appendix A and B for a sample of the initial and final version of the interview guide.

The study used an exploratory naturalistic inquiry approach. An exploratory data analysis has been described as a “method for discovering unforeseen or unexpected patterns in the data and consequently [for] gaining new insights and understanding of natural phenomena” (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996, p. 197).



Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), refined later by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and adapted to the content analysis method, which includes unitizing data, categorization, and identifying patterns. Patterns imply recurring regularities in the data, themes which occur frequently enough to suggest a shared reality (one or more). Names of individuals and institutions were removed from the analysis in order to maintain the confidentiality of the study. Glaser and Strauss described the constant comparative method as a means for deriving (grounding) theory, not simply a means for processing data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data analysis interacted with data collection: after the first interview, collected information was used to guide the collection of information from the next respondent. During the development of this study the perception and experience of each participant was crucial in detecting and building future scenarios that allowed the researcher to organize competencies by different criteria. This is why the use of content analysis and constant comparison of the findings were necessary for the study (Holsti, 1969).

### *Unitizing Data*

Unitizing data is the crucial step in transforming interview data “into the smallest pieces of information that may stand alone as independent thoughts in the absence of additional information other than broad understanding of the context” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993, p.117).

First, interview data in Spanish were transcribed from audio-tapes into computer files. Second, the transcripts were broken into “units” of data, or the smallest fragment of

data from which meaning could be obtained. Third, the units were numbered and coded by source of information, site, respondent, date, and gender. Then, data were transferred to 4x6 index cards in two different colors relating to the type of institution, private or public. After that, units were printed. Two thousand forty nine (2,049) cards, or units of data, were created in this process. Data came from 249 pages of transcripts of the 20 interviews conducted.

Units were kept in Spanish, in order to maintain the original language and continuity in each narrative made by the participants. Additionally this procedure was followed with the purpose of keeping the richness of the data in Spanish. For the presentation of the data, units are presented in both languages in several cases. This procedure supports the idea that the Spanish-speaking reader understands the exact meaning of the unit and its context.

Anzaldúa (1987), in her social studies about the Mexico-U.S. border insists on presenting them in Spanish, in English, and in many cases as a mix of both languages. This conveys the social phenomenon of two cultures bordering each other, and invites the reader to understand the “language of the border” where bilingual texts exhibit great power. The influence that language can have in the analysis of data has to be considered. “The primary function of human language would be to scaffold human affiliation within cultures and social groups and institutions” (Gee, 1999, p. 1). In the present study, the researcher had to consider the presence of multiple audiences with different data needs. This situation created the need for the researcher to make special arrangements regarding

language in order to ensure that the audiences would be able to understand the data and ultimately the results of this study.

### *Coding*

All information unitized on index cards was coded to ensure confidentiality and to provide an appropriate trail to enable locating the original source. Each card received a numerical code that enabled the researcher to locate the original source.

The code directed the researcher to the information source, respondent, interview site, and collection episode (first, second, or third interview) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this particular study, the code identified specific information about the respondent, such as gender, and the institution, such as type of institution.

An example of a unit card and coding is presented in Figure 1.

#	I-11.061401.Pg1; 325-330
F	Unit _____ _____

**Figure 1.-- Example of a unit card**

The unit card includes:

#	Card number
I	Institution number
I1	Interview number
061401	Date of the interview
Pg1;	Page number in the transcript
325	Line numbers
F or M	Gender of the Interviewee (F-female, M-male)
Unit	

In addition, the color of the card was used to identify the type of institution.

Beige	Units from Private Institutions
White	Units from Public Institutions
Green	Category name

### *Categorization and Discovering Patterns*

The objective of categorization is “to bring together into provisional categories those cards that apparently relate to the same content” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 347). The process of categorization and discovering patterns included the following steps: the researcher selects the first index card, studies it, and places it into a pile to be created using cards with similar data, thus forming categories. Then, the researcher selects the second card, studies it and if it contains similar relevant information places it with the first card, or starts a new stack if the relevant information differs. Eventually, each card was analyzed so that piles of similar information are created under different categories.

Miscellaneous cards that did not appear related to any category were put in a separate stack. The process was repeated several times (Alsmeyer, 1994). A name in English was given to each category to identify the “essence” of the properties that linked

the cards contained within it and combined into a decision rule (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The rule, or predominant linking characteristic, was written on a separate card and put on top of the stack for identification. Each card in the stack then was analyzed under the decision rule to determine continued inclusion or exclusion from the stack. If a card's continued inclusion could not be justified, it was placed in the miscellaneous stack of cards or used to begin a new category. These steps were repeated until each card was processed (Alsmeyer, 1994).

Each category set was reviewed until all cards were used. During this step the miscellaneous cards were categorized, set aside or, discarded if irrelevant. Finally, categories were compared so that possible patterns could be found, and themes could emerge.

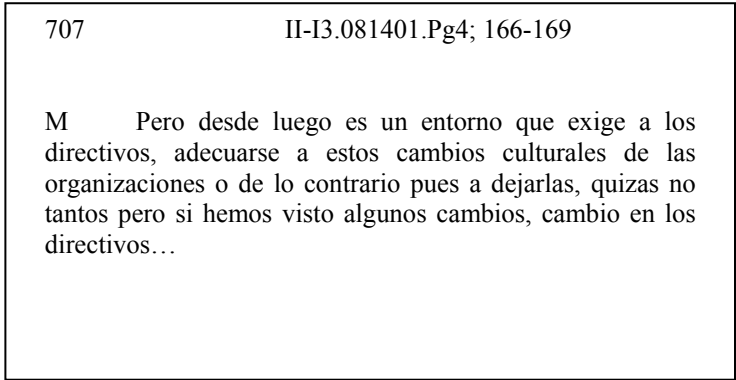


Figure 2.-- Example of a data card from the study

What follows is an example of the process; Figure 2 shows a data card picked at random from the completed categories.

The code in Figure 2 indicates that this is card number 707; the code means:

II	Institution number 2
I3	Interview number 3 in Institution number 2
081401	Date of the interview: August 14, 2001
Pg4;	Page number 4 in the transcript
166-169	Line numbers
M	Gender of the Interviewee = male

The unit in Figure 2 was added to the stack of cards categorized as “Change in the University administration”, because it explains how the senior administrators have had to adapt to the cultural changes at their institutions. During the presentation of results in Chapter IV, units will be included in order to support results of the study, following the text of the unit it will be included the number of the unit in brackets. With the purpose of clear identification of the source of the data, complete codes of some selected units will be included within the text through out the presentation of results.

Table 2 presents the 22 categories identified through categorization of the data units.

**Table 2.-- Categories of the Study**

Category
1. Descriptive data
2. Key experiences in the senior administrator's position
3. Present perceptions of the private institutions
4. Future scenarios of private universities
5. Change in the private university
6. Change in the public university
7. Present perceptions of public universities
8. Future scenarios of public universities
9. Context of the university
10. Present situation of higher education in Mexico
11. Challenges of higher education in Mexico
12. Change in the university administration
13. Academic leadership for senior administrators
14. "Everyday" situations senior administrators face
15. Need of professionalism of senior administrators
16. Attitude toward the professionalism
17. Barriers for professionalism
18. Current competencies of senior administrators
19. Needed competencies for senior administrators
20. Strategies for professional development of senior administrators
21. Opinions in regard the research study
22. Miscellaneous

### *Identifying Themes*

The researcher, based on the analysis of the data and the contributions of the peer debriefer, identified relevant themes and patterns uncovered during the unitizing process. Up to this point, the analysis of data was presented in English. The themes are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.—Identified Themes of the Study**

Themes
THEME I) Descriptive Data
THEME II) Private Institutions
THEME III) Public Institutions
THEME IV) Context
THEME V) University Administration
THEME VI) Professionalism
THEME VII) Current Competencies
THEME VIII) Needed Competencies
THEME IX) Strategies for Professional Development
THEME X) Others

The researcher wrote different research memos based on her findings and reflections throughout the dissertation process. These memos included methodological procedures followed through the study; description of the context; observations; discussion of categories and later of themes; and finally some considerations in regard participants.

Table 4 summarizes the data units by theme and category and by whether they represent a response from a public or private institution's senior administrator.



**Table 4.-- Units of Data for Identified Themes of the Study**

CATEGORY	1st. Round = 11 Inter		2nd Round = 9 Inter		TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	
	<b>THEME I) Descriptive Data</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>155</b>	
1. Descriptive data	52	35	67	61	119	96	215
Sub-categories (senior administrator):							
· Position & Time in the position	8	2	10	12	18	14	32
· Time in the university	6	10	6	4	12	14	26
· Career development inside of the university	13	13	18	19	31	32	63
· Career development outside of the university	9	5	3	3	12	8	20
· Formation as administrator	5	3	0	0	5	3	8
Sub-categories (University):					0	0	0
· # of students	5	1	4	5	9	6	15
· # Faculty and Staff	6	1	3	5	9	6	15
· University's organization	0	0	23	13	23	13	36
2. Key experiences in the senior administrator's position	20	31	16	31	36	62	98
<b>THEME II) Private Institutions</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>282</b>
3. Present perceptions of the private institutions	65	12	99	7	164	19	183
4. Future scenarios of private universities	41	0	21	1	62	1	63
5. Change in the private university	18	0	18	0	36	0	36
<b>THEME III) Public Institutions</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>236</b>
6. Change in the public university	0	11	0	42	0	53	53
7. Present perceptions of public universities	3	65	16	42	19	107	126
8. Future scenarios of public universities	4	24	0	29	4	53	57
<b>THEME IV) Context</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>261</b>
9. Context of the university	71	29	11	1	82	30	112
Sub-categories:							
· Social context	15	15	0	0	15	15	30
· Political context	8	4	0	0	8	4	12
· Economic context	13	5	2	0	15	5	20
· Technological context	9	4	5	0	14	4	18
· Demands of the society, including business and industry	26	1	4	1	30	2	32
10. Present situation of higher education in Mexico	0	0	12	25	12	25	37
11. Challenges for higher education in Mexico	41	26	5	40	46	66	112
<b>THEME V) University Administration</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>148</b>
12. Change in the university administration	53	15	0	0	53	15	68
13. Academic leadership for senior administrators	47	14	3	6	50	20	70
14. "Everyday" situations senior administrators face	0	0	8	2	8	2	10

Table 4. (Continued)

CATEGORY	1st. Round =		2nd Round =		TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
	11 Inter		9 Inter				
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	TOTAL
<b>THEME VI) Professionalism</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>202</b>
15. Need of professionalism of senior administrators	45	34	23	39	68	73	141
16. Attitude toward the professionalism	0	0	13	15	13	15	28
17. Barriers for professionalism	7	18	5	3	12	21	33
<b>THEME VII) Current Competencies</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>104</b>
18. Current competencies of senior administrators							
Sub-categories:							
· Understanding of the institution	7	2	0	0	7	2	9
· Planning	15	1	0	0	15	1	16
· Visioning	7	0	0	0	7	0	7
· University as a project of life	9	1	0	0	9	1	10
· Flexibility	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
· Evaluating	13	0	0	0	13	0	13
· Awareness of diversity	6	0	0	0	6	0	6
· Respect for the authority lines	5	0	0	0	5	0	5
· Individual qualities	4	1	0	0	4	1	5
· Productivity	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
· Technology competency	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
· Analysis of social demands & capacity of answer	0	8	0	0	0	8	8
· Individualized professional development	0	3	0	0	0	3	3
· Business experience	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
· Research knowledge	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
· Communication skills	0	1	1	0	1	1	2
· Positive attitude	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
· Goals achievement	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
· Trustworthiness	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
· Support of the academy	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
· Administrative Skills	0	0	3	2	3	2	5
· Building future competencies	0	0	2	2	2	2	4

**Table 4. (Continued)**

CATEGORY	1st. Round = 11 Inter		2nd Round = 9 Inter		TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	
	<b>THEME VIII) Needed Competencies</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>233</b>	
19. Needed competencies for senior administrators							
Sub-categories:							
1) Personal characteristics and skills:	21	5	17	12	38	17	55
· Flexibility	5	0	0	0	5	0	5
· Anxiety control	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
· Time management	3	0	0	0	3	0	3
· Adaptation	6	2	0	0	6	2	8
· Positive attitude	5	0	2	5	7	5	12
· Political skills	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
· Creativity	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
· Listening	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
· Human oriented	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
· Innovation	0	0	2	3	2	3	5
· Motivation	0	0	3	0	3	0	3
· Honesty	0	0	3	2	3	2	5
· Diplomatic	0	0	1	1	1	1	2
· Visioning	0	0	3	1	3	1	4
· Entrepreneurship	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
2) Administrative competencies:	91	16	15	16	106	32	138
· Decision making	10	0	0	0	10	0	10
· Delegating	2	1	0	1	2	2	4
· Searching alternatives	3	0	0	0	3	0	3
· Management/administrative & finance competencies	15	4	3	13	18	17	35
· Team work	8	3	1	2	9	5	14
· Communication	19	0	4	0	23	0	23
· Visioning	4	4	0	0	4	4	8
· Basic competencies	12	3	0	0	12	3	15
· Planning	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
· Negotiating	6	0	1	0	7	0	7
· Problem solving & conflict resolution	4	0	0	0	4	0	4
· Evaluating	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
· Knowledge management	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
· Networking	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
· Marketing	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
· Project management	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
· Response capacity	4	1	0	0	4	1	5

**Table 4. (Continued)**

CATEGORY	1st. Round = 11 Inter		2nd Round = 9 Inter		TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	
	3) Social responsibility competencies:	29	7	2	0	31	
· Social commitment	9	3	0	0	9	3	12
· Cultural diversity	11	0	0	0	11	0	11
· Knowledge of economic situations	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
· Analysis of demands	9	4	0	0	9	4	13
4) Institutional competencies:	12	3	23	11	35	14	49
· Leadership	4	1	9	3	13	4	17
· Understanding of the institutional identity or philosophy	8	2	2	6	10	8	18
· Fund raising	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
· Support of the academy	0	0	0	2	0	2	2
· Mentoring students	0	0	3	0	3	0	3
· Knowledge of HE market	0	0	8	0	8	0	8
5) Technological, informational and organizational skills	6	2	17	7	23	9	32
· Technologic competencies	6	2	5	2	11	4	15
· Use of the information	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
· Language skills	0	0	4	2	4	2	6
· Educational theory & practice	0	0	8	2	8	2	
<b>THEME IX) Strategies for Professional Development</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>162</b>
20. Strategies for the development of senior administrators	70	27	50	15	120	42	162
Sub-categories:							
· Reading of articles & papers	4	0	1	0	5	0	5
· Actual requirements	7	3	6	2	13	5	18
· Courses & professional programs	28	9	2	0	30	9	39
· External consultants	3	0	22	8	25	8	33
· Personalized formation	16	0			16	0	16
· Meetings (retreats)	3	1	0	0	3	1	4
· Evaluations	6	1	11	0	17	1	18
· Experiential learning or informal formation	1	2	1	0	2	2	4
· Visits universities & meeting with other senior administrators	2	6	1	0	3	6	9
· Willingness & motivation by authority	0	5	3	1	3	6	9
· Accessibility to training programs	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
· Need detection	0	0	3	3	3	3	6
· Induction sessions	0	0	1	1	1	1	2
<b>THEME X) Others</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>
21. Opinions in regard the research study	0	0	2	2	2	2	4
22. Miscellaneous	8	16	1	0	9	16	25
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>1,227</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>2,049</b>

Table 4 also indicates the two rounds in the data analysis the first was with the first nine interviews, then the second one with the other 11 interviews, and finally the last analysis with all the data together. The table gives additional information to the reader to help him/her understand the richness of the data.

### *Ensuring Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness covers all areas that ultimately determine the study's integrity: its truth value, plausibility, rigorousness of design and method, and the credibility of both data and researcher. The four trustworthiness criteria used in constructivist research were operationalized as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

*Credibility.* Credibility, which corresponds to the positivistic notion of internal validity, assesses the "truth value" of an inquiry. Several techniques for this assessment were incorporated into the study: activities that increase the probability of producing credible findings, activities that provide an external check on the inquiry process, and activities providing for the direct test of findings and interpretations with the human resources generating them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301).

First, the researcher conducted prolonged interviews and observations to increase the probability of producing credible findings. Interviews lasted at least an hour, and often longer. Observations of office environments and universities' facilities, where the participants interacted, allowed the researcher to analyze the context for the data acquired in interviews.

Second, peer debriefing provided an external check of the inquiry process. The peer debriefer created a structured process by which the researcher could discover and address her own biases, explore meaningful findings, clarify her interpretations as they emerged from data, and discuss possible future direction.

Third, member checks provided the best test of findings and interpretations because they looped directly back to the original data sources. Each respondent was given the opportunity following each interview to review the data attained. This gave participants a chance to provide additional information or amend or clarify information already provided.

Fourth, triangulation, or the use of “multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305) was used throughout the inquiry. Each event, incident, or issue thus identified was subject to further investigation and corroboration by at least two additional sources. Documents provided additional perspective on historical events, formal organizational responses, ramification of incidents, and presumed data. Observations also provided additional data especially in regard to the participants’ context.

*Transferability.* Transferability, which corresponds to the positivistic notion of external validity or generalizability, is an avenue through which the researcher forms working hypotheses and displays findings that may be applicable in other settings if the “fit” between settings is appropriate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The constructivist paradigm holds that truth statements are context-bound and thus cannot be shifted indiscriminately from one context to another.

To determine the degree of “fit” between settings, the investigator provided “thick description” surrounding each interview and observation so that future researchers can ascertain transferability among contexts. “Thick description,” a trademark of constructivist case studies, was created for each interviewee and site observation. Descriptive information includes the detection of any personal biases; interpersonal relationships; possible influences created by respondents’ education, career, and geographic location; and their attitudes, expectations, opinions, and emotions during the interview. The ultimate determination of transferability rests with future researchers and senior administrators.

*Dependability and confirmability.* The process of this study was guided by the use of a peer debriefer. Most debriefing sessions involved conversations, discussions, and question-and-answer periods, but documentation was provided as occasionally requested to substantiate the topic of discussion.

Confirmability, which corresponds to the positivistic notion of objectivity, is a product check that helps assure that data, interpretations, and findings are grounded in the context from which they came (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Another method of assuring confirmability that was incorporated into this study was the process of researcher reflexivity and introspection as described previously. The researcher’s reflexive journals documented changes in attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and the process by which constructions were created and molded. In addition, they provide a log of important activities, schedules, and dates that otherwise might have been forgotten with the passage of time. In order to assure confirmability, methods such as the use of

reflexive journals, tape recordings, transcripts, field notes, and description were maintained.

#### *A Note about the Audiences for this Research*

The presence of multiple audiences with different data needs requires the researcher to make special considerations in order to assure that the audiences will understand the data and, ultimately, the results of this study.

Two audiences were addressees for this study: the U.S. audience, and the Mexican audience. Both audiences may be present during the presentation, analysis, and reading of this document.

In this chapter, it has been the researcher's intention to present detailed data about methodological aspects of this study. The reason for this is to fulfill an identified interest by participants in this study. They suggested that the Mexican audiences may be interested not only in the topic, but also in the knowledge of methodological aspects of the study as it represents qualitative research. Some data may appear superfluous for the American audience, but extremely useful for the Mexican one. According to some leaders, there may be too much data in this regard for the American audience and too little for the Mexican one.

On the other hand, the American audience may require more data regarding the context of higher education in Mexico. In that case, the language, its translation, and context issues may also affect the analysis of the data. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) agree that "in qualitative data gathering and analysis, attention should be



given to constructing a comprehensive, holistic portrayal of the social and cultural dimensions of a particular context” (p. 85). In this sense, deeper considerations regarding the clarity of the context should be taken in order to have a more exact view of the analysis and results of this study, especially for the American audience. However, this consideration may seem superfluous for the Mexican audience but indispensable for the American one.

### *Working Hypotheses*

“Working hypotheses exist in seminal form before the research process begins and continue to take shape through the completion of the study” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 59).

Working hypotheses for this study began to be shaped from the beginning of the study and developed as the study progressed:

- Most of the higher education senior administrators in Mexico close to retirement can be characterized by a lack of formal training and interest concerning professional development.
- Most of the new cadre of higher education senior administrators in Mexico reflects an interest and belief in the need for professional development.
- Most women higher education senior administrators in Mexico recognize the need for professional development.

- Differences between public and private higher education institutions in Mexico make evident the need for specific training for their senior administrators to achieve professional development.

It is important to mention that, based on the institutions that the researcher visited, the above working hypotheses are “general statements applicable to the specific context under investigation” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 59). Working hypotheses are context and study-specific, but they take the place of generalizations, and constitute most of the provisional findings of a study.

In the next chapter, a broader presentation of the context of higher education in Mexico, and specifically these institutions, will be presented.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

How do you start collecting the data for your dissertation facing the following situations?

Your luggage is lost. You have no tapes for recording your interviews, no clean clothes, no shoes. Consider that it is midnight, and your first interview appointment – with the president of a prestigious university outside the U.S.—is at nine the next morning.

Once your patient husband or whoever is so fortunate as to be with you in that moment, is able to survive your stress attack, you may reconsider all these situations. You may be able to make do with some borrowed clothes, the first pair of shoes that you find in a tiny little shoe store, a tape from your mother-in-law’s answering machine, and, of course, with some luck and a lot of help. Fortunately, the researcher had all the items mentioned above.

That first interview turned out to be one of the best, and the visit to the campus was extremely interesting. This “learning experience” ended with very useful data and great insights for the study.

#### **Context of the Study**

The researcher made three trips to Mexico, to collect the data for this study. During each trip, details observed during the visits to each campus were recorded in a journal.

These observations included details about people, places, buildings, and facilities, descriptions of events during the trips, and other ethnographic thick descriptions. In order to analyze the data collected in those journals, a thematic analysis was followed, which “involved searching through your field notes to discover cultural patterns” (Spradley, 1980, p.85). After each interview the researcher wrote up a description of the person interviewed, his/her office, and a general impression of the experience. The experience of examining the journals was mostly enjoyable and, best of all, it was valuable to look at the notes later as the analysis proceeded. Reading the notes in the journals brought the experience of interviewing to life again.

Context plays an important part in the moment of interpreting data. Without an understanding of the context where the participants live, the results could emerge with no clear interpretation of the data. Participants expressed their ideas, perceptions, and interpretations, based in a context that surrounds their realities and within that they have learned. Jarvis (1987) expressed the fact that “learning always occurs within a social context and that the learner is also to some extent a social construct” (p.15).

An important section of this chapter is dedicated to the description of campuses and participants. The results presented in this chapter include a brief description of the campuses and the interviewees to facilitate reading and understanding the data. Selected observations from the journals also are presented.

#### *A Note about Culture Translation*

The analysis of data and the presentation of the results are a huge endeavor for any researcher who hopes to make certain that the local reader understands and makes sense

of the data from foreign participants. The process involves a translation, not only of the language, but also and mainly of the culture. Spradley (1980) presents a very clear explanation of this situation:

A translation discovers the meaning in one culture and communicates them in such a way that people with another cultural tradition can understand them. The ethnographer as translator has a dual task. For one, you must make sense out of the cultural patterns you observe, decoding the messages in cultural behavior, artifacts, and knowledge. Your second task is to communicate the cultural meanings you have discovered to readers who are unfamiliar with that culture or culture scene (p. 161).

### *Campuses*

Background knowledge of each university enabled the researcher to frame questions about current happenings in the course of the interviews. The need to establish a shared understanding of context with the interviewees is a confirmation of the groundedness of qualitative research (see Chapter 3 for more details).

In order to understand the analysis of the data, readers will need to have a clear perception of the context of higher education institutions in Mexico. Geertz (1973) claims that the particularities of higher education institutions are the result of their own culture or the cultural context in which they exist. Geertz explains culture as follows:

Culture is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described. Understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity. It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity. Nothing is more necessary to comprehending what interpretation is, and the degree to which it is interpretation, than an exact understanding of what it means—and what it does not mean—(p.14).

A brief description of each campus includes demographic data from each institution and observations regarding different aspects of the institution, made during the time of

the visits. This description provides hallmark characteristics of the institutions. The descriptors are not always the same. The reader will find some one-to-one similarities among these institutions; however, the researcher also has attempted to highlight their uniqueness and individualistic features. This description provides some insight into the research findings. Table 5 provides demographic data collected during campus visits and interviews. For example, in the case of Institution #1, the visited campus is 25 years old, however the institution in Mexico is 60 years old.

**Table 5.-- Demographic Profile of Participating Higher Education Institutions**

#	<i>Location of the Institution in Mexico</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i># Years Old</i>	<i># Full Time Faculty</i>	<i># Part-time Faculty</i>	<i># Staff</i>	<i>Undergrad students</i>	<i>Graduate students</i>
1	Center	Private	25 (60)	85	350	100	1900	250
2	Center	Private	55	220	1200	200	4,500	800
3	Center	Public	65	14,219	N/A	N/A	93,763	5,894
4	Campuses distributed in all the country	Public	10	5,760	N/A	N/A	144,000	N/A
5	Southeast	Private	18 (63)	270	400	N/A	7,300	700
6	Center	Public	52	400	950	957	8,000	1,600
7	Center	Private	28 (60)	300	150	N/A	4,000	280
8	Northwest	Public	30	470	900	580	9,700	1,500

Table 6 compares the number and range of academic degrees offered at each institution.

**Table 6.-- Number of Degrees and Academic Areas in the Institutions**

	<i>Undergraduate Programs</i>	<i>Masters Programs</i>	<i>Doctoral Programs</i>
<b><i>Institution # 1</i></b>	(16) Business, architecture, engineering, liberal arts	(6) Business, architecture, engineering, liberal arts	
<b><i>Institution # 2</i></b>	(13) Business, political sciences, economics, engineering, computer sciences	(12) Business, political sciences, economics	(1) Economics
<b><i>Institution # 3</i></b>	(57) Engineering, Social sciences and administration, medicine and biology.	(62) Engineering, Social sciences and administration, medicine and biology.	(25) Engineering, Social sciences and administration, medicine and biology.
<b><i>Institution # 4</i></b>	(24) Electromechanics, business, agroindustrial & food sciences, information technologies, environmental technologies, chemistry		
<b><i>Institution # 5</i></b>	(39) Business, social sciences, sciences, liberal arts, engineering.	(22) Business, social sciences, sciences, liberal arts, engineering.	(2) Computer sciences & economics
<b><i>Institution # 6</i></b>	(33) Arts, natural sciences, social and political sciences, business, law, nursing, philosophy, computer sciences, engineering, languages, medicine, psychology, chemistry	(23) Arts, natural sciences, social and political sciences, business, law, nursing, philosophy, computer sciences, engineering, languages, medicine, psychology, chemistry	(4) Natural sciences, law, engineering, food sciences
<b><i>Institution # 7</i></b>	(20) Architecture, industrial design, computer sciences, electronic engineering, business, agriculture area, food sciences, communications, liberal arts, & mechanical engineering	(17) Business, engineering and technologies, education	(1) Educational technologies and innovation (online)
<b><i>Institution # 8</i></b>	(44) Agriculture sciences, sciences, biomedicine, design and construction, business, social sciences, liberal arts	(29) Agriculture sciences, sciences, biomedicine, design and construction, business, social sciences, liberal arts	(5) Agriculture sciences, sciences, business, social sciences, liberal arts.

### *Participants*

Interviews were conducted with twenty senior administrators in eight higher education institutions in Mexico. Demographic data for the participants, including age, gender, and educational level are presented in Table 7. Participants were coded in order to identify them with their institutions. The first numeral represents the institution

number; the second is the number of the interviewee from that institution. For example, the code of the first participant is 1.1, signifying that he was the first interviewee from the first institution visited in the study.

Most interviews lasted an hour and half, although two lasted more than two hours. Interviews were carried out in Spanish. On May 2001, a confirmation of the appointments to do interviews in the first institution was received for the interviews held on June 2001. During the second data collection trip, four additional institutions were scheduled following the same process as in the first trip. During the last research trip, three more institutions were visited; in this case, limitations in time made it difficult scheduling interviews with more senior administrators in those three institutions, but collection of data through observation techniques completed the data collected from those last three institutions. However, it is clearly recognized by the researcher that more data collection through interviews would provide a more complete and richer picture.



**Table 7.-- Age, Gender, and Educational Level of the Participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Educational Level</b>
1.1	45	Male	Masters
1.2	40	Male	Masters
1.3	42	Female	Bach.
2.1	52	Male	Ph.D.
2.2	41	Male	Ph.D.
2.3	40	Male	Ph.D.
3.1	80	Male	Bach.
3.2	47	Male	Bach.
3.3	74	Male	Ph.D.
3.4	52	Male	Masters
4.1		Male	Ph.D.
5.1	38	Male	Masters
5.2	37	Male	Masters
5.3	40	Male	Masters
5.4	57	Male	Bach.
6.1	45	Male	Masters
7.1	39	Male	Ph.D.
8.1	45	Female	Bach.
8.2	56	Male	Bach.
8.3	53	Male	Bach.

Of the 20 senior administrators participating in the study, 18 were male and two were female. Their ages ranged from 37 to 80 years. Six of the 20 senior administrators held doctoral degrees, and seven held masters' degrees. Only seven participants hold only a bachelor's degree, although some of them are pursuing or intend to pursue a master's degree.

Table 8 compares the participants' positions and length of service. These data include their current position, the level of the position in the institution's organizational structure, the number of years in the institution, and the number of years in their current positions during the interview time.

**Table 8.-- Positions of the Senior Administrators**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Number of Years in the Institution</b>	<b>Number of Years in the Position</b>
1.1	Rector (President)	20	3
1.2	Director General Académico (Provost)	15	3
1.3	Directora del Centro (3rd)	2.5	2.5
2.1	Director División Administrativa (2nd)	9.5	Days
2.2	Director Centro (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	4	1.5
2.3	Director División de Derecho y Econ. (2nd)	8	6
3.1	Srio. Tec. De la Com Des. Curr (Former President)	42	1
3.2	Director General de Coord. De Vinc. (Former, 2nd)	15	4
3.3	Jefe de la Div. De Inter. Acad. (Former, 3rd)	35	2
3.4	Director del Centro (3rd)	30	5 months
4.1	Coordinador General de la UT (System President)	10	10
5.1	Director (3rd)	14	3
5.2	Director (3rd)	14	4
5.3	Director (3rd)	14	10
5.4	Director (3rd)	11.5	9
6.1	Director (2nd)	20	2.1
7.1	Director (2nd)	16	2
8.1	Past Director (2nd)	20	6
8.2	President (Past, former)	28	3
8.3	Past Dean & Former Provost & Former Director (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	29	3

The number of years the senior administrators has been in their universities ranged from two and a half years to 35 years. The senior administrators from public institutions tended to have greater longevity. Their time in their current position, however, ranged from mere days to 10 years. For example, senior administrator 8.3 had 20 years of experience as a senior administrator, and currently is a former senior administrator. His last position, as Dean, lasted three years; prior to that, he served six years as Provost, and

before that, 11 years as Director (2<sup>nd</sup> level position). Many of them held the title of “Director” which can indicate different position levels in the organizational structure of each institution depending on the organization and internal regulation of the university in Mexico. For instance, the reader will find that a senior administrator that held the title of “Director” could occupy the position of provost, chief executive, vice-president, or some other administrative position that can be compared with a senior administrative position in an American university.

In addition to previous reflections about culture and context, it is important to consider that “culture is not a single undifferentiated phenomenon; it varies by socio-economic class, by ethnic community, by region, and even by gender” (Jarvis, 1987, p. 13). Consequently, in addition to quantitative and factual data, the researcher included observations from the senior administrators that represent hallmark characteristics of the participants. These characteristics were not always the same. Senior administrators from public and private universities share particular cultural symbols because of their similar contexts, but they also present their own peculiarities and characteristics.

### *Campuses and their Participants*

*Institution # 1.* Institution 1 is located in the center of the country. While this private university is 60 years old, the current campus is only 25 years old. The institution has 85 full-time faculty, 350 part-time faculty, and 100 administrative staff members. The student population includes 1,900 undergraduate students and 250 graduate students at

the time of the interviews. The size of the institution affords the authorities the opportunity to consider and test different strategies for the operation of the university.

Visiting the institution, the researcher found that the size of the campus made it easier to identify and recognize the environment of the institution. The senior administrators in this institution have an open-door policy in which everybody, even the students, can come and talk with the administrative authorities. It is a clearly an organization with a “young” tendency; the university environment has a sense of familiarity, even informality, among the members of the community. It appears that the authorities want to maintain contact with everybody, and to be aware of what is happening on the campus. The surrounding physical environment supports the concept found around the senior administrators’ tendencies. The physical environment includes many green areas and spaces between buildings, contributing to a sense of openness and accessibility.

The campus is located in a part of the city where land was less expensive in the past, and the acreage allowed them to have many open spaces. In summary, the institution “communicates” being a Catholic university open to new ideas and to young people, and adaptable to changes and new times.

*1.1.* The first interviewee at Institution 1 was the president. He is 45 years old, has served three years in his present position, and has been at the institution for 20 years. He is one of the youngest presidents of all the campuses within the system. He bears the distinction of being the only current or past president who is not a Catholic priest. Currently, he is in his second term as president of the institution.

In summary, he emphasized how unexpected his appointment was because of his age and the fact that he was not a priest. He referred to his appointment in the university with the following commentaries: “It was coming back to my hometown [in the university], that was something that I liked” (*era regresar a mi tierra [en la universidad], eso era una cosa que a mi me gustaba*) [10]; “The appointment as President was something unexpected for me, totally unexpected” (*el nombramiento de Rector fue para mi algo inesperado, totalmente inesperado*) [11]; “the first non-priest President here in the campus, this was something important. That for me was a transcendent fact” (*el primer Rector Laico aquí en este campus. Esto entonces fue una cosa importante, que para mí fue un hecho como de trascendencia*) [13]; “Yes, I have been one of the youngest Presidents here, this is something unexpected, too” (*si, yo he sido uno de los mas jóvenes rectores aquí, también ésto es una cosa como que era inesperada*) [14].

During the interview and afterwards, he showed interest in the research and wanted to know the results and conclusions of the study.

1.2. This senior administrator is the provost of Institution 2. His title in Spanish is “Director General Académico”. He is 40 years old, has three years in his present position, and has been at the institution and on the same campus for 15 years. He is also a faculty member, but has held other senior administrative positions before the current one. He is part of the new administration that came with the first non-priest president of the institution, and because of this, he has faced challenges, considering himself as part of a time of change. “It has been a group of decisions, that I would say it is not only one –as unique- it is more a work of adjustment, with a revision of the present things and

some innovation. It is a sense of looking for improvements” (*Ha sido un conjunto de decisiones, que yo te diría que no es una sola –como única-, mas bien ahorita lo que veo es un trabajo de ajuste, con un poco de revision de las cosas que estaban presentes y un trabajo de innovación. Es un sentido de buscar mejoras*) [182].

*I.3.* The third interviewee is a director of a center who reports to the provost. She has occupied her current position for the two and a half years that she has been in the institution. She is 42 years old. Most of her professional experience is outside of the university; this was apparent in some of her comments when she compared the world inside and outside of the university, those worlds that many higher education senior administrators want to bring together in a harmonious relationship.

I believe that also the university administration is behind regarding the changes; in terms of time, in real demands, etc. The contact with the exterior world is lost. The senior administrators, who graduated and stayed in the university, and then started as faculty, and ended up as senior administrators, they have not lived the exigencies of the outside world, which is very demanding. (*Yo creo que también la administración universitaria se queda un poco atrás en los cambios, en tiempo, demandas reales, etc. se pierde este contacto con el mundo exterior. Los directivos, gentes que se graduaron, y se quedaron en la universidad, empezaron como profesores, y terminaron como directivos, y nunca han vivido las exigencias de un mundo de allá afuera que es muy demandante*) [465].

*Institution # 2.* Institution 2 is a 55-year-old private institution located in Mexico City. The institution had 220 full-time faculty, 1,200 part-time faculty and 200

administrative staff members. The student population includes 4,500 undergraduate students and 800 graduate students at the time of the interview. The institution has two campuses in the city.

Interviewees included senior administrators from both campuses. The researcher spent considerable time before and after each interview touring and observing the campuses.

Both campuses seemed very business-oriented and functional, with spacious facilities, including nice spaces and green areas. The institution seemed to be growing and adapting to new circumstances.

The visit to the campus that was focused on undergraduate degrees occurred during the first week of classes and in the midst of construction. The campus shares with most other universities certain characteristics at the beginning of the semester: students looking for their classrooms, noise, movement, and energy everywhere. Most of the undergraduate students at this institution come from wealthy families, and many of them consider themselves part of an elite socio-economic class.

The researcher later visited the second campus, which is more focused on graduate study. This campus exhibits a very welcoming environment, very business-oriented facilities, private security in all the buildings, comfortable facilities, and few students lingering in the hallways.

2.1. The first interviewee in the second institution was the dean of one of the colleges (*Director de la División*, in Spanish), who reports to the president of the university. He is 52 years old, has been in the institution for nine years, and was named to his position

only a couple of weeks before the interview. Before that, he held a department headship. He brought to his new position rich experience from his previous years as a department head. He possesses long experience outside of the university. Before his experience in this institution, he worked in the United States for 10 years as visiting professor in different institutions. Before that, he worked 14 years in the private sector in Mexico. One of his concerns is to make certain that society recognizes how much better his institution is and how different it is from the others. He stated, “[My institution] feels that in some way the market of education in Mexico is not valuing a solid education as they should.” (*[Mi institución] siente que además de alguna forma el mercado de educación en Mexico, no está valorando una educación sólida todo lo que debería*) [554].

2.2. This senior administrator is 41 years old, has been in his institution for four years, and for a year and a half in his position as director of a center, reporting to the dean of the college. During the time he has been in this position, he was assigned to do post-doctoral work in the United States. He felt very fortunate for that opportunity and very grateful to the institution. Before coming to the university, his previous experience was in the private sector.

Because of his very brief experience in the university, he seemed somewhat uncomfortable during the interview. He explained that, for him, it was more difficult to express some specific opinions about the institution, especially when outlining his vision of future scenarios of his institution. However, his responses, upon analysis, seemed



consistent with the statements of more experienced senior administrators at the institution.

2.3. The third interviewee from Institution 2 is 40 years old, and has been at his institution for eight years, with six years in his position as the dean of one of the colleges (*Director de la División*, in Spanish), and reports to the president of the university. This administrator reflects extensive experience in the higher education field. On many occasions, he expressed his conviction that faculty should have an integrated role, with strong emphasis on teaching, research, and services. These ideas seem normal and commonplace in an American context, but in higher education in Mexico these ideas are innovative and just starting to be implemented in some universities, especially in private ones. He commented, “I arrived at the institution with the idea of transforming the institution from a teaching institution to a research institution.” (*Yo llegué con la concepción de sumarme a una idea, de transformar la institución, de una institución de “teaching” a una institución de “research”*) [688].

*Institution # 3.* The campus of Institution 3 is also located in Mexico City. The university is 65 years old and is the second largest public higher education institution in the country. The institution has approximately 14,219 faculty members, but neither information about the exact number of full-time and part-time faculty nor that about staff was available. The student population is approximately 93,763 undergraduate and 5,894 graduate students. The institution has 39 campuses throughout the country, 15 of them within Mexico city.

Most of the public higher education institutions in Mexico are closely linked to local or federal governments, especially for financial reasons. The researcher hypothesized that their ties to various political environments have influenced whole institutions in many aspects of their development. The present political circumstances in the country favor changes in the ideology of the institution, anticipating a reorganization and independence from the federal government.

The main campus of the institution is extremely large and difficult to navigate. Most of its students come from the working class of the most populous city in the world. The pressure for more space and for more and better education is one of the most noticeable problems in all higher education institutions. On one wall an announcement for a meeting was painted by students who were not accepted in the last round of admissions to the institution, and at the bottom was the notice “Right to education, not privilege: Rejected students.” (*Derecho a la educación, no privilegio: Estudiantes rechazados*). The political environment in the institution influences students, faculty, and the whole administration in many ways. Most of the faculty and administrators are active members

of political parties or political entities, which not explicitly but subtly can influence the political inclination of students and staff members in the institution. Together they can attend meetings and other political events that establish political ties that will influence both their present experience and their future.

Even students not accepted by the institution organize meetings and other events to express their opinions. Politics shape the lives or the educational experiences of members of this kind of institutions in many ways. Many students also consider their time in the university, especially in cities like a state or national capital, a good opportunity to make connections that can help them when they enter a competitive labor market with relatively few opportunities. Capitals of countries and states are always characterized as center of political effervescence where everything happens, because central offices of political parties, offices of legislators, and political figures are all together in the same cities. Students from institutions in these cities may feel the effect of this political environment that surrounds them.

In order to visit the building where the president's office is located, visitors must register themselves and their cars. That is not a common practice in Mexico. Two or three police officers were in close proximity to the building, which may mean that the authorities need to know the identity and intent of visitors.

Throughout the visit to this institution, the researcher noticed a deep interest in change and in the current study; however, some of the individual interviewees seemed somewhat reluctant to participate.

3.1. This interviewee is a senior administrator in one of the biggest higher education institutions in Mexico. He is 80 years old and a former president of the institution who currently occupies an advisory position in the Commission of Curriculum Development. According to the rest of the participants from this institution, he always has been an important figure in the history, organization, and development of the institution. He seemed, from his interview responses, to have a very clear vision of the past, present, and future of the institution. One of his comments referring to the university administration was the following:

The university administration is becoming more complex, among other things, because of the [additional] increment in student population and the number of majors in the universities; more flexibility in the curriculum; the official evaluation process in the country; the globalization of education; the constant change in knowledge, every time more rapid and complex; and the advance of virtual education and distance education. (*La administración universitaria se ha vuelto mas compleja debido, entre otras cosas, al incremento de la matrícula y del número de carreras en las universidades, a la mayor flexibilidad del curriculum, al proceso de evaluación oficial al que estan sometidas las universidades en su país, a la globalización de la educación, al cambio cada vez mas rápido y complejo del conocimiento y al avance de la educación virtual a distancia*) [776].

3.2. This interviewee is 47 years old and has been in his institution for 15 years. He occupied the position of General Director for four years, until two months before the

interview when there was a change of president, to whom his position reported. Currently he occupies an advisory position in a center at his institution.

He described himself as a professional with business experience, which was what he brought to the institution. His actions during his time in the institution indicate that he tried to link the academic world with the business world. He commented: “The important thing is that your research has a practical application, that it has an impact on the economic life of a country.” (*Lo importante es que tu investigación tenga una aplicación práctica, que tenga una repercusión en la vida económica de un país*) [856]. His experience in the institution has had both positive and negative effects, resulting from the complexity of trying to bring those two worlds together.

3.3. This interviewee also is a senior administrator. He is 74 years old, and he has occupied different administrative positions at his institution during the last 35 years. His last position lasted two years and ended a couple of months prior to the interview. He expressed a clear understanding of the problems that senior administrators face in these kinds of institutions; however, he has proposed some solutions throughout the interview. The researcher believes that all the years of experience in his institution gave him a very broad understanding of the situation, not just at his institution, but also within the entire context of higher education in Mexico, especially public higher education. He said, “I believe that, in general, our senior administrators not only have a theoretical knowledge of education but are also familiar with educational management which they have learned from their own experience.” (*Creo que en general nuestros directivos tienen un conocimiento tanto de educación como de la gestión educativa que se ha derivado de su*

*propia experiencia*) [957]. “But I consider that... our senior administrators must be preparing in these fields of how to better manage the universities, how to better plan the programs and projects that affect education directly.” (*Pero si considero que ... nuestros funcionarios se deben estar preparando en estos campos de como administrar mejor las universidades, como planear mejor los programas y proyectos que inciden directamente en la educación*) [959].

3.4. The fourth and final interviewee from Institution 3 is 52 years old and has been in his institution for the last 30 years. He has occupied his current position as the director of a recently created center for 5 months. He brings his experience in governmental institutions and private organizations to this position. The center is looking for a closer relationship between this higher education institution and the larger society, especially small businesses that may need the support of professionals from the university. Throughout the interview, he emphasized the social commitment and responsibility that the institution may have toward the society. He alluded to this in the next comment: “We try to contribute for [small business] to be competitive and overall that their people are better prepared.” (*Tratamos de contribuir para que sean competitivas [pequeñas empresas] y sobre todo que puedan estar mejor preparados sus gentes*) [1021]. Many senior administrators like him from public higher education institutions feel the importance of this responsibility of their institutions toward society.

*Institution # 4.* Institution 4 includes the visit to the Consortium of a system of universities in Mexico. This system is an educational model established in 1991 by the Secretary of Education in Mexico. At the time of the interview, the system included 48

campuses distributed throughout the country. The system had 5,760 full-time faculty, and the student population was 144,000 students distributed across all 48 campuses during the semester of the interview. Data regarding part-time faculty and staff was not available.

The visited campus representing this multi-unit institution is located in the center of the country. All campuses throughout the country present similar characteristics and approach the needs of the community through their degree offerings. The objectives of these institutions are to train women and men through short programs of higher education, and to offer to society an educational option for young people. The effort has been unquestionably enormous, but these institutions, as other public institutions in Mexico, are surrounded by a complex situation that involves the social, economic, political, and cultural peculiarities of the country (see a description of the cultural, economic, political, and social context of higher education in Chapter 2).

Among the problems that the system faces in its everyday operations are limitations on financial resources, dependence on Federal and local funds, highly bureaucratic environments, and many other issues that make it difficult to achieve its original goals [#1164. IV-I1.081501.Pg6-7; 273-277]. For many of the institution's campuses it is a time of analysis and evaluation of their effort, and a reconsideration of what has to be done in order to achieve their original purposes [#1170. IV-I1.081501.Pg7; 294-296] (see description of coding used in units in Chapter 3).

*4.1.* The interviewee from Institution 4 has been in the Consortium for 10 years, always in the same position. Being part of a relatively new model, most of his opinions

imply that he is looking for a new way to do things and discovering innovative methods in all different operations of higher education, including its administration. He claims that Mexico requires changes in the offerings of higher education institutions in order to attend the real demands of the country. He then expanded this idea: “Then, what do our senior administrators require? The same thing: to have an open mind to structural changes, and to know what they have up front which are the knowledge areas that lead to the creation of new jobs.” (*¿Entonces que requieren nuestros directivos? Pues lo mismo, tener una mente abierta a los cambios estructurales, y saber que tienen adelante, cuales son por ejemplo las áreas del conocimiento que van a implicar la apertura de nuevos trabajos*) [1176].

*Institution # 5.* Institution 5 is located in an area that can be considered the beginning of the south of Mexico, although it is relatively close to Mexico City.

The university is a 63-year-old private institution, but the current campus is only 18 years old. The institution had 270 full-time faculty, and 400 part-time faculty. The student population included 7,300 undergraduate students and 700 graduate students at the time of the interview.

The research visit to this institution coincided with the arrival of a new president during the same week. Faculty, students, and administration seemed to view this not so much as an occasion for a change, but more as an opportunity to continue the institution’s previous success (#1238. V-I1.081601.Pg8; 339-345, #1539. V-I4.081701.Pg4; 148-151)



This university has a very peculiar style that can be seen in different architectural elements through the campus. They keep a charming Mexican-rustic style not only in furniture around the campus, but also in the walls, the colors, the architecture, the offices, the gardens, and ultimately in many little details throughout the campus. Coexisting with this traditional style is the most current technology, functional and comfortable facilities, modern systems in the buildings, and welcoming areas equal to those in any first-world institution. This special combination makes this campus unique in the country.

This institution is very well known in the State and in the rest of the country. The authorities, however, are worried about maintaining the institution as recognized through the delivery of different services to the community. It was characterized by one of the interviewees as “the most American university” in Mexico. This peculiarity is not exclusive to the facilities. It goes beyond the buildings to the faculty, administration, and organization.

5.1. This senior administrator is 38 years old and has been in his institution for 14 years, three years in his current position as Director. He reports to one of the vice-presidents. This interviewee is a young senior administrator but he has enough experience to recognize the importance of being prepared to professionalize his role. He expressed his willingness to take some risks and to innovate, which may be the result of his age. He commented, “The fact that you are a senior administrator implies, besides a responsibility, a continuing preparation on diverse topics.” (*El hecho de que tu estés como directivo implica a parte de responsabilidad, implica una continúa preparación en*

*diversos temas*) [1214]. “But, in general, I believe that inside of the university, the people look for alternatives in order to be updated.” (*Pero en general yo creo que dentro de la universidad la gente si busca, si busca alternativas para estar al dia*) [1231].

5.2. The second interviewee is 37 years old and has been in the institution for 14 years, spending the last four years in his position as Director. He also reports to one of the vice-presidents. He has had previous administrative experience before his current position, but has tried to maintain closeness to the academy as a part-time faculty member. His senior administrator positions all have been attached to technology innovations that support the academic function of the university. Throughout the interview, he expressed in different ways his worry about maintaining the quality of education. He believes that “our challenge is being the best university in the country, being a vanguard university.” (*Nuestro reto es ser la mejor universidad del país, ser una universidad de vanguardia*) [1311].

5.3. The third senior administrator from Institution 5 is 40 years old. He has been at this institution for 14 years, with ten years of administrative experience in two different directorships. Like his two previous colleagues, he reports to one of the university vice-presidents. He has broad administrative experience (#1414. V-I3.081701.Pg2; 49-58, #1415. V-I3.081701.Pg2; 58-75) and a very clear vision of the future for his institution (#1448. V-I3.081701.Pg6; 267-273, #1451. V-I3.081701.Pg7; 280-285, #1480 V-I3.081701.Pg10; 428-434). He was very concrete in his answers. For instance, he spoke about expectations that the institution has for prospective students (#1483. V-

I3.081701.Pg10; 442-444), for faculty (#1484. V-I3.081701.Pg10; 444-455), and for the administration (#1493. V-I3.081701.Pg11-12; 499-505).

Because of his position, he has a lot of contact with prospective students, current students, parents, and alumni of the university. This knowledge gives him a good understanding of the institution and of higher education in the State and in the country. He claims that this kind of important knowledge should be shared with all the senior administrators of the institution. “I consider that it is needed to have more ideas on the market of higher education. I believe that in these kinds of issues, we are not trained; we just know because of the experience.” (*Considero que se necesita tener mas idea del mercado de la educación superior, y creo que en ese tipo de cosas no nos capacitamos, sino nos vamos enterando*) [1495]; “Then, in summary, I would say that we need more training or self-education in order to better understand the market for higher education.” (*Entonces concretamente yo diría, necesitamos que nos capaciten o que nos autocapitemos en saber leer mejor el mercado de la educación*) [1498].

5.4. The last interview was conducted with a 57-year-old senior administrator who has been at the institution for eleven and a half years, nine of those in his current position as Director, reporting to one of the university vice-presidents. Prior to his experience in the university, his professional experience was in the private sector. He seemed very proud of the opportunity to work at this university (#1556. V-I4.081701.Pg6; 240-241, #1560. V-I4.081701.Pg6; 258-262); and he considers his function as a support for the rest of the areas in the university (#1525. V-I4.081701.Pg2; 78-79). On different occasions, he expressed his interest in having professional

development in university administration, which gives to senior administrators more appropriate training for their roles and responsibilities.

*Institution # 6.* The campus of Institution 6 is located in the center of the country, north of Mexico City. The university is a 52-year-old State public higher education institution, which means that the main campus is located in its State capital and that it receives financial support from State and Federal funds. By the time of the research visit to this institution, it had 400 full-time and 950 part-time faculty with a clerical staff of 957. The student population was close to 8,000 undergraduate and 1,600 graduate students. In addition to the main campus, the institution has a second campus in the State.

Interviews at Institution 6 took place during the third research trip to Mexico. Though not originally part of the purposive sample defined at the beginning of this study, this institution and Institution 7 possessed the target institutional characteristics. Because of this institution's late addition to the sample, the researcher did not have a contact person, but, after some calls, one of the senior administrators agreed to participate in the study. At the time, the university was in the middle of negotiations to avoid a strike, a situation not uncommon at a public higher education institution in Mexico, especially at the beginning of the year.

Most of the buildings in the public institutions are very similar, because they are generally built with Federal funds and by the same contractor. This physical aspect is one of the common characteristics among public higher education institutions and more so among those that are State universities. The common physical characteristic is not

significant in comparison with other common situations that most of these institutions share. One senior administrator commented that living the situation of one public university makes you understand situations that most of the senior administrators face in State universities throughout the country.

All of the departments of Institution 6 are located on the same campus. This results in a large campus, but one with many green areas. In front of the main building, where the senior administrators' offices are located, is a large plaza with a fountain in the center and three flagpoles along one side. These poles support the flags of the university, the State, and Mexico. The plaza also contains a sample of the area vegetation: cactus, trees, and regional plants.

6.1. This senior administrator is 45 years old and has held a faculty position for the last 20 years. He has spent the last two and a half years as a director of the university, reporting to the university's president. He possesses broad administrative experience in his university and has held various senior administrator positions. However, his current position is the highest ranking.

This was a long interview, with the director sharing his experiences and the challenges that he has faced, the greatest of which has been resistance to change in the institution. He commented: "The administration at different levels is assuming this change; in other arenas, the university is still the same, with resistance that places obstacles before the change." (*La administración en diferentes niveles, va asumiendo este cambio; en otros niveles la universidad sigue siendo la misma, con resistencias, que ponen obstáculos al cambio*) [1655].

*Institution # 7.* Institution 7 is located in the same city as Institution 6, and was visited during the time-limited third research trip. Also located in the center of the country, the university is a 60 year-old private institution, but this particular campus is only 28 years old. The institution had 300 full-time and 150 part-time faculty. Data regarding staff was not able to the researcher. The student population included approximately 4,000 undergraduate students and 280 graduate students.

As at Institution 6, the choice of interviewee was a matter of availability rather than personal contacts. This senior administrator was recommended by the university's president, who was unavailable because of previous obligations. The president did, however, agree to follow up on the research and participate in future studies.

This university is unique in its relatively large number of women senior administrators compared to other private and public institutions.

In a private institution, it is very typical to find large, open buildings and offices with a business-like style. This university is no exception. In fact, the architectural style is modern and vanguardist throughout the campus. This style is noticeable even in the green areas, plazas, fountains, statues, and other expositions of art that are shown through the buildings. In most of the hallways are computer stations open to the public in order to access to Internet. The library, the computer labs, and in general all the offices are a demonstration of the institution's adoption of the newest technology and the most modern systems on the market, and of their commitment to make those resources freely available to their students, faculty, and administration.

7.1. The interviewee from Institution 7 has held the position of Director for two years. He is 39 years old and has been at the institution for 16 years. He began his professional experience at the institution as a faculty member, but has held other administrative positions as well. In his current position, he reports to the president of the university.

During the interview, he described the changing environment of the university and expressed his attentiveness to this situation and responding efficiently. He mentioned his interest in examining the readiness and preparation of the senior administrators in the midst of changing environments.

*Institution # 8.* The campus of Institution 8 is located in the Northwest region of the country; as a State university, it is located in the State capital. The university is 30 years old and as a State public higher education institution, receives financial support from State and Federal funds. The institution had 470 full-time faculty, 900 part-time faculty, and a clerical staff of 580. The student population was close to 9,700 undergraduate and 1,500 graduate students.

Access to the institution was easier than access to the previous universities because prior contact had been made with a former president. This situation made it easier to contact the interviewees even with the time constraints of the third research visit.

Previous descriptions of other public institutions exhibit some similarity among the situations that these institutions face, especially those that are State universities. The public universities share common problems, experiences, and other situations very particular to their nature. Challenges, expectations, barriers, and opportunities are similar

in those institutions. These statements were justified by the interviews made in this State university.

The physical aspects of this campus are unique among the public institutions in this study. The buildings are not typical or traditional ones for a public institution; they are far more similar to those found at private institutions.

8.1. This senior administrator is one of only two women included in this study. She is 45 years old and was a director for six years. She has been at the institution for 20 years and has held other positions in the university administration. She has never been a faculty member. Currently she serves as one of the president's advisors. This senior administrator's exclusively administrative experience brings to the study a point of view different from some other interviewees. Her perceptions and opinions of the situation and context of the university differ as a result of her background.

She has a very clear idea of the function of service that the administration in the university has to have. "From the administrative side, everything that we do is done in order to make possible the most important function of the university, which is teaching undergraduate students in the best way." (*Dentro de la parte administrativa, todo lo que hacemos es para que la función mas importante de la universidad, que es la enseñanza en el pregrado, se dé de la mejor manera*) [1809]. Changes in processes and procedures seem to have occurred less widely and more slowly than she would like (#1803. VIII-I1.030402.Pg4; 168-171, #1804. VIII-I1.030402.Pg4; 172-173, #1813. VIII-I1.030402.Pg5; 211-214).



8.2. The second interviewee is the past president. He is 56 years old, and he occupied the presidency for the last three years of his 28-year tenure at the university. He is an authority in higher education in Mexico, possessing broad experience in the field. Many of his opinions, as the following, represent a “big picture” of the situation:

According to the situation with the public finances, the low tax collection that we have in Mexico, plus the large growing student registration in higher education that we have now and that we will have for many years; it is clear that the public subsidies are not going to be enough, and of course, the money is not going to catch up with what the university has needed to grow. *(Dada la situación de las finanzas públicas, de la bajísima recaudación fiscal que hay en México, y junto al fuerte crecimiento de la matrícula de educación superior que tenemos ahora y tendremos por bastantes años, es claro que los subsidios públicos no serán suficientes, es claro que no va a ajustar el dinero para lo que tiene que crecer la universidad)* [1923].

Through the analysis of the results of his comments, an interesting history of the past, present, and future situation of higher education in Mexico emerged; he has a sound understanding of its problems, its changes, and its expectations.

8.3. This senior administrator is 53 years old and has occupied many different positions during his 29 years at the university, among them dean, director, and, most recently, provost. At the time of the interview, he had returned from a sabbatical to rejoin the university as a faculty member.

He readily shared his views about what should be done in order to improve the senior administrator function. During the interview, he talked about the problems, the

challenges, and many situations that senior administrators face and that he believed could be improved. During the interviews, many of the senior administrator's problems were attributed to a lack of administrative background. However, this interviewee possesses an administrative background that he thinks has helped his performance in his different roles as a university administrator. "I do not know if was my administrative mind, or the knowledge that I have about the university, that allowed me in some ways, to put in order things and that has been the base for this [systematization of academic files]." (*No se si fue mi mente de administrador, o el conocimiento que yo llevaba de la universidad, pues que me permitió un tanto el ir ordenando cosas y que bueno han servido de base para esto [la sistematización de archivos académicos]*) [1981].

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to answer certain questions in an effort to identify the competencies needed by senior administrators in higher education institutions in Mexico.

The remainder of this chapter will provide answers to the research questions individually. This will be followed by a more complex analysis that weaves these answers together to create new understandings and insights.

The data include twenty interviews, eleven of which are with respondents in private institutions, while the remaining nine are from public universities. These interviews correspond to the eight Mexican higher education institutions visited, half of which are public and the other half of which were private institutions. Interviews and observations produced 2,049 data units contained in 249 pages of transcripts. All data units have been

sorted into categories and sub-categories, identifying the number of units of data from public and private institutions. A list of all the categories for this data analysis was included in the previous chapter. From these units, 1,227 correspond to the respondents from private institutions, and 822 to the respondents from public institutions.

Besides the analysis of the data from interviews, important data can be derived from an analysis of some of the documents that were handed over to the researcher. A list and description of those documents is included in Appendix G.

Special emphasis is given to the different responses of participants from public and private higher education institutions. For purposes of consistency, senior administrators from public and private higher education institutions are going to be called “public” and “private” administrators through the narrative of the chapter.

*Research Question One:*

*What social forces and trends are provoking recognition of the need to identify competencies for the professional effectiveness of senior administrators in Mexican higher education institutions?*

The observations and opinions about the current situation of higher education in Mexico, the context, and the challenges that it faces help to address this question.

*Present situation of higher education in Mexico.* Private senior administrators expressed concern about the current situation of HE in Mexico. “At some point, there are expectations that are not going to be fulfilled. There are expectations regarding job

offers after graduation, but the reality is otherwise.” (*En algunos puntos se pueden generar expectativas que no se van a cumplir. Expectativas de que cuando salgas tienes un empleo, cuando la realidad es otra*) [1305].

Additionally, private senior administrators referred to a lack of quality and a lack of regulations in some private institutions. Some of their comments on these issues are:

“Some years ago, licenses were given the right to open universities without control... where the academic level was not as good as could be... generating in some ways more unemployment.” (*Hace unos años se dieron licencias para abrir universidades a “ton y son”. Donde el nivel académico deja mucho que desear... generando de una forma mas desempleo*) [1308].

The private interviewees felt that their institutions are giving options to the student population. “But we in higher education institutions, we are really giving alternatives.” (*Pero nosotros como educación superior, estamos dando realmente alternativas*) [1435]. “From 120 to 130 universities, I tell you; between 5 to 6 are the only ones who are worth it.” (*De 120 a 130 universidades, te digo, entre 5 a 6 son las que valemos la pena*) [1439].

Public senior administrators seem even less optimistic about their own institutions. They see problems concerning the way regions are developed, and the consequent increase in the demand for educational spaces, not just in number but also in the number of fields (majors and specializations) and levels. Some of their comments are:

“The knowledge is regionalized; it will not exist in general while regions are being taken care of in different ways.” (*Hay una regionalización del conocimiento, no hay tal sociedad del conocimiento, mientras se atienden de manera diferenciada las regiones*) [1628]. The educational needs from the North of Mexico to the South has been attended to in different ways; the States of Chiapas and Oaxaca for example, are still far below the average for the rest of the country and their educational needs are still not attended (Martinez Rizo, 2003).

“There is a strong pressure stemming from a larger demand than the one that has been traditionally had. This is because of the change in the demographic profile of the population, but also because of the changes that have happened in the lower levels in the education system.” (*Hay una presión muy fuerte de demanda mayor que la que se había tenido tradicionalmente y esto es por un lado por el cambio del perfil demográfico de la población, pero por otro por los cambios que ha habido en los niveles inferiores del sistema educativo*) [1890]. During the 70’s and 80’s, Mexico experienced strong growth in some demographic categories. The growth rate decreased during the following decades, and as a result of this plus the efforts of the Government to cover the educational needs of elementary education in most of the country, the population currently in educational need is the one ready to go to college. This is one of the current pressures that higher education in Mexico is facing. One senior administrator concludes: “And what society requires more is a spectrum that goes from technicians to post-docs. It is not enough to have bachelors. This is a very strong change.” (*Y lo que requiere cada vez mas la sociedad, es toda una gama que va desde técnicos medios, técnicos*

*superiores, hasta post-docs. Ya no basta sacar la licenciatura. Esto es un cambio muy fuerte)* [1891].

Higher education in Mexico, in the opinion of public senior administrators, is being affected by the political environment, the legal context, and, of course, the economic context. An analysis of the context will be presented later, but for the moment, here is a comment that may introduce us to an analysis of the current situation in Mexico.

“Now the change in the political climate that we are living in Mexico is very important, and the Mexican higher education system is not distanced from the peculiarities of the political system. Many phenomena that happened and still occur in the universities have their origins in the political situation.” (*Ahora, el cambio político, que estamos viviendo en México, que es importantísimo y que hace que el sistema de educación superior mexicano pues no pueda estar ajeno a las peculiaridades del sistema político. Muchos de los fenómenos que pasaban y todavía pasan en las universidades, tienen su origen en la situación política*) [1892]. In this sense, most of the public senior administrators talked about the development that they have seen in their institutions and other public institutions through the years and how the political environment affects their universities.

In the past, and because of their regulations (the institution’s charter), the state governors appointed most of the presidents of public universities; that situation produced an immediate link and dependency between the universities and the state government. Although with the increasing autonomy of the public universities, which started with the National University of Mexico in 1933 and was followed for the rest of the public

universities through the rest of the century, that regulation changed, still it is not difficult to find important ties between both structures. Additionally, there is the almost complete financial dependence of the public universities on the federal and state budgets; this situation, of course, is going to affect the universities.

In addition, for many years the persons that occupied public positions were mostly from the same political party, though in the last decade this has changed little by little, which of course also affects those political and economic ties mentioned before. But not only has the way the universities are related to the government changed; universities, because of the political diversity among the public officials, have had to learn how to negotiate and interact in different ways with officials from the same and different political parties. Finally, the different political agendas of the state government many times depend on the political agendas of their original political parties, which also impacts how budgets are defined and prioritized, and consequently the support that public higher education receives.

“In Mexico, we have a situation with an external element, but also with an internal one. This is the legal frame that is very bad. Regarding the external legal frame, there is not a law directed at higher education. The legal frame is very poor... the law is not precise in this aspect and obviously there are many interpretations.” (*En México, tenemos una situación que tiene algún elemento externo, pero que tiene mucho de interno, y es el marco jurídico que es muy malo; incluyendo el marco jurídico externo, donde no hay una ley de educación superior. El marco jurídico es muy pobre...la Ley no precisa al respecto y obviamente hay muchas interpretaciones*) [1914].

This public senior administrator elaborates more on this situation in the next statement:

And the internal legal frame of the universities the situation is very bad too, because it vacillates between a very authoritarian legal frame, where the President and the individual authorities have broad discretion, to the other extreme, where there is a situation of paralysis where everything is left to assembly, secret voting, etc. Then the senior administrator is crippled, and cannot do anything and nothing can be done in order to correct processes. That goes nowhere, or is manipulated. *(Y el marco jurídico interior de las universidades también, es muy malo, porque oscila entre a veces un marco jurídico muy autoritario en donde, el Rector y las autoridades individuales tienen un marco enorme de discrecionalidad. O en el otro extremo, en donde hay una situación de parálisis, donde todo es asamblea, sufragio efectivo universal, secreto, etc. y el directivo está maniatado, no pudiendo hacer nada con un proceso correctivo que nunca llega a nada, que se enpantana o se manipula)* [1919].

*Context of higher education in Mexico.* The context presents significant but subtle differences in the way we understand the reality of these universities and the senior administrators who run them. An understanding of the cultural, political, social, economic, and technological context of the different types of institutions might make differences clear to the reader. An understanding of the context of HE in Mexico can help in the analysis, perception, and understanding of the reality behind the data.

Social context. During the interviews, senior administrators referred to the social context in Mexico, which presents some peculiarities. The senior administrators began



explaining how a changing world provokes a changing environment in their communities, and, as a consequence, a demand for a new organizational structure for the HE system in Mexico.

“The importance of the preparation is brought to light.” (*La importancia de la formación se vá dando mas a la luz*) [30]. “The challenges and the opening up of the world imply a stronger preparation. Then we see the larger worldview is changing.” (*Los retos del mundo y la apertura implican una formación muy fuerte, entonces aquí se van cambiando esta percepción*) [32].

“Our social context at the local level is changing, from an exclusively business city, to a city with wider complexity, with more cultural development.” (*Nuestro contexto social a nivel local va cambiando, de una ciudad netamente de negocios, va creciendo a tener más formación, mas desarrollo cultural*) [27]. But one also noted that higher education’s development had not grown a pace with the cultural complexity:

“The deficit of education that we have as a nation demands an impressive effort in higher education.” (*El déficit de escolaridad que tenemos como país, reclama un esfuerzo impresionante en educación superior*) [309].

Private senior administrators also looked at the social context and realize a lack of value and recognition that society holds regarding different higher education institutions. This opinion was a coincident point among public and private senior administrators. When they refer to the proliferation of entrepreneur institutions, they believe society has not yet realized the lack of quality offered by those entrepreneur institutions and the difference between those and the education provided by recognized private and public

institutions such as theirs. They also believed that they have made many efforts to improve their institutions and keep improving the education that they offer, and sometimes society does not realize this either. The following are some of their comments:

“In some ways, the education market in Mexico is not giving value to a solid education, as they should.” (*De alguna forma el mercado de educación en México, no está valorando una educación sólida, todo lo que debería*) [554]. In the United States, a stronger social value and recognition is given to someone who graduated from a recognized school. The labor market recognizes it as well.” (*En Estados Unidos, se dá un valor social muy fuerte en sueldo y reconocimiento a alguien que es egresado de una escuela dura, el mercado de trabajo lo reconoce suficientemente*) [556].

In addition to the problem of the proliferation of entrepreneur institutions in which the quality of the education that they offer is questioned by the interviewees, some public senior administrators also addressed the social problems of higher education. “Higher education is getting selective and the number rejected is growing.” (*La educación superior se está volviendo selectiva y el número de excluidos va aumentando*) [786]. The National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education in Mexico (ANUIES) estimated in 1999 that the number of students demanding higher education in Mexico in 2020 will reach five million, but that only 50% of this demand will be met. The estimate for 2006 is for 30% coverage of the demand, and the actual percentage of demand met in 1999 was 18% (Martínez Rizo, 2000). These data illustrate the deficiency in higher education capacity that results in a high rejection rate. It is

important to point out that even with the questionable offerings by entrepreneur institutions, the problem still exists.

One of the proposed solutions by one of the interviewees is the option that Technologic Universities provide. One senior administrator from this institution explained that these institutions offer options that not only are students looking for, but also that companies are requiring. Such institutions increase job opportunities for students after graduation.

Others interviewees focused more on the peculiarities of the social context, including a sense of changing environment at the Federal and local levels. One of the reasons for this is a social movement, which had its origins in the political movement around the country; another reason is a consequence of a changing world. Some of their opinions that illustrate the previous statements are:

“In Mexico, the people feel more confident, they feel that they can make decisions, we feel democratic, and this is very valuable. It is a different Mexico; then taking this as a starting point, also the educational purposes and focus have to change.” (*En México, la gente se siente con mucha mas confianza, se siente que puede tomar decisiones, nos sentimos democráticos, eso es muy valioso. Es un México distinto, que partiendo de esta base, tambien tienen que cambiar los enfoques y propósitos educativos*) [1059]. With the request for change expressed during the last Federal and local elections around the nation, Mexican society is asking for changes today. “The social environment is favorable toward making substantive changes in the Mexican educational system.” (*El*

*entorno social es muy favorable para que haya cambios sustantivos en el sistema educativo mexicano)* [1063].

Besides the propitiousness of the social environment is the responsibility that the university has to society. Higher education senior administrators expressed that their institutions by “cooperating in the solution of social global problems [are] contributing to the change in education.” (*Cooperar en la solución de los problemas sociales globales está contribuyendo al cambio de la educación*) [827].

Now, as a result of this context, senior administrators expressed the need to be better prepared. “I notice senior administrators with much more interest in becoming more current and better prepared, understanding that we are in a more competitive environment.” (*Yo noto directivos con mucha mas inquietud para actualizarse y prepararse mejor, entendiendo que estamos en un entorno mucho mas competido*) [1064].

Political context. Part of the political context is political appointments, which influence the nomination and appointment of many senior administrators in public institutions. Frequently these appointments are made without consideration for administrative or higher education experience. Consequently, what happens in the political context many times affects what happens in the universities, especially the public institutions. One senior administrator alluded to this situation when he said. “These positions are very political in many respects.” (*Estos puestos son muy políticos en muchos aspectos*) [162].

Because of the political appointments, one public senior administrator explained the need for professionalism: “Our senior administrators are traditionally designated by the President or the Governor, and the appointed men are not always the better trained to accomplish the important function of managing an institution of this nature.” (*Nuestros directores han sido tradicionalmente designados toda la vida por el Presidente o el Gobernador, y no necesariamente se designa al hombre que esta mejor capacitado para cumplir una función tan importante como es el dirigir una institución de estas características*) [1098]. It is important to mention that this situation changed in many public institutions once they became more autonomous; but, as was mentioned previously, the ties between the government and the university administration still persist, mainly because of the financial dependency of the university.

Senior administrators from private institutions, on the other hand, usually tend to be those with administrative or business experience.

Economic context. In a developing country such as Mexico, discussion of the economic context can affect how any aspect of the country is analyzed. Higher education is no exception. The following comments from interviewees advance an understanding of how the economic context affects higher education in Mexico:

“The challenges are enormously demanding, and we do not have the capacity to respond because of the economic situation.” (*Los retos nos están demandando grandemente y no necesariamente tenemos la capacidad de respuesta por la misma situación económica*) [51]. The interviewee is referencing a slowed growth in economic development, which directly influences expenditures for higher education.

“On the economic side, we have large deficiencies; with a population in a strong poverty situation, this is a challenge for all of us, how to make this situation turn around.” (*En lo económico con grandes deficiencias, con una población en pobreza muy fuerte, es un reto para todos nosotros, como revertir esta situación*) [43]. It is however, not only the public sector which is affected: “Because of the economic growth, the private education has not grown as fast as we had hoped.” (*Debido al crecimiento económico, la educación privada no ha crecido en una forma tan rápida como era de esperarse*) [546]. Students, too, feel the effects of unemployment and lack of jobs personally: “Maybe because of the increase of poverty, student attrition is growing.” (*Quizás por el avance de la pobreza, la decersión está aumentando*) [791]. Students abandon college not only because of the cost of school, but also because they have to go to work and help supporting their families. The economic situation seems both to contribute to the difficulty of higher education in Mexico and to suggest part of the solution to the problem. “It is becoming clear that education is the way to continue with the development of the country.” (*Se está viendo que sólo con educación es uno de los puntos de poder seguir adelante con el desarrollo del país*) [1303].

Technological context. Technology in higher education has different implications: (a) how faculties teach and how the students learn; and (b) how the institutions react to adopt new technologies, not only for academic functions, but also for administration. Some illustrative comments are the following:

“Technological development is ruling the market, and consequently education.” (*El desarrollo tecnológico esta mandando al mercado y consecuentemente a la educación*)

[75]. “Technological elements are affecting the situation of having a better administration.” (*Los elementos tecnológicos estan afectando la situación de tener una mejor administración*) [45]. Senior administrators from public and private institutions recognize technology as a part of their institutions that has come to stay.

Senior administrators are sure that technological changes affect and will affect higher education institutions and ultimately how they will perform their roles, but the impact of these changes is still not very clear for them. “The technological revolution still has unknown impacts... “(*Toda la revolución tecnológica tiene impactos todavía desconocidos...*) [550]. “We still do not know well the implications that it is going to have, it is a new paradigm to learn and we are just kind of waiting...” (*todavía no sabemos bien que implicaciones va a tener, es una nueva forma de aprender y estamos un tanto a la expectativa...*) [551], “all this is a motive to study.” (*todo esto es motivo de estudio*) [810].

Demands of society, including business and industry. The senior administrators of higher education institutions recognized that society has many different expectations of their institutions; those expectations are for better education, for solutions to social problems, for the development of better professionals. Public and private senior administrators both agreed that society sees their institutions as entities of service, where they are asked to make proposals, study, diagnose, and ultimately to solve problems that society faces. They also claimed that answering those demands is sometimes difficult, and that they always must keep in mind the mission of their institutions.

“The university is asked to do many things; to research, to solve, to propose, to study, to diagnose, to offer opinions...” (*A la universidad se le pide un montón de cosas, que investigue, que resuelva, que proponga, que haga estudios, que diagnostique, que opine...*) [261]. “It is complicated; it is a lot of social pressure.” (*Es complicado, es mucha presión social*) [273].

*Challenges for higher education in Mexico.* During the interviews, most of the senior administrators from public and private institutions discussed the challenges that their institutions face. Private senior administrators focused on their concern for opening different options for students. Quality is one of the biggest concerns among private senior administrators. They detect a growth in the private higher education offerings, but not at the level of quality within their institutions. Private senior administrators discussed competency being developed from new options in the country and from foreign institutions, sometimes through distance education. Senior administrators from private institutions believed that their institutions are doing their job, but society still has not recognized the value of their academic preparation. Nevertheless, through their analysis, they may find some other challenges that the institutions face. One of those challenges is the lack of efficient and timely answers to society’s demands.

Public senior administrators expressed concerns for their institutions’ ability to address social problems. As one senior administrator explained: “The institutions of higher education should be models for the development of the country, where development implies the social dimension, the growth, and the solution to social problems.” (*Las instituciones de educación superior deberían ser modelos para el*



*desarrollo del país, donde el desarrollo implica el aspecto social, el crecimiento, la solución de los problemas sociales)* [828].

Public and private senior administrators mentioned throughout the interviews the challenges that higher education in Mexico faces in general, in a national context. Many of the comments focused on the need for resources, and for a different legal framework for the institutions, one that allows evaluation and diversification in funding. The next response illustrates many of their ideas:

The challenges of higher education in Mexico include—1) demographic changes and the concentration of the demand in higher levels of education, 2) the inability to attend to the demand, 3) the response time in the school under the conventional model is very slow and it is not possible to respond in a timely manner to the impact of the technology revolution. (*--Los retos de la educación superior en Mexico incluyen— 1) La tendencia demográfica y de concentración de matrícula en los niveles superiores, 2) la incapacidad para poder atender como lo requiere la demanda, 3) el tiempo de respuesta de la escuela bajo el modelo convencional es tan lento que no alcanza a responder al impacto de las revoluciones tecnológicas*) [1620].

Consequently, they believe there is a need for higher education senior administrators with new characteristics, executives who are constantly attentive to what is happening inside and outside of their institutions. As one senior administrator put it:

Nowadays we are asked to be many things. We have to be visionaries, intelligent, winners, experts in education, and many additional things in order to carry out our

roles; in addition, there is the dynamic of change. As a result, we are going to have the challenge of how to create the senior administrator for the new scenarios. (*Ahora nos piden que seamos muchas cosas, que seamos previsores, inteligentes, ganadores, expertos en educacion, y que seamos muchas cosas adicionalmente para atender [este rol]; sumado a esta dinámica de cambio. Entonces si va haber el reto de como formar al directivo para los nuevos escenarios*) [422].

Additionally, the interviewees referred to the need for an administrator with a broad understanding of the national situation, and knowledge of the government's educational initiatives, having therefore the elements to make changes in their own institutions.

They also suggested that the universities themselves become objects of study, in order to produce concrete proposals to address those needs. While they anticipated a need for change in some organizational structures of their institutions, they also recognized resistance to such changes.

*Research Question Two:*

*What do current senior administrators think are the competencies that future senior administrators should have in order to be prepared for changing higher education institutions in Mexico?*

*Current competencies of senior administrators.* Respondents without prompting identified specific competencies that current directors in their institutions have and will need to retain or further develop. Data from this category were organized in sub-

categories in order to present a more coherent interpretation of the sub-themes, and the relational patterns found in them.

Competencies are conceived as “complex structures of attributes (such as knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes) needed for intelligent performance in specific situations. It incorporates the notion of professional judgment” (Gonczi, 1996, p.12). The previous definition was mentioned to each one of the participants in this study. However, what I found was that the participants had a broader definition; they were not limited to the definition but went further, including in their responses aspects such as personal characteristics and necessary skills of a senior administrator. They suggested that the professional that their institutions need has and is expected to have certain skills, competencies, and personal characteristics and attributes. The identified current competencies are described next.

Personal characteristics and skills. In most of the cases, directors from public and private universities identified different competencies as personal characteristics and skills of their senior administrators. Directors from private institutions emphasized *flexibility* and individual qualities such as *energy*, *intelligence*, *enthusiasm*, and *confidence*. One director also suggested tolerance and having clear values as desirable personal traits for directors. On the other hand, directors from public institutions mentioned competencies such as *individual qualities*, *individualized professional development*, *research knowledge*, *communication*, and a *positive attitude*.

Respondents from public institutions placed their emphasis on the importance of *individualized professional development* for their current senior administrators. “I cannot

say that it is 100% of them, but I believe that in general they (senior administrators) are people trying to improve every day, and to be better trained for their ever demanding responsibilities.” (*Yo no puedo decir que el 100%, pero yo creo que en lo general son gentes que si tratan de todos los dias, muchos de ellos de prepararse, y estar mejor entrenados para esta alta responsabilidad*) [1071].

During the interview, one respondent from a public institution emphasized that when hiring current directors, they focused on competencies like *research knowledge* and *experience, communication skills, open mindedness, and having a positive attitude*.

Administrative competencies. Respondents from private institutions strongly emphasized the administrative competencies that their current directors possess. In contrast, respondents from public institutions barely mentioned current administrative competencies. One of the reason of this outcome might be the business background of the founders and top authorities of many private institutions.

First, respondents from private institutions focused on *planning*. One director especially emphasized the importance of applying strategic planning at his institution. One of the directors from a public institution who did mentioned planning as a competency that their current directors have also is identified as one of those with broader administrative experience.

The second competency mentioned more often by respondents in private institutions was *evaluating*. One director from a private institution related that one of his initiatives was to carry out an evaluation process for all administrative directors in his institution, including the president.

*Visioning* was also another competency mentioned, especially by a respondent who is the president of a private institution. For this senior administrator, visioning is a competency that they need not just for the well being of the institution, but also for that of the whole community. “As senior administrators, we need to have the skills to see the needs of the future, the needs of today, and to know the demands from the society in general.” (*Como directivos, tenemos que tener herramientas para estar captando cuales son las necesidades del futuro, cuales son las necesidades del hoy, y que es lo que la sociedad demanda*) [58].

Other competencies mentioned by private senior administrators were *respect for the line of authority*; and *productivity*. Private senior administrators are as results oriented as any business person. They were very concerned with the results that they achieve, including those related to the student population, grants, research, facilities, and use of resources. We have to keep in mind that private education in Mexico does not receive funds from the government, which demands that, their senior administrators be accountable to their authorities and governing boards.

On the other hand, a public director mentioned *business experience*. Funding could be affecting this response. The resources that public institutions are receiving are limited and the institutions’ needs are growing. Public higher education in Mexico needs not only to find ways to get more resources but also to make the best use of the ones that they are already receiving. Thus, they need to have senior administrators with business background and/or business experience who support these efforts.

Social responsibility competencies. For one of the senior administrators from a private institution, the competency of being *aware of diversity* is implied because of their position. He stated that “this job is a task of working with diversity.” (*El trabajo es así, es un trabajo de trabajar con la diversidad*) [328]. This can be explained and understood in the context of private universities. Private universities in Mexico are more diverse than public institutions in terms of gender, age, and even socioeconomic status of their students, staff, and faculty.

*The analysis of social demands and capacity for finding answers* are related competencies. These competencies were identified for directors in public institutions where their responsibility vis-à-vis society is well understood, as well as manifested in liaisons between the directors from public institutions and society. This competency was mentioned especially by those respondents from public institutions with more business background. It implies something we increasingly see in U.S. universities; that is, corporate connections and relationships.

Institutional competencies. Having an understanding of the institution and seeing the university as a project of life, were also identified as competencies that are present in their current senior administrators. Respondents from both public and private institutions agreed that understanding their institutions is one way to better carry out their jobs. In order to better understand their institutions, senior administrators also recognized the importance of having a clear knowledge of the context that surrounds them. There is a growing recognition of the importance of context, as a means of determining institutional direction and needs.

The idea of *the university as a project of life* was brought up most often by senior administrators in private institutions, by six of eleven private interviewees. The president of a private institution said, “I believe that for the [university] executive, this is not just a job, it is having a deep perspective of life.” (*Este sentido de vida del directivo, no es un empleo, es toda una profunda perspectiva de vida*) [99]. Another director from a private institution said “We want to present the [life in the university] as an option in your life. We want that students to feel attracted to this style of life, to this professional activity.” (*Ha sido el presentarle una opción de vida, a los chicos de licenciatura, que vean a sus profesores como gente que se les puede antojar su estilo de vida, su actividad profesional*) [743]. For years, academic life was considered not very competitive in comparison with other jobs in terms of salaries, personal development, and professional development. As a consequence many of the young scholars who went out of the country to get degrees decided not come back to Mexico. Educational authorities are conscious of the problem and the situation has begun to change. Some of the interviewees from

private institutions showed their concern, expressing that they are trying to change their institutions and the conditions for their professors, making the academic life in their institutions very attractive for the new, well-prepared scholars.

*Needed competencies for senior administrators for the future.* A category called “needed competencies for senior administrators” seemed the most appropriate way to start the presentation of data on future competencies that upcoming senior administrators should have or those that current senior administrators need to change. Included in this theme are all the categories related to needed competencies for senior administrators. The data includes 312 units, of which the majority (233 units) are responses from private senior administrators, and the rest (79) are responses from public senior administrators.

The total amount of data from private institutions (1,227 units) is greater than that collected in public institutions (822 units), and there is a clear difference between the comments from the respondents from private versus from public institutions regarding needed competencies for directors. The respondents from private institutions made a more extensive and elaborate response in answer to the question “What competencies will the directors of HE institutions need in the future?” In contrast, respondents from public institutions made less extensive and less elaborate responses to this question; this may be the reflection of more need of professional development in public institutions whose senior administrators need do more preparation in their field. However, there are always cases in public institutions that may represent examples to follow and that the respondents identified in order to define what they have and need.



Data from this category were organized into sub-categories in order to present a more coherent interpretation of the emerged sub-themes and the relation between them. The extension, elaboration, and richness of this category and sub-categories are fundamental in this study.

Personal characteristics and skills. According to the respondents, the personal characteristics and skills that future HE senior administrators in Mexico will need include *flexibility, anxiety control, time management, adaptation*, and a *positive attitude* when addressing faculty, staff, and students. Respondents also identified *political skills, creativity, listening*, being *human oriented, innovation, motivation, honesty, diplomacy, visioning*, and *entrepreneurship* as necessary skills. Respondents from private institutions provided the largest number of responses, 38 out of 55.

Respondents from private institutions placed special emphasis on *adaptation*, and it seems that respondents from public institutions also recognized the importance of this competency. Respondents from both types of institutions recommended, “don’t be afraid of changes” [1179], “keep an open mind” [1176], and “adapt to the demands of a new kind of organization” [434]. The respondents saw those as characteristics that future directors of higher education institutions might need in order to keep adapting to new situations.

Directors from private universities also recognized *flexibility* and a *positive attitude* as competencies that have to be cultivated every day. This last competency was equally recognized for most of the respondents. Flexibility and adaptability are related; it is not

possible to be adaptable if you are not flexible, so these two characteristics go hand-in-hand.

There is strong evidence of differences regarding the competencies identified as “personal characteristics and skills” between public and private respondents. Respondents from public institutions mentioned being a good *politician*, *creativity*, and being an *entrepreneur* as some of the competencies that future directors might need. Context in this sense is very important. The closeness of public institutions in Mexico to the government demands that public higher education senior administrators be good politicians. In addition, the organizational restructuring and the enormous changes that public universities are going through, especially those visited for this study, perhaps influenced the responses of public institution directors when they mentioned creativity and being an entrepreneur as future competencies for their senior administrators.

Administrative competencies. Senior administrators from private institutions identify *decision making, delegating, searching or exploring alternatives, finance and administrative competencies, team work, communication, visioning, planning, negotiating, conflict resolution, evaluating, knowledge management, networking, marketing, project management, and response capacity* as “administrative competencies.” Most of these competencies are part of the administrative process that starts with planning and ends with decision making; the rest of the identified administrative competencies are part of an administrative preparation background got it from school years.

On the other hand, directors from public institutions gave less emphasis to the administrative competencies that they may need; they mentioned competencies such as *delegating, administrative and finance competencies, teamwork, visioning, basic competencies, and response capacity*. Thus, while there was some overlap, there is clearly not a one-to-one correspondence. Senior administrators from public institutions have made a much narrower response to this question. What that means is unclear. Whether the private institution senior administrators are simply more accustomed to operating in a forecasting mode or whether public institution senior administrators simply expect their own context to change less radically is uncertain. There is, however, a broader response set from the private institution senior administrators, many of whom come out of the business and corporate sectors, which must be also considered in the responses.

Senior administrators from private universities also identify as “basic” competencies those that, in the majority of cases, their directors already have, such as administrative and human resources basic knowledge. They also consider that those competencies need to be reinforced and improved as part of a process in their own institutions.

Although public senior administrators placed less emphasis on this sub-category, it is important to acknowledge that directors from both public and private institutions concurred on some administrative competencies.

The most important concurrence between these two types of directors is *administrative and finance competency*, as well as the perception that administrative competencies are basic competencies that those directors need to have. Representative statements include: “...to know about planning, controlling, and evaluating, as a part of the administrative process –basic or traditional competencies—.” (*Planeación, control, evaluación; estos tres últimos como parte del proceso administrativo –competencias básicas o tradicionales—*) [160]. “Knowing that we have limited resources, it’s important to know how to more effectively administer them.” (*Sabiendo también que los recursos que tenemos son limitados, como administrarlos mejor, como una clásica y típica administración*) [60]; “...administer financial resources...” (*...administrar recursos financieros...*) [411]; “...organize people...” (*...organizar al personal...*) [488]; and others.

Senior administrators from both types of institutions also recognized the need for an administration focused on higher education, because according to them “education is a

system much more complex and vastly different from a manufacturing system.” (*Educación, es un sistema mucho más complejo y diferente que el de producción*) [482].

Another competency that was mentioned on several occasions by both public and private directors was *visioning*. Respondents expected directors in their institutions to have a “vision” of their institutions and higher education in general. In addition, they wanted directors who see the future, directors “that move forward to possible changes” [1084], who “have vision and pragmatism” [1088].

In addition, respondents concurred on another competency, *delegating*, which means to “assign the work to those responsible” [970]. They expressed the importance of understanding what it is to delegate, and, in the same sense, of individuals knowing and assuming their responsibilities.

Finally, respondents from public and private institutions concurred on competencies such as *teamwork*, and *response capacity*. Both types of administrators, but, especially those from the private institutions, expected future administrators to answer accurately and on time the demands of the market and of society.

Some of the identified differences are the degree of emphasis that each respondent, public or private, placed on certain competencies. In summary, the greatest emphasis from private executives was on competencies such as *communication, administrative and finance competencies, decision-making, and basic competencies*. For public executives, their strongest opinions were related to competencies such as *administrative and finance competencies, visioning, teamwork, and basic competencies*.

Social responsibility competencies. Another sub-theme is one identified for competencies such as *social commitment, cultural diversity, analysis of demands, and knowledge of economic situations*. These competencies can be grouped together because of the relationship that they bear to society and its demands. “It requires that the universities have a clear commitment toward the society that they intend to serve.” (*Se requiere que las universidades tengan un compromiso claro ante la sociedad que intentan servir*) [305].

One of the first competencies that respondents identified, especially those from private institutions, was the *social commitment* that their directors must have to the society. Commitment to society includes meeting a broad range of needs that the society has and understanding where universities can help. They expected that their institutions, through their leaders, have a clear commitment of service to society. They hoped their senior administrators would participate in the support of growing populations that demand more service from the university, including a quality education, and, ultimately, preparation of those students to become social leaders. “We want –the students— to be social leaders with a significant social impact.” (*Nosotros queremos que –los alumnos— sean líderes sociales, de alto impacto social*) [608]. In order to accomplish that, “the director needs to be in close contact with society’s needs.” (*Que el directivo esté en contacto muy cercano con las necesidades que la sociedad tiene*) [753].

A similar interest, but with less emphasis, was expressed by the respondents from public universities. They pointed out the compact that their institutions have with society, which pays for public education in Mexico out of tax resources. They also

realized the importance of strengthening the relationships with businesses and the productive/corporate sector. However, one director from a public institution claimed, “It doesn’t mean that the universities or the institutions of higher education must only be focusing on the idea of ‘serving’ the business sector in the future.” (*Esto no significa que las universidades o que las instituciones de educación superior se dediquen en el futuro a “servir” al sector empresarial, o al sector productivo, no*) [965]. This would seem to suggest that at least one senior administrator was concerned that higher education does not lose sight of its real mission. The press toward “corporatization” of higher education felt in highly industrialized countries is fortunately not yet being experienced in Mexico.

Another identified competency shared by both types of respondents was *analysis of demands*. Senior administrators believe that they will be responding to social needs by identifying problems and presenting solutions through applied research. “Knowing how to understand the demand of businesses, government organizations, and society” [97] is how one of the respondents from a private university expressed this idea. In the same sense, a director from a public institution cited “trying to find solutions for all sectors in the society” [1170] as his institution’s response to society’s needs.

Respondents were conscious of the need to develop sensitivity to demands from a diverse society. The competencies called *cultural diversity* and *knowledge of economic situations* were identified only in the responses of private directors. One director said “It will be needed to be able to solve things in a changing and diverse environment, where the paradigms that Mexico has now will change in the coming years.” (*--Será necesario— que se resuelvan cosas en un entorno cambiante, diverso, donde el*

*paradigma al menos en Mexico, se va a cambiar en los próximos años)* [418]. Another participant claimed that “with new scenarios of change, we will need a new university executive that will embody all of this, and I do not know if we will have one.” (*Con nuevos escenarios de cambio, así sería como el nuevo directivo universitario tendría que ser, la suma de todo esto y quien sabe si haya*) [421].

Institutional competencies. Respondents emphasized the importance of understanding their own institutional philosophy and identity as one way to achieve institutional goals, and make easier the identification of the director with his/her institution. Directors from public and private institutions referred to this competency, but the emphasis was stronger from private institutions. The emphasis may come because of the greater “distinctiveness” of private universities in general (Clark, 1970). Clark explains the concept of “distinctive college” relating it to the ideas that “all organizations have a social role, ways of behaving linked with defined positions in the larger society, but only some have seized their role in the purposive way that we can call a mission” (p.8). When the author talks about this concept he does it in regard to private higher education institutions. The institutional identity and philosophy include generalized traditions, ceremonies, and a symbolism of uniqueness; all of which maintain unity, link internal and external groups, and emphasize the distinctiveness of the institution.

One of the respondents from these institutions considered it vital for the university to keep “refreshing” the study of the institutional identity and philosophy in order to maintain a permanent updating and adaptation of the institutional project. In addition, they recognized the importance of having previous experience and knowledge of the



institution, and its goals, antecedents, values, vision, and mission. They expected to have directors who know and have this experience to be more identified with the institution and with a stronger commitment. This competency was mentioned also by one of the respondents with more experience in the field of higher education in Mexico. “It is very important that the senior administrator shares the institutional values and the institutional mission, in order to comprehend the breadth and scope of it.” (*Es importantísimo que el directivo comparta los valores institucionales, la misión de la institución, [para] comprenderla a fondo*) [758].

Another competency that most of the respondents, especially those from private institutions, identified was *leadership*. However, respondents attached a specific meaning to the word “leadership”. They meant a senior administrator that invites, encourages, listens, makes decisions, and believes in teamwork, among other characteristics. One of the respondents from a public institution defined this needed trait as “more than being a leader, is being a facilitator, building a good work environment” (*más que ser un líder, ser un facilitador, crear buenos climas laborales*) [1181]. When Clark (1970) explains a distinctive college, he includes in the equation the personal capacity for leadership:

The great-man theory of history has a specific version in education in the frequent claim that the institution, especially the noteworthy one, is the lengthened shadow of a man. In the history of the successful college, so the interpretation goes, lurks the forceful president who made it what it is today. Therefore, the personality of an individual is the ultimate factor in institution-building; the key to success is to find the strong leader (p.240).

The competencies identified only from respondents from private institutions were *fund raising, mentoring students, and knowledge of the higher education market*. The

context of all private institutions surely influences the responses of their senior administrators. Private institutions have as one of their main endeavors finding funds to support their activities; this is why it is vital that their senior administrators possess *fund raising ability* as an indispensable competency. Similarly, with *knowledge of the higher education market*, private institutions need to be aware of the what the market requires in order to both provide the resources that the market demands and make sure that their graduates are going to get jobs. The differences in tuition between public and private institutions are immense. In the public sector it is almost nonexistent, while in the private sector it can be as high as tuition in a respected public university in the U.S. This is one of the reasons why private institutions are very “client oriented” or “student oriented.” Students have the right to demand a quality service for the price they pay. One of their demands is attention from faculty and staff, and this may be the reason why *mentoring students* came out as one of the competencies mentioned by private senior administrators. This does not mean that students from public institutions cannot make demands; they can, and they do. The pressure, however, may be greater and increasingly effective in private institutions.

*Support of the academy* was a competency only mentioned by public senior administrators. There is still a wide gap between faculty and administrators of the university, almost as if they exist as two different worlds. This situation is emphasized in public institutions and may explain why senior administrators who seek to close the gap recognized the need to better support the academy.

Technological, informational and organizational skills. This sub-theme includes competencies such as technologic competencies, use of information, language skills, and knowledge of educational theory and practice. Respondents from public and private institutions agreed that new technologies applied to education would require senior administrators to continue to update their competency in this area.

*Language skills and knowledge of educational theory and practice* were competencies shared by at least half of the respondents, especially for those in private institutions. Public and private higher education institutions are increasingly opening their doors to foreign faculty; at the same time, the national faculty more and more are networking with faculty from different countries. This creates a need that not only faculty members, but also senior administrators, be fluent in another language. Universities are expanding their horizons outside of Mexico through agreements, joint projects, collaborations, visiting professors, professional development and other activities in different countries. Senior administrators in these institutions acknowledge the need for more language skills. Additionally, in reference to knowledge of educational theory and practice, senior administrators feel that they lack knowledge in this field. They believe that in order to be professionals in a field as specific as education, they need to be aware of the state of the art and apply in their positions the advances in their discipline.

*Research Question Three:*

*How do senior higher education administrators in Mexican institutions feel that they are prepared to change? To adapt?*

Data from the private senior administrator responses were analyzed separately from that of public senior administrators. First, the researcher identified the overall analysis that the senior administrators made regarding change in private higher education institutions, and then in public higher education institutions.

HE senior administrators in private institutions did not offer specific observations or opinions about readiness for change. This, perhaps, results from their belief more in the idea of “continuation” than in the idea of “change”. They considered that they had already started working in the necessary direction; now they need not change as much as to follow the processes already initiated. As one senior administrator put it: “It has been a continuum, I wouldn’t say that it is a unique action; moreover it has been dynamic, a fight of adjustments, of changes.” (*Ha sido más bien un continuo, yo todavía no diría que hay una acción única, sino mas bien, ha sido una dinámica, una lucha de ajustes, de cambios*) [175]. The ideas expressed by private senior administrators are much related to the previously introduced concept of “distinctive college.” Clark (1970) claims that one of the conditions necessary to create distinctiveness is an evolutionary openness in established institutions. The private institutions are not looking to change, they are looking to continue; they are already “established institutions”, with sufficient reputation and traditions. In order to build and maintain this distinctiveness, Clark suggests four elements: faculty dedication, features of the curriculum, a social base of external

believers, and a strong subculture with the central or institutional idea of the university. These private universities seem to be working in those elements in order to pursue a brighter future.

Other senior administrators also recognize that their institutions have been through a process of change. “I see that in these three last years, the university has not stopped, it has had adjustments, revisions, and changes.” (*Yo veo que en estos tres años la universidad no ha parado, se le ha ido en ajustes, revisiones, y cambios*) [181].

They identified some specific ideas about changes in their institutions that focused on the idea of the university’s mission. One senior administrator noticed the following: “I see a university that will have to provide more support in those areas –teaching, administration, and research—if it does not want to remain being a ‘little teaching school’” (*Veo una universidad que va a tener que apoyar mas esas áreas –docencia, administración, e investigación—si no quiere quedarse siendo una escuelita de estilo docente*) [475]. Among other changes that their institutions are implementing, they emphasized improving quality, heightening awareness of the environment, and overcoming resistance to change.

Finally, some private senior administrators also talked about being afraid to change and take risks as a situation present among higher education institutions. “Being afraid to change, not knowing how to take risks; this is something that here in Mexico we suffer from a lot.” (*Tenerle miedo al cambio, no saber correr riesgos; es algo que aqui en México padecemos mucho*) [1253].

Senior administrators from public institutions do believe they need to change, and they discussed the challenges that they face, chiefly the slow dynamic or pace of change. They commented that any change must come from the top authorities, because it is difficult for people to do it by themselves.

One of the main problems in the public university is explained in the next comment: “The university cannot stop every three years and see who is coming and what they say. No, no, it has to be a dynamic; it costs you a lot, but I believe those are the challenges that we have in the public universities.” (*La universidad no se puede detener cada tres años, y ver quien llega y ver que dice. No, no, tiene que ser una dinámica, que te cuesta muchísimo, pero yo creo que esos son los retos que tenemos las universidades públicas*) [1833].

Some of the challenges stem from socio-cultural changes in the student population, where the female population has been growing during the last year. Cultural change influences the educational responsibility of the institutions, faculty professional development and quality in research, teaching, and extension.

Some public senior administrators recognized that they are in a transition period where resistance to change is very strong, but where incremental change is occurring. Some areas of the university have started changing; others are still the same. One senior administrator speculated that the change has been supported by the idea of evaluation from the Federal authority in education.

Once the participants began to talk about change in their institutions, they also pointed out the changes that the university administration is experiencing. Most of these

responses also came from public institutions. There is a consensus among both public and private senior administrators about whether their senior administrators are prepared to change. They agreed that they are not, or at least not fully prepared, but they also insisted that in their institutions, an effort to remedy this situation is in place, and that many measures have been put in practice.

Among the measures cited by respondents from private institutions that indicate preparations for change are: (a) evaluations at all levels of the administration, including the president, (b) strategic planning, (c) implementation of a more cooperative style and group or team work, (d) continuous review of their functions, (e) setting up new management styles, (f) diagnosis of the institution administration, (g) policies of customer service, and (h) modification of institutional structures. Private senior administrators seemed to understand that they are continually preparing for change.

One of the private senior administrators concluded: “I believe that we must change many administrative issues. We have to be flexible, and to embrace ideas of adaptability and flexibility, otherwise [the university] is not going be able to respond, to survive.” *(Yo creo tienen que cambiar muchas cuestiones administrativas. Se tiene que ser flexible, y adoptar ideas de adaptabilidad y flexibilidad, o [la universidad] no va a poder responder, no va a sobrevivir, para acabar pronto)* [472].

Public senior administrators were more pessimistic about their past preparation for change. For the future, they seemed more optimistic. They believe they are working toward change in their institutions despite continuing difficulties. They cited as an

example the model of the technologic university; this in itself is considered “a very strong change in the administrative side” [1135].

One public senior administrator pointed out what public universities are doing as indicators of change in the university administration:

“There have been very important changes in the country through ‘pairs committees’ .... and one of the phases is to review the university administration; then there are parameters for identification and certification of the processes.” (*Han habido cambios muy importantes en el país a través de los “comités de pares”... y una de las etapas a revisar es la administración universitaria, entonces hay parámetros para identificar y certificar los procesos*) [1138a].

For higher education senior administrators, adaptation is the result of change. In general, there is consensus among the participants in this study that they do not feel fully prepared to change, even when they recognized the importance of change in their institutions. As one private senior administrator pointed out, they are looking at institutional change in order to help them meet the new demands of new times.

What the institution would have to do, or what we have to do, is to consider the context in order to act in some way, act in consequence. We cannot prepare professionals in an environment that is not adequate. Then we also have to be aware of what is happening in the country, and of what the country demands, so we can adapt to that change. (*La institución lo que tendría o lo que tiene que hacer es considerar el entorno para actuar de cierta manera, actuar en consecuencia. No podemos preparar profesionistas en un entorno que no es el adecuado, entonces*



*tenemos que estar pendientes de lo que ocurre en el país, y de lo que demanda el país para adaptarnos nosotros a ese cambio) [636]*

Most of the responses addressing an adaptation process were related to the idea of adapting as a response to the situations that surround and, consequently, affect the institution. Beyond that, adaptation was barely addressed by the respondents, except for the times when it was considered as the subsequent step of change. The senior administrators seem willing to adapt, even if they are not fully prepared, in the same way that they are expecting their institutions to change.

*Research Question Four:*

*Are there differences between private and public higher education senior administrators in Mexico relative to their perceptions about the kind of senior administrator that future higher education institutions in Mexico require?*

In Research Question Two, respondents identified the needed competencies for future higher education senior administrators. The data analyses presented identify how and why public and private senior administrators differ in their perceptions about the senior administrator that is required in future higher education institutions in Mexico. At this point, the question will be why those differences exist.

This question will be better answered having a clearer idea of the current situations that senior administrators face in higher education institutions in Mexico and of the future scenarios that they anticipate.

*Present perceptions and future scenarios for private higher education institutions.*

Present perceptions. The interviews yielded extensive and detailed data about the perceptions that private senior administrators hold concerning the present circumstances of private higher education. Private senior administrators described their institutions as entrepreneur institutions that make possible high levels of interaction where everybody knows everybody else. They consider their institutions “young” institutions with a “young” faculty population. In addition, they understand that their institutions are involved in a very competitive environment, which has promoted institutional change. One of these institutional changes is the way they conceive their institutions:

To have a research university rather than just a teaching one, is precisely the idea of offering a complete academic project. It is not just necessary to have faculty well prepared who are very good teachers; more than that we need to have faculty on the cutting edge of knowledge. *(Tener una universidad de investigación más que de docencia, es precisamente con la idea de poder ofrecer un proyecto académico redondo para este tipo de formación, donde no basta tener en la facultad gente que esté bien preparada y que sea buenos docentes, sino más bien necesitamos tener a la facultad en la frontera de los conocimientos)* [702].

In these institutions, phenomena like hiring faculty from outside of the country, senior administrators (including the president) teaching, and searching for chief senior administrators (including the president) from outside the institution, are the result of the institutional change already taking place in the private higher education institutions that participated in this study.

When they talked about their administrations, one of them pointed out how independently they manage their campuses in relation to the rest of the campuses in the system, which makes it easier from the administrative point of view. Senior administrators from private institutions see their institutions thus: “We have a clear, simple, and fundamental strategy... this is what we do, we try to do the best, and that is all.” (*Tenemos una estrategia clara, sencilla, fundamental... esto es lo que hacemos, tratamos de hacer lo mejor que podemos y se acaba*) [611]. They consider their institutions not at all bureaucratic.

Half the private participants talked about their institution’s concern for an integrated and high-quality development of their students. They talked about preparing students not only as professionals, but also as persons. These institutions look for personalized preparation of the student, including extracurricular development in sports, the arts, and the like where those institutions provide resources like sports scholarships and financial support. One of the private senior administrators mentioned that they are looking for the student and his/her family to view the university as their home. In private institutions, programs that emphasize the importance of the presence of former students (alumni) are very important.

They described the education that they provide as very solid because the majority of their faculty came from American universities, most with master’s degrees, and many with doctoral degrees. One private senior administrator commented: “What we understand about education is that we need to continue offering a very formal, rigorous, and demanding preparation.” (*Lo que nosotros entendemos por una educación, es seguir*

*ofreciendo una preparación muy formal, muy rigurosa, muy exigente*) [701]. One senior administrator reported his institution's faculty composition by degree level as 35% doctoral, 55% masters, and 10% baccalaureate. Because they are in areas like arts, baccalaureate degree holders must show many years of experience rather than formal education.

Their perception of the external context of the university was that, on the one hand, they are surrounded by a demanding society with expressed needs that are brought to them in order to find solutions. On the other hand, they felt that society still does not recognize how "good" their institutions are. An important element of these institutions is the commitment that they have to their communities. They mentioned activities toward the society such as legal support, municipal projects, literacy projects, and support to industry in specific projects where they have identified needs.

Senior administrators from public institutions recognized that the well known private higher education institutions in Mexico are growing, but at the same time, they expressed their concern about the academic quality of those private institutions that are just emerging: "But look at those institutions that nobody knows. There are many, and they have a great market but with doubtful, very doubtful academic quality." (*Pero "hechale una mirada" a las instituciones que "en su casa las conocen" y si las sumas, te "vas para atrás" del crecimiento de mercado que están atendiendo con una dudosa, muy dudosa calidad académica*) [872]. This concern is shared also by senior administrators of recognized private institutions.

One of them mentioned, for example, that “in our State, there are 130 institutions of higher education, but only six are worth it” [1436].

Future scenarios. The future scenarios for private universities were also well described by the participants from these institutions. Most of the future scenarios that senior administrators mentioned are also current challenges for their institutions. They want to make their institutions academically stronger, institutions of vanguard stature and more prestige, but they anticipated that their institutions would stay roughly the same size. With regard to their student population, they expect to attract the best students from Mexico and from other countries; in the same sense, they want to be a real option for the larger society, which has not been possible because of the cost of tuition. They envision the inclusion of innovative teaching technologies, including distance education. In addition, they see their institutions taking care of local problems, touching the reality of their communities, and being totally adaptable to changes. They anticipated an increase in interdisciplinary areas of teaching and research, becoming very research oriented, and being increasingly service oriented.

*Present perceptions and future scenarios of public higher education institutions.*

Present perceptions. Perceptions that public senior administrators have concerning the present circumstances of their higher education institutions were also in this case very extensive and detailed.

The word “politics” often arose in reference to public institutions. Senior administrators of public institutions explain the association between these entities – between politics and higher education— sometimes as positive, but many times as

negative. In this aspect, private senior administrators often expressed an opinion similar to that of the public senior administrators.

One public senior administrator made the following comment: “—The institution—preserves some aspects of its established origins, one of which is to have a very strong link in order to support the Government in the development of the country.” (*--La institución—conserva algo de lo establecido en sus orígenes, el tener una liga muy fuerte de apoyo al Gobierno, para apoyar el desarrollo del país*) [819]. The same senior administrator, however, also said, “I believe that it must be modified –the ‘Organic Law’. Obviously for this to happen there are political risks. But a study of the change and of the strategies must be made in order to make it happen.” (*Yo si creo, que se debe modificar—la Ley Organica—, obviamente para esto hay los riesgos políticos, se tiene que hacer el estudio del cambio, y las estrategias para llevarlo a cabo*) [823]. Public senior administrators insisted on change, partly to give them the freedom to respond faster to social problems.

Variations in public higher education such as the technologic universities are clear initiatives of the government to find solutions to problems that higher education faces in Mexico. The authorities of these institutions are satisfied with the actions of the government in this sense. One of the senior administrators believed: “What higher education in Mexico is today—is due to the policies of the different regimes, and actually those policies are followed for the present government.” (*México lo que es hoy – en educación superior--, es gracias a las políticas de los diferentes régimenes, y actualmente esas políticas se han continuado por el actual gobierno*) [1173].

When senior administrators from public institutions expressed opinions about the present condition of their institutions, they concurred when they discussed the problems, barriers, and challenges that they face. In addition, they agreed about the enormous efforts that their institutions have made and continue to make in order to overcome these situations: efforts to create interdisciplinary programs, new technologies such as distance education, effort to keep them in force, and overcoming a campaign of discredit. Despite these barriers, they see the role of public higher education as very important for today and the future.

They have worked hard to implement changes for their institutions, but it has not been easy. Positive and negative issues faced by their senior administrators in order to implement institutional reform were described by one of them:

—Changes—were accomplished in a context of much difficulty, of political opposition, very hard. Then, there were very difficult moments, the response to attacks, etc. And there were very interesting moments, of accomplishing things, of seeing things happen. (*--Cambios-- se hicieron, en un contexto de mucha dificultad, de una oposición política, muy fuerte. Entonces hubo momentos que fueron muy difíciles, el tratamiento de ataques, etc. Y hubo momentos muy interesantes, de terminar cosas, de ver que se dieran cosas*) [1889].

Another concept that repeatedly appears associated with public universities is that of “service” and their responsibility to the broader society. Public senior administrators stressed this aspect of the mission of their institutions with different activities. Among those actions is the support that the institution provides to small business through

services such as consulting. This is one of the present concerns for their institutions. One of the public senior administrators in charge of a center commented:

We are looking to be a liaison body, because we try to provide service, because we want to connect better with the society, with the environment that we have, and overall with this liaison we expect to serve our institution in order to improve it. *(Buscamos ser un ente vinculador, tratamos de dar servicio, pues nos tenemos que vincular mejor con la sociedad, con el entorno que tenemos, y sobretodo poder servirle a nuestra institución para que mejore)* [1025].

Some private institution senior administrators expressed their opinions with respect to public institutions. One comment addressed the deteriorating image of the public university because of the problems that they have faced. However, public senior administrators are optimistic and see a better future based on recent achievements. Among those are greater effectiveness, administrative changes, a reduction of authoritarianism, and in general, more transparency in their decision making.

The words of one of the public senior administrators illustrated how they see their institutions today:

The university has an important function, the historic function of orienting the causes of knowledge on behalf of the society, diminishing as much as possible the inequity margins. If we can put it in just one word, it is the challenge of having both equity and sustained development. The university has to assure equal conditions of access to different people; this is a demand of time. Open its doors to sectors with fewer possibilities and resources. *(La universidad tiene la gran función, si hablamos de*



*una función histórica, de orientar las causas en beneficio tanto del conocimiento como de la sociedad, reducir en lo posible los grandes márgenes de inequidad. Si lo pudieramos resumir en una palabra, es el reto de la equidad y el desarrollo sustentable. La universidad debe asegurar condiciones iguales de acceso a gente desigual, eso es una convicción de tiempo. Abrir sus puertas a sectores con menores posibilidades y recursos) [1687].*

Future scenarios. The future scenarios for public universities were described by senior administrators from these institutions. Public senior administrators do not see their institutions growing in the future. On the contrary, they want to make them smaller in order to diminish the problems inherent in large institutions. They anticipated evaluations of their institutions by national authorities, then likewise by international entities. They foresee many changes in their institutions; they envision, overtime, very different institutions emerging.

In anticipating future scenarios for their institutions, they envision the implementation of different strategies, e.g., universities taking more care of their former students (alumni) and maintaining contact with them in order to receive comments through them from society. In addition, they contemplate a closer connection with the productive sector and attending to the country's needs and requirements. Senior administrators from public institutions recognized the challenge that they face in regard to the social responsibility they acknowledge.

They look for strategies for more flexible and interdisciplinary programs, and utilizing innovative technologies. One senior administrator concluded: "I think we have

all the ingredients in order to have in 10 years a very good public higher education.”[2020]

Data regarding the present and future perceptions of both types of institutions have been examined. Differences between them are easier to identify, and it becomes easier to understand why the type of senior administrator required in each type of institution differs. Senior administrators from both types of institutions emphasized additional areas they have been started to be attentive, and where they have their specific plans.

*Research Question Five:*

*Are there differences by gender of higher education senior administrators in Mexico relative to their perceptions regarding competencies that future higher education directors in Mexico will require?*

There were not enough data from women senior administrators in the study to make statements with confidence and to adequately address this question. Only two of the 20 respondents participating in this study were women. Consequently, it is not possible to speculate with any certainty about the effect of gender on higher education senior administrator positions.

The data collected from women higher education senior administrators in this study showed no differences in perceptions. The women senior administrators' responses and comments agree with and are similar to those from their male counterparts. Future

studies with a larger female sample base will be needed to determine if any perceptual difference exist.

### **Additional Results**

During the analysis of the data, some themes arose as distinctive categories apart from those specifically related to the research questions. These themes or emerging categories refer to professionalism and consequently to the strategies of professional development for higher education senior administrators.

#### *Professionalizing Higher Education Senior Administrators*

This theme became an essential part of the study because it suggests a way to develop the required competencies identified by senior administrators. Once senior administrators start considering the competencies that they may need in order to carry out their responsibilities, they may wonder: What is the next step? What do we do now? No specific interview question addressed this issue; however, through the data analysis some suggestions did emerge.

The identification of future competencies illustrates the idea of a professional with these characteristics, understanding subsequently that such an individual can only be developed by professionalizing higher education senior administrators. All the participants, public and private, concurred with the idea of professionalizing their function. Some private institutions have begun to carry out evaluations of senior

administrator's work. Those evaluations speak for themselves, and in many cases, they suggest an urgent need to better prepare the senior administrator cohort. Private senior administrators referred to both formal and informal types of professional development. They see themselves living in the midst of many changes; and they see more changes coming in the future, making the need for professional development all the more critical, in order to face the challenges appropriately. One senior administrator suggested: "We have to work more to professionalize the university administration. This is a topic of development" [368].

Another senior administrator commented on individualized professional development as an answer to the different preparation level of senior administrators. And another one added, "We have to force ourselves to learn, we are conscious that we have to do it, and more because we do not have all the needed training" [478]. In some cases administrators also commented that they do not use professional development techniques because they do not know of them. The need for professionalizing higher education senior administrators is clearly identified for all the interviewed participants, although its apparent lack is explained by the comment:

Many of those who ended up as university senior administrators are there because of their performance as academicians in a specific area, because of their achievements, and their publications. But this does not guarantee success in their responsibilities of management and administration. (*Muchos de los que terminan siendo directores académicos, lo han sido por su desempeño como académicos en un area*

*determinada, por sus logros y por sus publicaciones, pero esto no precisamente garantiza un éxito en las funciones de gestión y administrativas) [485].*

Finally, one private senior administrator put it in these words “One can be an important academic or researcher, but that does not mean he is a good administrator” [487].

Most of the private senior administrators admitted an absence of formal professional development for their positions. Half of them broached this topic feeling that such development is necessary if they are to be competitive and able to respond to the growing demands that they face. They see it also as a huge responsibility. In addition, many talked about individualized and continuous professional development in order to address specific development needs.

Private senior administrators see the idea of professionalizing their function as a continuum along which they have already begun and now must continue to move. They see that still they have things to do.

Public senior administrators also recognize an urgent need for professionalizing their function. They commented that they have too much to do with respect to professional development of their senior administrators. They do, however, acknowledge some exceptions. They mentioned examples of senior administrators working in the development and performance of their roles. “In the first place, I have to recognize that I have deficiencies, which is the first, to be honest. Then I have to prepare.” (*En primer*

*lugar tengo que reconocer que tengo deficiencias, eso es lo primero, ser honesto. Para entonces prepararme) [1092].*

One public senior administrator commented about some activities in this regard:

The National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher education (ANUIES) is fulfilling an important role in the training, but it is not enough; it is very slow. There are training opportunities but I couldn't guarantee that the majority of the senior administrators have taken those courses. *(ANUIES va cumpliendo un papel importante en la formacion, pero no es suficiente, es muy lento. Hay acciones, pero yo no podría asegurar que la mayor parte de funcionarios hayan tomado esos cursos) [1664].*

Another senior administrator concluded:

We train ourselves in a lonely way. Let me explain this, a large proportion of the senior administrators that take the place of others, arrive like their predecessors, without previous formation, training, even without a gradual and transparent transition of the position and the resources. *(Nosotros nos formamos de manera muy solitaria, por poner un caso, gran parte de los funcionarios que sustituyen a otros, pues llegan como llegaron ellos, sin formación previa, capacitación, vamos ni siquiera la entrega gradual, transparente, y eficaz del puesto y los recursos) [1695].*

In addition, there are comments about improvisation in their performance. Senior administrators explained that often they learn along the way, on the job, with little assistance from their predecessors.

Senior administrators from both public and private institutions identified barriers inside of their institutions to carrying out the idea of professionalizing their positions. Private senior administrators did not identify many barriers. Among the few, they see the lack of formal development programs, and how they have prepared themselves only via the practice.

In public institutions, barriers that were mentioned include the large size of the institutions that make it difficult to implement any change; another is a previous inefficient administration that new administrators must deal with when they assume senior administrator positions. One public senior administrator described the need for teams, where their members enhance the groups with different skills, abilities, and qualities. Finally, some of the attitudes in public education toward the professionalism of their senior administrators encompass the lack of conviction and motivation for this effort.

#### *Strategies for Professional Development of Senior Administrators*

The theme *strategies for professional development of senior administrators* arose because of a clear need of the participants to find solutions to the needed competencies they identified.

Data include responses of directors from public and private institutions. The richness of the theme *needed competencies for directors* suggests that once directors have identified the needed competencies for their directors, they also may have thought about strategies for developing those competencies in and among their directors.

Respondents identified thirteen different strategies, some of which have been used or are suggested. Among these, one of the most commonly used is *courses and professional programs*. This strategy is considered formal training, and they planned those activities according to the needs of their directors. In some institutions, these activities are planned for higher level authorities; in other cases, directors receive continuous information about these kinds of activities and they decide what kind of course or program to attend. It is important to note that all the respondents from private institutions mentioned this strategy. The respondents from public institutions mentioned some efforts in this area, including courses and the support of external consultants. This strategy is the most popular, but directors also considered that its use is inadequate compared with their needs, especially in public institutions.

Another strategy that was widely mentioned by the respondents from private institutions was *individualized professional development plans*. These are derived from the diagnostic and evaluation process between supervisors and directors. In one of the private institutions visited, each of the directors is required to complete a minimum number of hours of professional development during the year. The definition of what kind of course or program is “more specific, more individualized training” [142] varies according to the need of the senior administrator. The analysis of this need is made between the director and the person to whom he/she reports. Planning these activities “implies human resource management, based on the personal trajectory, labor aptitudes, and personal characteristics and skills.” (*Esto implica un manejo de los recursos humanos, basados en las trayectorias personales, en las aptitudes laborales, en sus*



*competencias personales*) [429]. Administrators claimed that identical training for every director is not what they need.

Currently higher education institutions are making some efforts toward professional development of their directors. Some of these efforts are *actual requirements*, and were mentioned by some respondents from both public and private institutions. Some respondents from private institutions stated that their directors must have annually a minimum of 100 hours of formal learning in three areas: professional development, teaching development, and institutional development.

One characteristic in Mexican universities is that, in most cases, their top-level senior administrators are part of the faculty. In addition, some private institutions are requiring that their senior administrators earn a doctoral degree from a foreign institution. Respondents from public institutions mentioned some beginning efforts, such as training for new senior administrators and activities that are promoted by ANUIES.

Another strategy mentioned, mainly by respondents from private institutions, was *evaluation*. Some of them apply an evaluation process where every executive, even the president, is evaluated in order to obtain information that supports his/her professional development. This strategy focuses on improving the senior administrators by identifying needs and finding solutions. But it was my impression that given the importance of any evaluation, some senior administrators may feel threatened in their positions. One of the respondents clarified that with this strategy they are not intending to fire anybody. “*No sirve para tomar decisiones de ‘yo voy a correr a fulano’*” [245]. Rather, they are trying to make the commitment to improve their performance.

Some other strategies mentioned by the respondents were *retreats*, *experiential learning*, and *visits and meetings with directors from other universities*. They mentioned how the experience of getting together with counterparts from other higher education institutions and sharing their experiences has helped them with an experiential learning that they feel they can consider in their own institutions.

Strategies mentioned exclusively from senior administrators of private institutions were *reading articles, papers* and other specialized literature, and the use of *external consultants*. They believe that their own efforts are going to address part of the need, a kind of “self-learning” strategy. In addition, respondents from public institutions commented about the importance of their authorities providing motivation for professional development of their senior administrators. I called this last strategy *willingness and motivation by authority*, which is essential to implementing this kind of initiative.

### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to answer certain questions in an effort to identify the competencies needed by senior administrators in higher education institutions in Mexico. These respondents shared many beliefs and opinions; indeed, in some cases they were virtually unanimous in their responses. The process of writing was not always easy, you have the endeavor of describing a complex context, but conducting a naturalistic inquiry allows the researcher to understand better the interrelations of people and their impact on

the organization, other people and the researcher. In subsequent pages, a summary of the data found regarding each research question will be provided.

*Research Question One:*

*What social forces and trends are provoking recognition of the need to identify competencies for the professional effectiveness of senior administrators in Mexican higher education institutions?*

Through the reflections that were found around the current situation of higher education in Mexico, the context of higher education in Mexico, and the challenges that higher education in Mexico faces, the researcher sought to identify what social forces and trends are provoking recognition of the need to identify competencies for HE senior administrators in Mexico.

During the interviews, most of the senior administrators from public and private institutions discussed the challenges that their institutions face, and those that higher education in Mexico in general faces in a national context. Many of their opinions focused on the need for resources, and on the need for a different legal framework or charter for the institutions, that permits evaluation and diversification in funding. They questioned the quality of many small higher education institutions that are opening their doors throughout the country; this situation was being supported in the absence of national regulations. In addition, one of their main concerns is the increasing demand of students for higher education degrees.

Consequently, in conjunction with the mentioned considerations, they suggested the need for a higher education senior administrator with new characteristics, a senior administrator that is constantly attentive to what is happening inside and outside of their institutions. It is clear among the interviewees that because of the challenges that their institutions face, they are inclined to believe in the need for a senior administrator with a broad understanding of the national situation, with the elements to support the national initiatives, and with the ability to make appropriate responses happen in their own institutions.

Understanding of the context that surrounds higher education institutions has to be considered according to this senior administrator. The social context, where society is constantly changing, puts the universities in a situation where they have to adapt and offer to society options where the value of those options is recognized. The political context tends to affect mainly public institutions, where local governments still affect internal workings of higher education institutions and their decisions. The economic context, that is the condition of the economy, contributes to the difficulty of higher education in Mexico, while ironically; education is seen as one of the main contributors in solving the national economic problem. In addition, the technological context dictates that institutions have to move fast in response to new developments, or risk being left behind.

Respondents faced with the social forces and trends described above shared opinions regarding the need to look for a senior administrator with specific characteristics.

*Research Question Two:*

*What do current senior administrators think are the competencies that future senior administrators should have in order to be prepared for changing higher education institutions in Mexico?*

As part of the ongoing interview process, many respondents identified those needed future competencies for senior administrators. In addition, they described which are the competencies those senior administrators now have, mainly with the idea of identifying those that they should pursue for their senior administrators.

Competencies are conceived as “complex structure[s] of attributes (such as knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes) needed for intelligent performance in specific situations. It incorporates the notion of professional judgment” (Gonczi, 1996, p.12). The previous definition was mentioned to the participants in this study; however, it was found that the participants had a broader conception of the definition. The respondents included in their responses personal characteristics of a senior administrator, suggesting that the new professional that their institutions need is expected to have certain skills, competencies, and personal characteristics. Respondents identified specific competencies that current directors in their institutions have. These competencies were organized by:

- a) Personal characteristics and skills, where private institutions emphasized as *flexibility* and *personal qualities* and directors from public institutions mentioned *personal qualities*, *individualized professional development*, *research knowledge*, *communication*, and having a *positive attitude*.

- b) Administrative competencies, which included *planning, evaluating, visioning, respect for the line of authority, and productivity*. These competencies were emphasized more by private respondents than by the public ones.
- c) Social responsibility competencies, included being *aware of diversity, analysis of social demands* and *capacity of finding answers*.
- d) Institutional competencies, such as *understanding the institution* and *considering the university as a project of life*.

After identifying current competencies, respondents also identified competencies needed by future higher education senior administrators. Data were organized by the same categories used to define current competencies.

- a) Personal characteristics and skills included *flexibility, anxiety control, time management, adaptation*, and exhibiting a *positive attitude* when addressing faculty, staff, and students. Respondents also identified *political skills, creativity, listening, being human oriented, innovation, motivation, honesty, diplomacy, visioning*, and *entrepreneurship*, as necessary skills.
- b) Administrative Competencies identified by senior administrators from private institutions included *decision making, delegating, searching or exploring alternatives, finance and administrative competencies, team work, communication, visioning, planning, negotiating, conflict resolution, evaluating, knowledge management, networking, marketing, project management, and response capacity*.

- c) Social Responsibility Competencies included *social commitment, cultural diversity, analysis of demands, and knowledge of economic situations.*
- d) Institutional Competencies identified by directors from both public and private institutions were *understanding the institutional identity and philosophy, and leadership.* The competencies identified only by respondents from private institutions were *fund raising, mentoring students, and knowledge of the higher education market.* On the other hand, *support of the academy* was a competency only considered by public senior administrators.
- e) Technological, Informational and Organizational Skills included competencies such as *technologic competencies, use of information, language skills, and knowledge of educational theory and practice.*

*Research Question Three:*

*How do senior higher education administrators in Mexican institutions feel that they are prepared to change? To adapt?*

Data from the responses of private senior administrators were analyzed separately from the responses of public senior administrators. HE senior administrators in private institutions did not delve very deeply into the discussion of change. They emphasized more the idea that they already started working in the direction that they need, and that they do not really need to change the present situation in their institutions. Instead they may just follow the processes already initiated.

On the other hand, in public institutions the senior administrators interviewed do believe they need to change. They talked about the challenges that they face. Among those challenges is considered the slow dynamic or pace of change. Many public senior administrators recognized that they are in a transition period where resistance is strong, although incremental change is beginning to occur.

There is a consensus among public and private senior administrators about whether the senior administrators in their institutions are prepared to change. They both agreed that they are not, or at least not fully prepared, but they also insisted that in their institutions, a concern to reverse this situation is in place, and many measures have been put in practice. For higher education senior administrators, adaptation is the result of an implementation of change. In general, there is consensus among the participants in this study that they do not feel fully prepared to change, even when they recognized the importance of it.

Most of the answers concerning an adaptation process were related to the idea of adapting as a response to the situations that surround and consequently affect the institution. Besides that, adaptation was barely addressed by the respondents, except for the times when it was considered to be the consequence of change. The senior administrators expressed their willingness to adapt, even if they are not fully prepared.



*Research Question Four:*

*Are there differences between private and public higher education senior administrators in Mexico relative to their perceptions about the senior administrator that future higher education institutions in Mexico require?*

In the responses to Research Question Two, the needed competencies for future higher education senior administrators were identified. The data analysis presented previously illustrates that public and private senior administrators present clear differences in their perceptions about the kind of senior administrator required in the future in higher education institutions in Mexico. At this point, the questions becomes why those differences are present. Interviews related to specifics regarding present perceptions and future scenarios of public and private institutions clarify why the senior administrator required in each kind of institution has to possess specific, distinctive characteristics depending on the university.

Present perceptions regarding private higher education institutions describe these universities as entrepreneurial institutions, young institutions, with a larger number of faculty members with degrees from outside of the country, with management-oriented administrations, concerned with providing a solid education, and surrounded by a demanding society. The future scenarios are considered challenges by the respondents; they anticipate that their institutions will look for more prestige, for ways to attract the best students, for use of innovative teaching techniques, and for increasing teaching and research areas.

Respondents from public institutions described the present perceptions of their institutions as entities with strong ties to the government; and as facing extreme problems, and challenges, but committed to success in order to maintain their important role in the higher education of the country. In the future scenarios of their institutions, they anticipated the implementation of different strategies including interdisciplinary programs, utilizing innovative technologies, closer connection with the productive sector, and attending to the country's needs and requirements.

*Research Question Five:*

*Are there differences by gender of higher education senior administrators in Mexico relative to their perceptions regarding competencies that future higher education directors in Mexico will require?*

There was not enough data from women senior administrators in the study to adequately answer this question. Only two of the 20 respondents participating in this study were women. Therefore, it was not possible to speculate with any certainty whether gender influences perceptions of higher education senior administrators. Future studies may further explore this question.

### **Additional considerations**

Analysis of the identified themes led to a reflection on additional results and interpretations, including:

- How people have started to think beyond their limits. Respondents expressed the need to do something about professional development of higher education executives. Once respondents identified competencies for their senior administrators according to their present and future needs, the professional development of their senior administrators came out as an additional issue to be considered.
- How a new senior administrator with a new visioning leadership has started to emerge. Younger respondents were the ones who showed the most willingness to change. They did not question the need for change; they just pursued it.
- How the need for research in this area becomes important in order to provide professional development services according to the particular needs of the country or region. At some point during the interviews, most of the respondents expressed their interest in knowing the results of the research.
- How in addition to the answers to the research questions, more data were found that open the door to a more extensive analysis of these themes, and the collection of additional interview data.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The previous chapters include the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, the literature review, methodology and procedures used in the study, and the presentation of the data and findings answering each research question. This chapter presents a summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the results, and a discussion of the implications of the results. Recommendations for further studies close this chapter.

#### **Summary**

This study was undertaken to identify the competencies needed by present and future senior administrators in Mexican higher education institutions. In addition, it was necessary to gain an understanding of trends, constructions, and the cultural understandings of these senior administrators based on the perceptions that they have of their own institutions and the competencies needed for their positions.

The sample consisted of twenty senior administrators from eight Mexican higher education institutions selected via a purposive sample. The purposive sample of institutions was determined by deploying several criteria: geographic location, diversity, and accessibility to the researcher. The researcher visited those campuses over three trips between June 2001 and March 2002. The institutions in this sample are good examples

of different kinds of higher education institutions: one institution is one of the largest universities in Mexico. Four private and four public institutions are included.

Intensive interviews and observations were used to gather information from executives in Mexican higher education institutions. The human instrument was primarily used in this study for data collection purposes; for a broader explanation of “human instrument” the reader should refer to chapter 3. The data, including perceptions, forecasts and constructions were collected via the use of unstructured interviews. The researcher used an interview guide, which was expanded upon and revised as the research progressed. In addition to the interview guide, it was important to include demographic information concerning the interviewees: years of professional experience, education, experience in public or private institutions, gender, age, and other demographic data. Observations of administrative activities during site visits, document reviews and analyses, and broad consultation on the topic are all activities that assisted the researcher in exploring and assembling a contextual foundation sufficient for accurate interpretation.

Data collected (interviews, observations, and documents reviews) in this study were primarily subjected to qualitative analyses. Data analyses interacted with data collection, because from the first interview information collected was used to guide the collection of information from the next respondent.

As a result of analyses of the data the researcher identified themes and categories. These provided answers to the research questions and prompted suggestions for further studies.

## **Conclusions**

The conclusions reached are the following:

*Research Question One:*

*What social forces and trends are provoking recognition of the need to identify competencies for the professional effectiveness of senior administrators in Mexican higher education institutions?*

The researcher concludes that because of the challenges that their institutions face, respondents are inclined to believe in the need for a senior administrator with a broad understanding of the national situation, with the elements to support the national initiatives, and with the ability to make appropriate responses in their own institutions. An individual fully aware of the internal and external context of his/her institution, an administrator available to make a deep scanning of the situation of their own institutions.

Social forces and trends inside and outside of their institutions are pushing this belief. Among the main situations are the need for resources, and the need for a different legal framework or charter for the institutions, charters that permit evaluation and diversification in funding. In addition, the quality of many small higher education institutions that are opening their doors throughout the country is being questioned. This situation is being supported by an absence of national regulations, and, indeed, these institutional start-ups reflect a larger, transnational and global emphasis on free markets and entrepreneurial ventures. Finally, one of their main concerns is the increasing demand of students to pursue higher education degrees. As one participant expressed: “The challenges are increasing the enrollment of the indigenous population,

quadruplicating the enrollment of graduate students, increasing the enrollment of older adult that didn't have the possibility of finishing school, meaning to certify the active skills and attitudes that have been not acquired in the school, and something very important, to generate conditions of access for persons with special conditions." (*Los retos son aumentar la matrícula de la población indígena y cuadruplicar la matrícula en los posgrados, elevar la matrícula de adultos mayores que no tuvieron la posibilidad de terminar sus estudios, esto significa certificar los saberes de actividades y actitudes que no se han obtenido por la vía escolar, y algo muy importante generar condiciones de acceso para personas con condiciones especiales*) [1689].

Another response to these challenges is the acknowledgement of the need for a higher education senior administrator with new characteristics, a senior administrator that is constantly attentive to what is happening inside and outside of their institutions. The respondents emphasized understanding the context that surrounds higher education institutions by senior administrators. In a social context where society and the social structure are in constant change, the universities are put in a situation where they have to adapt and offer to society educational options where the value of the institutions and their degrees are recognized. The political context tends to affect mainly public institutions, where local governments still actively affect the inner workings of higher education institutions and their decisions. The economic context seems to contribute to the difficulties of higher education in Mexico, but education is seen as one of the main contributors to solving the national economic problems. In addition, due to the

technological context's impressive and rapid development, institutions have to move fast, in order to not be left behind.

One of the main conclusions in this study represents the understanding of that the problems of the university will begin to be solved when the vital problems of Mexico start being faced; this statement was previously supported by Silva-Herzog (1999). More detailed information regarding problems of Mexico which may include levels of education, technological and political context, and economic and social needs was pointed out in chapter 2.

*Research Question Two:*

*What do current senior administrators think are the competencies that future senior administrators should have in order to be prepared for changing higher education institutions in Mexico?*

Competencies are conceived as “complex structure[s] of attributes (such as knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes) needed for intelligent performance in specific situations. It incorporates the notion of professional judgment.” (Gonczi, 1996, p.12) The previous definition was mentioned to each one of the participants in this study. However, the participants had a broader definition that included aspects such as personal characteristics and skills of a senior administrator. They suggested that the professional that their institutions need is expected to have certain skills, competencies, personal characteristics, and mindsets.



Gonzci (1996) studies the general definition of competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values), that in turn are based on a specific context such as that of Mexican higher education. This study intended to contribute to the support of particular kinds of professional development of senior administrators in certain institutions, and to open the discussion for the development of similar studies in other institutions. This study is considering then the integrated approach to competence that Gonzci mentioned, the importance of context and culture are considered, and also the fact that there may be more than one way of practicing administration competently.

Current senior administrators identified needed competencies for their future counterparts. It is concluded that the needed competencies are organized by personal characteristics and skills, administrative competencies, social responsibility competencies, institutional competencies, and technological, informational and organizational skills.

- a) Personal characteristics and skills include *flexibility, anxiety control, time management, adaptation*, and exhibiting a *positive attitude* when addressing faculty, staff, and students. Respondents also identified *political skills, creativity, listening*, being *human oriented, innovation, motivation, honesty, diplomacy, visioning*, and *entrepreneurship*, as necessary skills.
- b) Administrative Competencies include *decision making, delegating, searching for or exploring alternatives, financial and administrative competencies, team work, communication, visioning, planning, negotiating, conflict resolution, evaluating, knowledge management, networking, marketing, project management, and*

*response capacity*, as competencies which are clustered as “administrative competencies”.

- c) Social Responsibility Competencies included *social commitment, sensitivity to cultural diversity, analysis of demands, and knowledge of economic situations*.
- d) Institutional Competencies involves competencies of *understanding the institutional identity and philosophy, and leadership* as competencies of this type. Included in private institutional competencies are *fund raising, mentoring students, and knowledge of the higher education market*. On the other hand, *support of the academy* was a competency only considered by public senior administrators.
- e) Technological, Informational and Organizational Skills, included competencies such as *technologic competencies, use of the information, language skills, and knowledge of educational theory and practice*.

*Research Question Three:*

*How do senior higher education administrators in Mexican institutions feel that they are prepared to change? To adapt?*

It can be concluded that public university leaders believe that they face more difficult situations in their institutions in order to adapt and change. Even though they recognize the need for change and adaptation, the present situations that public university leaders face do not help them in this challenge; however, public executives are optimistic and see a better future based on the achievements that they are having in the present.

However, I also concluded that there is a consensus among public and private senior administrators regarding whether the senior administrators in their institutions are prepared to change and adapt. They both agreed that they are not, or at least not fully prepared, but they also insist that in their institutions a concern to reverse this situation is in place, and many measures have been put in practice.

*Research Question Four:*

*Are there differences between private and public higher education senior administrators in Mexico relative to their perceptions about the senior administrator that future higher education institutions in Mexico require?*

Administrators of private and public universities look at themselves in very different ways. They recognize their own needs, and see their goals as particular to their own institutions. Leaders of private and public higher education institutions forward conclusions regarding the need to be responsive to increasing demands that they will face in the near future, while not forgetting to keep a close eye on educational quality. Both agree that this last aspect has been overlooked in some cases for both private and public institutions because of the overwhelming demand.

Public university leaders believe that they face more difficult situations in their institutions in order to adapt and change. Even though they recognize the need for change and adaptation, the present situations that public university leaders face do not help them in this challenge; however, public executives are optimistic and see a better future based on the achievements that they are having in the present.

*Research Question Five:*

*Are there differences by gender of higher education senior administrators in Mexico relative to their perceptions regarding competencies that future higher education directors in Mexico will require?*

Respondents of this study expressed their opinions regarding the importance of considering the differences in management styles that woman administrators have, during the design of professional development programs for senior administrators. Further studies are needed in order to respond with certainty to whether gender in higher education senior administrator positions might contribute additional considerations, insights, or results to these answers, and the presentation of valid conclusions.

**Additional Conclusions**

Working hypotheses for this study began to be shaped from the beginning of the study and developed as the study progressed, leading in the end of the study to the following set of conclusions:

- Most of the higher education senior administrators in Mexico close to retirement can be characterized by a lack of training or interest concerning professional development.

As it is stated in the conclusion of research question 3, especially in public institutions, even though they recognize the need for change and adaptation, the present situations that they face do not help them in this challenge, making it difficult to pursue

professional development. However, many measures have been put in practice in order to reverse this situation in public as in private institutions.

- Most of the new cadre of higher education senior administrators in Mexico indicates an interest and belief in the need for professional development.

As it is mentioned in the conclusion of research question 1, the need for a higher education senior administrator with new characteristics, a senior administrator that is constantly attentive to what is happening inside and outside of their institutions, is acknowledged.

- Differences between and within public and private higher education institutions in Mexico make evident the need for specific training for their senior administrators to achieve a level of professional development matched to the specific needs of their institutions.

The conclusion of research question 4 emphasizes how senior administrators from public and private institutions recognize their own needs, and see their goals as particular to their own institutions. In consequence, the design of professional development programs has to consider these institutions' specific needs.

Working hypotheses are context- and study-specific, but they take the place of generalizations, and constitute some of the provisional findings of a study.

## **Implications**

This study has implications for the professional development of higher education senior administrators in Mexico yielding information that may be used in a variety of ways.

### *Implications for Private Higher Education Senior Administrators*

Private higher education senior administrators, or those pursuing these positions, should be aware of the competencies that were identified as needed for those already in those positions. Administrative competencies appear to be the most needed among private administrators. The next order of competencies identified by private administrators, according to the frequency of responses, were personal characteristics and skills, then institutional competencies, social responsibility competencies, and finally technological, informational and organizational skills. Those in senior administration positions or aspiring to such positions must work to develop these competencies. Those preparing to be administrators clearly need a different and more complex form of training and preparation at graduate schools. The founded data help to substantiate the need for training programs, workshops, and general assistance to higher education administrators.

Many private universities are associated with the political party of the "right" –or conservative—in which is similar to the rest of the world, many of the members are business-oriented persons. Business people have been those who have been supporting the funding of private institutions, at least initially. Later, tuition became one of the main

sources of money for private institutions. In regard responses for needed competencies, a broader response set from the private institution senior administrators was indicated, considering that many of them come out of the business and corporate sectors.

#### *Implications for Public Higher Education Senior Administrators*

Public higher education upper-echelon administrators or those pursuing these positions should be aware of the competencies that are identified as needed for those already in those positions in the field. As with their private counterparts, public administrators identified administrative competencies as those which appear to be the most needed. There is, however, a slight difference in the competencies identified at the moment as identified needed competencies. For public administrators, social responsibility competencies were those almost not considered, or considered only slightly. It is important to note that these considerations could be the result of public higher education institutions attending to the social needs for higher education as a part of their responsibilities. In that case, these competencies may not need to be developed, because they are already in place at public institutions.

In public institutions, the ties between the presidents of the universities and the state governor usually are very strong, mostly because of the source of public higher education funding and because of the antecedent that, until some years ago, each state university started the "autonomy movement" in their institutions. What that means is that before university autonomy, the governor used appointed the president of the university; now university presidentes are elected.

### *Implications of the Results of this Study*

The results of this study indicate that public and private executives in Mexico concur in most of the identified needed competencies. Jointly, private and public senior administrators identified administrative competencies as most needed, then personal characteristics and skills, institutional competencies, social responsibility competencies, and finally technological, informational and organizational skills. Studies in the United States present specific but different considerations and results. Tillotson (1995) studied top level student affair administrators, where the importance of their skills are identified; her results mention emphases in conceptual, then human, then technical skills based on Katz's (1974) approach for business administration. Contextual differences may influence these results; further studies with a comparative approach may expand this assertion. Culture is key to the contextual considerations and the particularities of the institutions, since cultures are formed by the interactions of different personalities, both conflicting and complementary, forming a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Getting closer to the opinions of Mexican higher education administrators promotes an understanding of the current situation of higher education in Mexico, their culture, and an appreciation of its complexity in many developing countries.

### *Implications for Professional Development*

In order to develop the identified competencies, some approaches, such as courses, programs, individualized professional development plans and others mentioned in the previous chapter as strategies for professional development, could further professional



development for senior administrators of higher education institutions. The executive that future higher education institutions in Mexico need requires a new model of the HE executive. It is possible to identify key authorities that actually possess the competencies that respondents expressed as needed. Some of these authorities might be the exemplars of how the next leader might be; they could become the “model” to follow. In fact, some of the interviewed executives presented many of the characteristics, vision, and involvement that are included in the needed competencies of a senior administrator.

Most of the participants from public institutions expressed the need for professional development, and they are willing to do something about it. Professionalizing higher education senior administrators is the key of this study; most of the respondents from public as well as private institutions recognized the need for developing professional programs for this purpose.

Public and private executives shared the idea of combining two important functions—the academic and the administrative—in order to carry out their executive roles. Public and private executives concurred with the idea that: “It is not something easy to combine, I would say. They are two big tensions, the capacity of administering, that is one issue, and the capacity of being an academic leader.” (*No es algo fácil porque se tienen que conjugar, yo diría, dos grandes tensiones, la capacidad de administrar, que es un asunto, y la capacidad de ser líder académico que es otro asunto*) [174].

Executives explained the reasons why they have to combine those two roles. In order to influence their people, they need to be academic or intellectual leaders so that they can keep in mind the mission of the university. All these ideas were broadly described

mainly by private executives. They are trying to make their executives understand that if they are part of the academy, they will better understand the processes. Public executives expressed similar ideas.

In summary, in order to carry out professional development of the executives of higher education institution in Mexico and indeed anywhere, it is important to have a clear understanding of their context and aspects about their past, present, and future. Historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts influence both how planning can be done, and the vision of future scenarios, which leads to a deep analysis of their needs.

### *Contextual Implications*

The Mexican education system, and in particular the higher education system, presents particularities that have to be considered constantly when thinking of professional development.

Considerations important to point out in the Mexican society are the limitation of strategic resources; a society in political development; a relatively high rate of illiteracy; and extreme economic differences among members of the society, among others. Putting in perspective all the previous considerations, Mexican families maintain their hopes for a better life with a better future for their children, looking to education as a solution for their needs. At present, lack of jobs and opportunities creates frustration and disappointment for graduates after all the effort that their families put forth so they can go to school. In the long term, education seems to be the solution and the response to a needy society, an educated society will make better decisions, and will expect to have a

better future for the majority of its members, not just for a few. Such a society will be able to ask for social justice for everybody.

Public and private institutions in Mexico present specific characteristics that make them very different. One of these is the policies that every type of institution follows, in aspects such as research funding and general funding. Policies for accreditation are also different; in many cases, private institutions present more flexibility with respect to authorization to work, to open programs, and to give diplomas more easily than public institutions, which are closely supervised by the Secretary of Education.

The characteristic which makes these institutions essentially different is the general funding. Where public institutions are almost exclusively funded by governmental funds (state and federal funds), private institutions are funded by private sources. Because of the origin of the funds and tuition, research funding and the way this is applied is very different. In the case the case of public institutions, those funds are determined by governmental priorities, while in the case of private institutions, those are defined by the interest of boards of directors, the market, or other private initiatives.

## **Recommendations**

The following is only a partial list of opportunities for professional development of higher education senior administrators in international contexts.

### *Recommendations for Practice*

Based on the data and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for practice are outlined for consideration.

1. Administrative competencies are considered as the most needed of the identified competencies. Therefore, emphasis on development of administrative competencies becomes more important for those aspiring to senior administration positions. It is expected that findings from this study will yield information that will allow higher education institutions to review or create programs designed to prepare future senior higher education administrators.
2. When designing professional development programs, developers should be aware of the differences between public and private senior administrators in order to consider their peculiarities.
3. This study focuses on identified competencies; it may be useful to determine how to develop and assess these competencies in graduate programs and in the workplace.
4. Based on the importance that context has during the unfolding of the data, language plays an important role in the interpretation of data. As a result, it is recommended that data be analyzed in the language in which it was collected. Consequently, it is also important to also make the results accessible in the native language, or to give the reader the option of the original language of the data.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

1. Future studies should extend this study with the identification of competencies by gender, within the inclusion of more data from women senior administrators in diverse institutions. They should also include an in-depth study of differences in

gender-leadership styles, especially in different contexts, including international ones.

2. Further research should include identification of competencies considering geographic differences in Mexico. This will allow the researcher to verify the conclusions of this study in other geographic areas of Mexico. The contextual differences that the different geographic areas in Mexico present make understandable and reasonable further studies in this sense. The particularities of each institution, depending on their location, suggest the importance of evaluating the present situation with all its regional particularities. A vision of future scenarios, based on a more solid analysis and the planning for those future may then be more accurate, having a larger probability of success. Planning for professional development for senior administrators follows the same logic; a needed step should be considered for the development of specific professional development for senior administrators of a specific higher education institution.
3. Another extension of this study may be a prolonged engagement, longitudinal approach, where an analysis after a period of time can be done, regarding how senior administrators deal with a variety of decisions and leadership issues.
4. The focus of this study was on senior administrators in Mexican higher education institutions. Future research might identify competencies identified in other countries, in order to analyze differences and similarities.
5. Additionally, when conducting research in a foreign country, it is recommended that a researcher review the literature from the host country in its language; otherwise,

the researcher may take the risk of missing important research literature already conducted, of which he/she wasn't aware or because of the language in which it was published.

6. The definition of “standard competencies” may be the purpose of future studies and a meaningful follow-up to the present study in the area of higher education administration. For this purpose, a pool of experts may be identified in the field of Mexican higher education administration, establishing the parameters for their expertise, and finally taking into considerations this and similar studies which include a larger number of administrators. Professional development of standard competencies can be carried out, but the importance of identifying the particularities of different kinds of institutions, the geographical location of the institution, and the gender of the administrator should be considered in the curriculum of professional development for higher education senior administrators in Mexico, taking account of the varying contexts in which they operate. The lack of sufficient research in this area suggests the need to reflect on competencies in HE in Mexico, which are seen as related to a norm or standard. However, it is important to consider “standard competencies” focusing on generic attributes as the best indicators of future successful performance, instead of a narrow or mechanistic view of competencies. A narrow definition of competencies has no place in the higher education system; instead a richer, and more educationally attractive, conception of competence is possible (Hager, 1993).

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**APPENDIX A**  
**SAMPLE INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**  
**(ENGLISH AND SPANISH)**

### **Interview Questions**

*By Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez*

Some of the questions that will guide these interviews are:

1. Could you describe your career pathway?
2. What are some of the most memorable experiences you have had in this position?
3. How do you think the social context of higher education is changing?
4. Do you think that the nature of university administration has been affected because of change of the outline?
5. How do you think higher education institutions will look like in 10 years?
6. Do you feel prepared to lead changes in a sense of structural change, new technologies, and political implications?
7. How do you think that directors need to face the challenges of the new millennium (10 years)?
8. What kind of initial competencies directors need in the higher education of the new millennium?
9. What additional competencies do you think would directors need?
10. What competencies do you think future directors will need in 20 years?

## Entrevista

*Por Elsa María González y González*

Algunas de las preguntas que guiarán estas entrevistas son:

1. ¿Podría Usted contarme acerca del desarrollo de su carrera profesional?
2. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las mas memorables experiencias que Usted ha tenido en este puesto?
3. ¿Cree Usted que el contexto social de la educación superior está cambiando?
4. ¿Usted cree que la naturaleza de la administración universitaria ha sido afectado como resultado del cambio en el que se encuentran inmersas sus instituciones?
5. ¿Cómo Usted cree que las instituciones de educación superior serán en 10 años, y su institución?
6. ¿Usted siente que los directivos están preparados para dirigir sus instituciones en medio de cambios estructurales, nuevas tecnologías e implicaciones políticas?
7. ¿Qué cree que los directivos necesitarían para enfrentar los desafíos del nuevo milenio (10 años)?
8. ¿Qué tipo de competencias los directivos necesitarán en la institución de educación superior del nuevo milenio?
9. ¿Qué competencias adicionales Usted cree que los directivos necesitarán?
10. ¿Qué competencias Usted opina que los futuros directivos necesitarán en 20 años?



**APPENDIX B**

**SAMPLE FINAL VERSION OF INTERVIEW GUIDE OR PROTOCOL**

**(ENGLISH AND SPANISH)**

## Interview Guide

**By Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez**

### I. Preface

- a. The interview will be pre-arranged so participants know in advance when and where they will be interviewed, and for how long. Once introductions are made, we proceed with the interview.
- b. I will thank the subjects for their participation and briefly explain the purpose of the interview. I will also explain they can stop and ask for clarification of a question in any time. They may choose not to respond to a question, or they can stop the interview at any time.
- c. I will ask subject to sign the Informed Consent Documents.
- d. I will ask permission to the interview to be taped; explaining it will serve as a means of recalling the interview information. Release forms will be signed.

### II. Ask descriptive information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Descriptive Information:

- Age \_\_\_\_\_
- Gender \_\_\_\_\_
- Position \_\_\_\_\_
- Years in the position \_\_\_\_\_
- Years in the university \_\_\_\_\_

#### Institution:

- Region of the country where the institutuion is located: \_\_\_\_\_
- Institution type (public or private) \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of students \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of faculty and staff \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Semi-structured Questions

Some of the questions that will guide these interviews are:

1. Could you describe your career pathway?
2. What are some of the most memorable experiences you have had in this position?
3. How do you think the context of higher education is changing? What are the changes that surround higher education?
4. Do you think that the university executive has been affected because of change in their institutions?
5. Do you feel that the executives are prepared to lead their institutions in the middle of these changes and get adapted?
6. How do you think higher education institutions will look like in 10 years and your institution?
7. How do you think that senior administrators need to face the challenges of the new millennium (10 years)?

Let me mention the definition of COMPETENCIE, which I am using in this study:

Competencies are conceived as “complex structure of attributes (such as knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes) needed for intelligent performance in specific situations. It incorporates the notion of professional judgment” (Gonczi, 1996, p.12).

8. What kind of initial competencies directors need in the higher education institution of the new millennium? (today, basic competencies).
9. What additional competencies do you think would directors need?
10. What competencies do you think future directors will need?

Testing the next questions:

11. Did you receive any kind of training before start in your current position? What was the content? Or induction (formal or informal)? Or do you know if the executives receive some training?
12. Do you consider important or useful this kind of studies?

#### IV. Closure

- a. Member check:
- b. Ask if there is any questions about the interview
- c. Ask if there is something else that he/she would like to add.
- d. Reiteration of the confidentiality aspect of the interview
- e. Thank them for their participation and their time to this study.
- f. Ask if there is a possibility to have a copy of his/her vita, in case I didn't get it in the web site of the institution.

## Guía de la Entrevista

**Por Elsa María González y González**

### I. Prefacio

- a. La entrevista será pre-acordada de tal forma que los participantes sepan con anterioridad cuando y donde ellos serán entrevistados, y por cuanto tiempo. Una vez que la presentación es hecha, se procede con la entrevista.
- b. Agradeceré a los individuos su participación y brevemente explicaré el propósito de la entrevista. También explicaré que ellos pueden parar y preguntar por aclaraciones a una pregunta en cualquier momento. Ellos también pueden escoger no responder a una pregunta, o ellos pueden parar la entrevista en cualquier momento.
- c. Les pediré a los participantes firmar el Documento Informativo de Consentimiento.
- d. Les pediré por permiso para que la entrevista sea grabada, explicando que esto servirá como una forma de revisión de la información de la entrevista. Los permisos serán firmados.

### II. Solicitar información descriptiva:

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Institución: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Información Descriptiva:

- Edad \_\_\_\_\_
- Sexo \_\_\_\_\_
- Puesto \_\_\_\_\_
- Años en ese puesto \_\_\_\_\_
- Años en la universidad \_\_\_\_\_

#### Institución:

- Región del país dónde se encuentra ubicada la universidad: \_\_\_\_\_
- Tipo de institución (pública o privada) \_\_\_\_\_
- Número de estudiantes \_\_\_\_\_
- Número de trabajadores \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Preguntas Semi-estructuradas

Algunas de las preguntas que guiarán estas entrevistas son:

1. ¿Podría Usted contarme acerca del desarrollo de su carrera profesional?
2. ¿ Cuáles son algunas de las mas memorables experiencias que Usted ha tenido en este puesto?
3. ¿Cree Usted que el entorno de la educación superior está cambiando? ¿Cuáles cambios existen alrededor de la educación superior?
4. ¿Usted cree que el directivo universitario ha sido afectado como resultado del cambio en el que se encuentran inmersas sus instituciones?
5. ¿Usted siente que los directivos están preparados para dirigir sus instituciones en medio de estos cambios y adaptarse?
6. ¿Cómo Usted cree que las instituciones de educación superior serán en 10 años, y su institución?
7. ¿Qué cree que los directivos necesitarían para enfrentar los desafíos en estos 10 años?

Permítame mencionar la definición de COMPETENCIA, que estoy utilizando en este estudio:

Competencias son concebidas como “estructuras complejas de atributos (tales como conocimiento, valores, habilidades, y actitudes) necesarios para un desempeño inteligente en situaciones específicas. Incorpora la noción de juicio profesional” (Gonczi, 1996, p. 12).

8. ¿Qué tipo de competencias los directivos necesitarán en la institución de educación superior del nuevo milenio? (HOY, competencias básicas).
9. ¿Qué competencias adicionales Usted cree que los directivos necesitarán?
10. ¿Qué competencias Usted opina que los futuros directivos necesitarán?

Probar las siguientes preguntas:

11. ¿Recibió algún tipo de capacitación antes de empezar su actual función? ¿En qué consistió? O Inducción (formal o informal), O Usted sabe que reciben los directivos?

12. ¿Considera Usted de importancia este tipo de estudios?

#### IV. Cierre

- a. Revisión de sus opiniones con el participante.
- b. Preguntar si hay alguna pregunta acerca de la entrevista.
- c. Preguntar si hay algo que le gustaria agregar.
- d. Reiterar la confidencialidad de la entrevista.
- e. Agradecerles por su participación y tiempo en este estudio.
- f. Preguntar si hay la posibilidad de obtener una copia de su curriculum, debido a que no lo pude obtener de la página de internet de la institución.

**APPENDIX C**  
**SAMPLE INSTRUMENT TO OBTAIN INFORMED CONSENT**  
**(ENGLISH AND SPANISH)**



### Informed Consent Document

The purpose of this study is to provide Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez, a doctoral student in Educational Human Resource Development, with information that will assist her in completing the requirements for her dissertation. The purpose of her study is to identify the competencies needed by directors in higher education institutions in Mexico according with their cultural reality and specific institutional criteria including location, kind of institution, and gender of the directors.

I will be one of the approximately 30 participants in this study. I will be asked to respond to interview questions on a voluntary basis and there is not penalty or loss of benefits for refusal to participate. Whether or not I choose to participate will not affect my employment. The interview content will be confidential and my name will not be revealed or used in any publication.

The data will be gathered through face-to-face interviews. Each interview session will last approximately 60 minutes. A tape recorder will be used during the interviews. I have a choice whether or not I want to be audio-taped.

- I understand that I am one of the higher education directors in Mexico participating in this study.
- There is no compensation for or from participating in this study.
- No personal documents will be examined and no name-assigned quotes will be used.
- I may refuse to answer any question(s) that makes me uncomfortable. There is no consequence for refusal to answer questions.
- My participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw from this study at any time, with no consequences.
- There are not anticipated circumstances under which my participation may be terminated by the investigator
- Records will be kept in storage at the home of the principal investigator, for a period of three years.
- There are no costs to me associated with this study.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, the Institutional Review may be contacted through Dr. Richard E. Miller, IRB Coordinator, Office of Vice President for Research and Associated Provost for Graduate Studies at (979) 845-1881.

I give my permission to be quoted in Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez's research publication.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntary agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez  
MS 4226 TAMU Campus  
(979) 845-4004

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Yvonna S. Lincoln, Committee Co-Chair  
MS 4226 TAMU Campus  
(979) 845-2701

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Kenneth E. Paprock , Committee Co-Chair  
MS 4226 TAMU Campus  
(979) 845-5488

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Documento Informativo de Consentimiento

El propósito de este estudio es proveer a Elsa María G6nzález y González, estudiante de doctorado en el Departamento de Administración Educativa y Desarrollo de Recursos Humanos, en Texas A&M University, con información que la asistirá en el cumplimiento de los requisitos para su investigación. El propósito de su estudio es identificar las competencias administrativas requeridas por los directivos en las instituciones de educación superior en México de acuerdo a su realidad cultural y criterios institucionales específicos entre los que se incluyen localización geográfica y tipo de institución.

*Yo seré uno de los aproximadamente 30 participantes en este estudio. Se me solicitará responder preguntas de una entrevista, de manera voluntaria, no existiendo ninguna penalidad o pérdida por el hecho de negarme a participar. Decida o no participar no afectará mi empleo. Las respuestas a la entrevista serán confidenciales y mi nombre no será revelado o usado en ninguna publicación.*

Los datos serán recopilados através de entrevistas en persona. Cada sesión durará aproximadamente 60 minutos. Una grabadora será usada durante las entrevistas. Tengo la opción de acceder o no a que se grabe la entrevista.

- Comprendo que soy directivo de una de las instituciones de educación superior en México participantes en este estudio.
- No hay compensación por participar en este estudio.
- Ningún documento personal será examinado y citas de los entrevistados con sus nombres no serán utilizados.
- Tengo la libertad de poder negarme a contestar cualquier pregunta(s) con la(s) que me sienta incómodo. No hay consecuencias por negarme a contestar alguna pregunta.
- Mi participación en este estudio es voluntaria y podré retirarme en cualquier momento, sin consecuencias.
- No hay circunstancias anticipadas bajo las cuales mi participación pudiera ser terminada por el investigador.
- Los registros serán almacenados en el domicilio del investigador principal, por un periodo de tres años.
- No hay costos asociados con este estudio.

Este proyecto investigación ha sido revisado y aprobado por el Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. Para problemas relacionados con esta investigación o preguntas con respecto a los derechos de los sujetos de investigación, el Institutional Review podrá ser contactado a través del Dr. Richard E. Miller, IRB Coordinator, Office of Vice President for Research y Associated Provost for Graduate Studies al (979) 845-1881.

Doy mi consentimiento de ser citado en la publicación de la investigación de Elsa Maria González y González.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Entrevistado

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

He leído y entendido la explicación que me fue dada. Han sido contestadas todas mis preguntas a mi satisfacción, y voluntariamente estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio. Se me ha entregado copia de esta forma de consentimiento.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Entrevistado

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez  
MS 4226 TAMU Campus  
(979) 845-4004

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Yvonna S. Lincoln, Committee Co-Chair  
MS 4226 TAMU Campus  
(979) 845-2701

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Kenneth E. Paprock , Committee Co-Chair  
MS 4226 TAMU Campus  
(979) 845-5488

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

**APPENDIX D**  
**SAMPLE CONSENT TO BE AUDIO-TAPED**  
**(ENGLISH AND SPANISH)**

### **Audio-Tape Release Forms**

I voluntarily agree to be audio-taped during the study being conducted by Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez. I understand that the tapes will be transcribed so that content of the interview can be thoroughly analyzed, and only Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez will have access to the tapes. These tapes will be identified by the alias assigned to each of the participants. The tapes will be kept for 36 months in the home of the principal investigator. After data is transcribed, the tapes will be erased, and the transcriptions will also be destroyed after the content has been analyzed and the research study written up.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **Refusal to be Audio-Taped**

I do not agree to be audio-taped during this study being conducted by Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez . I understand I will not receive compensation by such a refusal. By refusing to be audio-taped, I understand that I may continue to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### Permiso para Grabación por Audio

De manera voluntaria expreso mi consentimiento de ser grabado durante el estudio que es conducido por Elsa María González y González. Entiendo que los cassettes serán transcritos de tal forma que el contenido de la entrevista pueda ser analizada, y sólo Elsa María González y González tendrá acceso a esos cassettes. Estos cassettes serán identificados a través de un seudónimo asignado a cada uno de los participantes. Los cassettes serán guardados por 36 meses en el domicilio del investigador principal. Después que los datos seán transcritos, éstos serán borrados, y las transcripciones serán también destruidas después que el contenido haya sido analizado y el proyecto de investigación escrito.

---

 Firma del Entrevistado

---

 Fecha

---

 Firma del Investigador Principal

---

 Fecha

### Negativa para Grabación por Audio

No otorgo mi consentimiento para ser grabado durante el estudio que es conducido por Elsa María González y González. Al negarme a ser grabado, entiendo que podré continuar participando en este estudio.

---

 Firma del Entrevistado

---

 Fecha

---

 Firma del Investigador Principal

---

 Fecha

**APPENDIX E**

**SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER TO SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR OF**

**MEXICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

**(ENGLISH AND SPANISH)**

<<Date>>

<<First>> <<Last>>

President <<Higher Education Institution>>

<<Address>>

<<City>>, <<St>> << Zip>>

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>:

I am contacting you from Texas A&M University as a part of my doctoral dissertation research. I am conducting a nation-wide study in which I am interested in interviewing Presidents and Administrative Directors of Mexican Higher Education Institutions. The tentative title of my dissertation topic is *“Perceptions of Selected Senior Administrators of Higher Education Institutions in Mexico regarding Needed Competencies”*.

Because educational trends and initiatives are different among countries, it is not surprising that Mexico will present specific needs dictated by its cultural reality and specific institutional criteria including location, kind of institution, and gender of the directors. The purpose of this study is to identify the competencies needed by directors in higher education institutions in Mexico.

Approximately ten Mexican higher education institutions will be involved in this study. During the sampling process, your institution has been selected as one of them. [Within a week or so ago, I made the arrangements in order to scheduled an interview with you]. I plan to be in [your city on these dates]. I would like to visit with your while I am there and have the opportunity of interview you if you agree. These interviews usually last about an hour.

[Before conducting the interview, I will first call you in order to obtain the names of two administrative directors who you think would like to participate in this study and have an extensive knowledge of the institution].

If any questions should arise about this study, please feel free to contact me at (979) 680-9077 or email me at emg1414@labs.tamu.edu. [Otherwise, I will call you in the next few days to schedule an interview and to collect the names of two administrative directors who may be interested in being interviewed].

Thank you for your time and assistance in advance. I am looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Elsa M. González y González  
Principal Investigator  
Texas A&M University

<<Nombre>> <<Apellidos>>  
Ejecutivo <<Institución de Educación Superior>>  
<<Dirección>>  
<<Ciudad>>, <<Calle>> <<Código Postal>>

Estimado <<Nombre>> <<Apellidos>>:

Aprovecho para enviarle un cordial saludo, permítame presentarme, mi nombre es Elsa María González y González, soy Candidato a Doctor y como parte de mi investigación doctoral lo estoy contactando desde Texas A&M University. Actualmente, me encuentro conduciendo un estudio a nivel nacional por el cual estoy interesada en entrevistar Rectores y Directores en instituciones de educación superior en México. El título tentativo de mi tema de investigación es *“Percepciones de Directivos Seleccionados de Instituciones de Educación Superior en México con respecto a las Competencias Necesarias”*.

Debido a que las tendencias e iniciativas educacionales son diferentes entre los países, no es sorpresivo que México presentará necesidades específicas dictadas por su realidad cultural y criterios institucionales específicos entre los que se incluyen localización y tipo de institución. El propósito de este estudio es identificar las competencias necesarias por los directores en instituciones de educación superior en México.

Aproximadamente diez instituciones mexicanas de educación superior serán incluídas en este estudio. Durante el proceso de muestreo, su institución ha sido seleccionada como una de ellas. Hace aproximadamente una semana me fue otorgada una cita con Usted, lo cual agradezco mucho. Estaré en la ciudad de León el 12 de junio del presente de acuerdo a lo acordado, para así tener entonces la oportunidad de entrevistarle si Usted está de acuerdo. Estas entrevistas duran aproximadamente una hora.

Si cualquier pregunta pudiera surgir acerca de este estudio, por favor sientase en la libertad de contactarme al teléfono (979) 680-9077 o bien puede enviarme un correo electrónico a [emg1414@labs.tamu.edu](mailto:emg1414@labs.tamu.edu).

Gracias de antemano por su tiempo y su apoyo en la realización de este estudio. En espera de poder visitarlo queda de Usted su segura servidora.

Atentamente,

Elsa M. González y González  
Investigador Principal  
Texas A&M University



**APPENDIX F**

**SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER TO SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR OF**

**MEXICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

**(ENGLISH AND SPANISH)**

<<Date>>

<<First>> <<Last>>

President <<Higher Education Institution>>

<<Address>>

<<City>>, <<St>> << Zip>>

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>:

[Through the present may I take your attention to thank your kindness to accept my visit the next <<date>>, and if you agree then to have the opportunity to interview you.] Because the primordial objective of my research project in Texas A&M University, and for the importance that always educational administration has had in my previous job experience and in my professional development, it is that I am conducting a nation-wide study in Mexico that allows me to identify the administrative competencies that directors feel they need and/or will need in the immediate future in higher education institutions in our country. Like you know the generally used methodologies to get information are surveys sent by mail or by electronic mail. Even important those methodologies, I consider that the most important comments and realities are better detected by personal communication. Because of that I thank you again for your support in order to accomplish my objectives in a deeper way.

Most of the studios that have been developed in higher education only mention superficially the importance of competencies or skills needed by administrators in higher education. This and many other antecedents that I have lived or that I have references, made me to begin a research. Because educational trends and initiatives are different among countries, it is not surprising that Mexico will present specific needs dictated by its cultural reality and specific institutional criteria including location and kind of institution.

Approximately a dozen of Mexican higher education institutions will be involved in this study. Which I will visit according with the availability of the directors, the location, and costs. During the sampling process, your institution has been selected as one of the most representatives of the region. [A week or so ago, I made the arrangements to schedule an interview with you].

If any questions should arise about this study, please feel free to contact me. [Otherwise, I will call you in the next few days to schedule an interview and to collect the names of two administrative directors who would be willing to participate in this study and who will have an additional extensive knowledge of the institution]. These interviews usually last about an hour.

Thank you for your time and assistance in advance. I am looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Elsa M. González y González  
 College of Education  
 Texas A&M University  
 Harrington Tower 605  
 (979) 845 4004  
[emg1414@labs.tamu.edu](mailto:emg1414@labs.tamu.edu)  
 College Station, TX

<<Fecha>>

<<Nombre>> <<Apellidos>>

Ejecutivo <<Institución de Educación Superior>>

<<Dirección>>

<<Ciudad>>, <<Calle>> <<Código Postal>>

Estimado <<Nombre>> <<Apellidos>>:

A través de la presente me permito distraer su atención para agradecer su amabilidad de aceptar mi visita el próximo martes 12 de junio a las 5 P.M., y si Usted está de acuerdo tener entonces la oportunidad de entrevistarle. Como objetivo primordial de mi proyecto de investigación en Texas A&M University, y por la importancia que siempre ha tenido en mi previa experiencia laboral y mi formación profesional la administración educativa, estoy conduciendo un estudio a nivel nacional en México que me permita identificar las competencias administrativas que requieren y/o requerirán en el futuro inmediato, los directivos de las instituciones de educación superior de nuestro país. Como usted sabe las metodologías para obtener esta información generalmente se basan en encuestas que pueden ser enviadas por correo, o por medios electrónicos. Aunque sustancial, considero que los más importantes comentarios o realidades son mejor detectadas a través de la comunicación personal. Por lo anterior reitero mi agradecimiento por brindarme su apoyo para cumplir con mayor profundidad mis objetivos.

La mayoría de los estudios que han sido previamente hechos alrededor de la educación superior sólo superficialmente han mencionado la importancia de las competencias o habilidades requeridas por los administradores de educación superior. Esto y muchos otros antecedentes que he vivido o de los cuales tengo evidencia escrita me llevarán a iniciar una investigación al respecto. Dado que la mayoría de las veces la información que se genera en investigación se relaciona con países desarrollados, donde las tendencias e iniciativas educacionales son diferentes de país a país, no es sorprendente que México presentará necesidades específicas dictadas por su realidad cultural y criterios institucionales específicos entre los que se incluyen localización geográfica y tipo de institución.

El tamaño de la muestra para este estudio abarca un par de docenas de las principales instituciones en México. Las cuales visitaré personalmente, de acuerdo a la disponibilidad de los directivos, localización y costos. Durante el proceso de muestreo, su institución ha sido seleccionada como una de las representativas de la región.

Cualquier información o pregunta respecto a esta investigación o relacionada con la entrevista por favor siéntase en la libertad de contactarme. Las entrevistas tienen una duración mínima de una hora.

De antemano le agradezco la atención que se sirvió prestar a la presente y por el privilegio que me otorga. En espera de hacerlo nuevamente en persona, le envío un cordial saludo.

Atentamente,

Elsa M. González y González  
College of Education  
Texas A&M University  
Harrington Tower 605  
(979) 845 4004  
[emg1414@labs.tamu.edu](mailto:emg1414@labs.tamu.edu)  
College Station, TX

**APPENDIX G**  
**LIST OF INSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS**

The interviewees (senior administrators) from the different institutions provided the following documents. The last in the list is a federal document that was provided by one of the participants from Institution 8.

Documents are coded, following the next example:

**I1.d1** Institution 1, document 1

- I1.d1.** Anaya Duarte, G. (1995). *Filosofía social. Una propuesta educativa, PROUNIVAC, CECUSAC* [Social philosophy. An educative proposal, PROUNIVAC, CECUSAC]. Mexico, DF: Universidad Iberoamericana.
- I1.d2.** Universidad Iberoamericana Leon (2000). *Manual de Inducción para Académicos* [Manual of Induction for Faculty]. Leon, MEXICO: Author.
- I4.d1.** Secretaría de Educación Pública (2001). *Coordinación de Universidades Tecnológicas* [Coordination of Technologic Universities]. Mexico: Author.
- I5.d1.** Universidad de la Américas-Puebla (2001). *Estatuto Orgánico de la Fundación Universidad de las Américas-Puebla* [Organic Statute of the *Fundación Universidad de las Américas-Puebla*]. Puebla, Mexico: Author.
- I5.d2.** Universidad de la Américas-Puebla (2001). *Estatutos del Consejo Universitario* [Statutes of the University Senate]. Puebla, Mexico: Author.
- I5.d3.** Cárdenas Sánchez, E. (1999). *Informe de Actividades 1997-1998 Universidad de las Américas-Puebla* [Report of Activities 1997-1998 *Universidad de las Américas-Puebla*]. Puebla, Mexico: Universidad de las Américas-Puebla.
- I5.d4** Cárdenas Sánchez, E. (2000). *Informe de Actividades 1998-1999 Universidad de las Américas-Puebla* [Report of Activities 1998-1999 *Universidad de las Américas-Puebla*]. Puebla, Mexico: Universidad de las Américas-Puebla.
- I5.d5** Cárdenas Sánchez, E. (2000). *UDLA, una esperanza una realidad. Don Manuel Espinosa Yglesias* [UDLA, one hope one reality. Don Manuel Espinosa Yglesias]. Puebla, Mexico: Universidad de las Américas-Puebla.
- I6.d1** Dirección de Planeación y Desarrollo Institucional (2001). *Plan Institucional de Desarrollo 2000-2010* [Institutional Plan of Development 2000-2010]. Querétaro, Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro.

- 18.d1.** Martínez Rizo, F. (1999). *Memorias Gestión 1996-1998* [Memoirs Administration 1996-1998]. Aguascalientes, Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes.
- 18.d2.** Secretaría de Educación Pública (2001). *Programa Nacional de Educación 2001-2006* [National Program of Education 2001-2006]. Mexico: Author.

## VITA

Elsa Maria Gonzalez y Gonzalez  
1900 Dartmouth C-1, College Station, Texas 77840

### EDUCATION BACKGROUND

December 2004	Ph.D. in educational human resource development Emphasis on higher education administration Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
June 1998	M.B.A. in organizations National Autonomus University of Mexico, Mexico
December 1992	B.S. in accounting University of Guanajuato, Mexico

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

October 2003 to December 2004	Research Assistant Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
January 2002 to September 2003	Research Assistant Office of Continuing Education, College of Education Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
September 1998 to December 2001	Research Assistant Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
June 1997 to January 1998	Continuing Education Coordinator University Center "VEN" University of Guanajuato, Mexico
January 1997 to May 1997	Project Manager with Latino America Foundation University-Industry of Valladolid (FUEVA) University of Valladolid, Spain
March 1993 to December 1996	Administrative Coordinator University of Guanajuato, Mexico