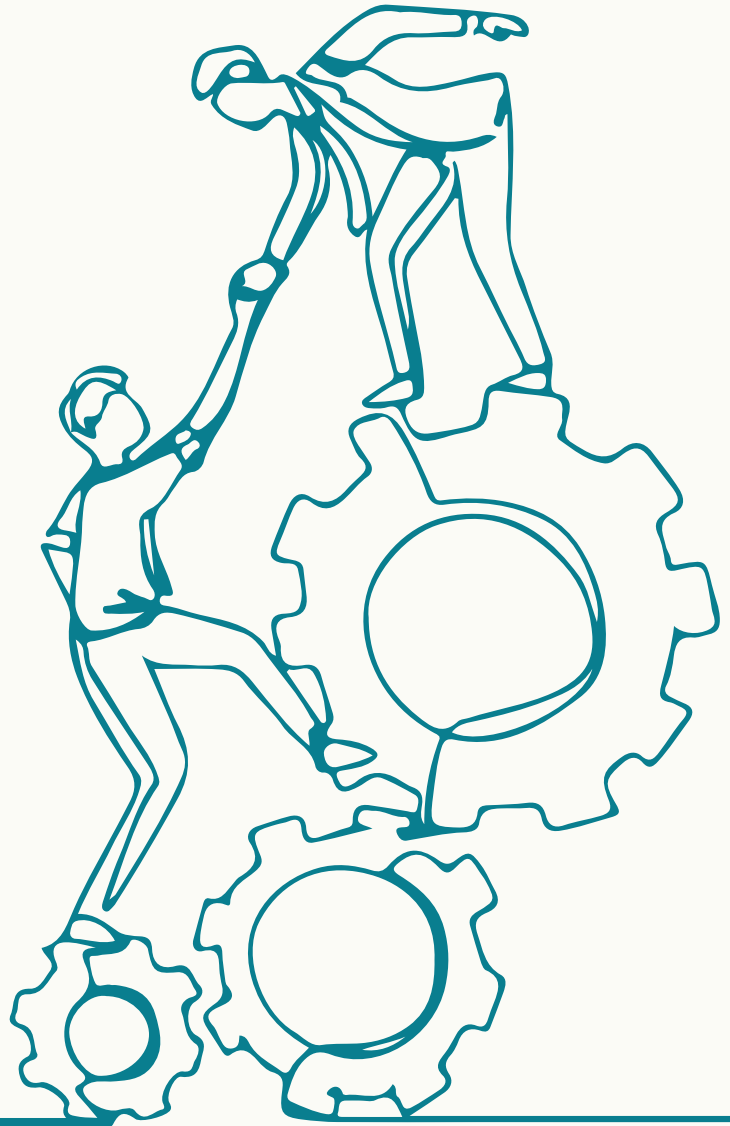# Breaking the mold of participation

A case study on the influence of Participatory Value Evaluation on strategic formation processes within higher education institutions

A. (Annelotte) Andeweg

POPULYTICS
What would you do?

T U Delft

Breaking the mold of participation

A case study on the influence of Participatory Value
Evaluation on strategic formation process within
higher education institutions

By

A. (Annelotte) Andeweg

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Preface

Starting a participatory trajectory without a genuine intention to learn from the participants is nonsense and above all: a waste of investment. With that being said, taking the actual steps to establish such a path is far from simple. It is frightening and requires a considerable amount of trust in your staff. Nevertheless, the outcomes are highly rewarding at the end of the line, owing much to all the knowledge available within high education institutions. Reap the rewards!

After dedicating seven months to research, conversations with my supervisors, a lot of stand-ups with my fellow graduates, making visits to physiotherapists due to a lot of periods of sitting and above all, gaining a lot of new knowledge, my time as a student in Delft has come to an end. This report marks the final chapter of my academic journey: my master's thesis. By writing this thesis, I had the privilege of contributing to the transdisciplinary collaboration between three highly regarded academic institutions in the Netherlands. Due to the crises caused by climate change and the multiple transitions the world is going through, combining strengths as institutions is becoming increasingly important. Therefore, it is a logical thought to focus the collaborations' strategy on the world nowadays issues. Nevertheless, higher education institutions are well-known for their autonomous operational core, consisting of mostly very critical and eager researchers. As the Executive Board, for creating any form of change within the institutions, the involvement of the operational core within the strategic formation processes is critical.

So, that is what I did: involving the employees within the design process of the strategic narrative of Convergence, the collaboration between the Delft University of Technology, Erasmus University Rotterdam and Erasmus Medical Center. I designed and conducted a Participatory Value Evaluation which allowed me to dive deeper into the field of strategy, policy-making and participation. I got the opportunity to talk with many different employees from the three institutes, and I also got to learn a lot about the used method from the employees of Populytics. Applying the method in a familiar network increased my motivation and enthusiasm to make the region even more robust towards future challenges.

I encourage you to dare to break the mold and co-create strategy together to accelerate the research the world is aiming for. As Joop den Uyl once said: *"Waar de visie ontbreekt, komt het volk om"*.

Annelotte Andeweg
Delft, August 2023

Acknowledgement

Executive summary

Problem statement

With the increasing need for entangling the complexity around worldwide crises and transitions, the transdisciplinary collaboration between governmental organisations, multidisciplinary academic institutions and companies is becoming increasingly crucial. Involving citizens within the policy-making processes regarding those crises and transitions already led to various positive outcomes, for example increased awareness, understanding of policies, new innovations, and acceptance of decision-making. As higher education institutions (HEIs) have a so-called Third Mission, they are obligated to be game changers and contribute to society, alongside their primary roles of teaching and conducting research. However, it remains to be explored how HEI employees could effectively and efficiently be involved within the strategic processes addressing for instance those important topics. A nowadays successful digital participatory method by the Dutch government is the Participatory Value Evaluation (PVE). Within the PVE, a large number of individuals get the possibility to engage in the decision-making process by completing a consultation. This master thesis explores the added value of applying a PVE within the HEI context, analysing both the perspectives of employees and the policymakers, and therefore provide valuable insights for future implementations of PVEs within professional bureaucracies.

Methodology

The research seeks to understand how the PVE could effectively increase employee engagement, serve as a communication tool, and provide valuable insights for strategic policymakers to eventually drive transitions and sustainability efforts in HEIs. The main question of this study is: "**What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation within strategy formation processes of higher education institutions?**". The PVE method is executed as part of a case study, consisting of the strategy formation process of Convergence, a transdisciplinary collaboration between the Erasmus University, the Delft University of Technology and the Erasmus Medical Centre. It is important to ensure the strategy will be accepted and complied by the operational layer of the institutions, mostly academics. For the executive board of Convergence, this means considering ideas and input from bottom-up.

During the PVE, the participants will receive information concerning the strategic policy choices that need to be made. Participants must choose one or multiple options from a predefined set, subject to specific constraints such as a limited budget or the need to achieve a particular objective. Subsequently, they are requested to explain their choices. The research outcomes regarding the weight of the consultations can serve as a research objective to deliver more effective policy advice.

Subsequently, seven interviews, as another part of the case study, are conducted to gain insight into the perspectives of both the employees and the policymakers on their experience with PVE.

Additional data is collected by conducting an extensive exploratory literature review. The research methodologies aim to identify the differences between citizens and professional bureaucracies, other participatory methods within HEIs, the perspectives of employees and policymakers in HEIs on PVE and, therefore, the added value of PVE within HEIs.

Results

The study provides different insightful results. Firstly, the literature review identified a few key differences between employees-to-manager and citizens-to-government relations, focussing on the unique aspects of HEIs as professional bureaucracies. Whereas the power and knowledge of governmental institutions and citizens often lays more on the governmental side, this research shows that within the professional bureaucracies the power and knowledge lie within the employees of the operational core, having these two aspects over their own work. Interestingly, even though the employee's significant autonomy within HEIs, the PVE results present how the employees like to be questioned about topics like Convergence. This suggests that employees appreciate being involved in discussions about strategic topics like Convergence, underlining the added value of using PVEs in professional bureaucracies.

Secondly, the added value of PVEs could be found in five aspects. To begin with, representation: PVEs facilitate the engagement of participants who typically remain uninvolved. Subsequently, low fatigue; civil servants encounter minimal time constraints. Following this, awareness: PVE employment enhances citizens' comprehension of specific subject matter. Furthermore, meaningfulness: citizens experience the consultation as meaningful. And lastly, usefulness: the PVE outcomes offer valuable information for civil servants' decision-making processes.

Moreover, this study includes various statements about experiences with the PVE. The findings of statement indicates that participants felt that they were steered when filling in the PVE, which suggest further research. However, most of the respondents trusted the consultation as a fair research and agreed that being questioned about topics like Convergence is desired. The majority of the respondents also think that the institutions should use the PVE more often to consult their employees. Furthermore, 45 percent of the respondents agreed that they feel more engaged with the institution they are working for, due to filling in the PVE. Also, most respondents disagreed that the PVE had helped them to learn more about Convergence.

Furthermore, the participants were also asked about what they liked and disliked about the consultation. The positive aspects included the innovative scoring system of the PVE, the ability to openly contribute, the anonymity, the availability of information buttons and the possibility to express their opinions to the Executive Board. The participants disliked the perceived top-down perspective in the design of the questions, the time it took, the uncertainty about the feedback of the Executive Board on the results and the limited outreach of the consultation to those employees who are not involved in Convergence.

Subsequently, in terms of the proceeding of the results, 50 percent of the respondents wants the Executive Board to significantly weight the outcomes and 26 even want them to heavily weight the outcomes into their considerations regarding the strategic narrative of Convergence.

Next, three interviews have been conducted with Convergence employees about their experience with the PVE. The responses varied on the PVE's added value and feeling of being heard. Two gained a better understanding of Convergence, but engagement levels differed. Transparent communication increased one participant's engagement, while others felt less engaged and suggested improvements in communication with the Executive Board.

Finally, the Convergence Office (CO) has been interviewed to evaluate their experiences with conducting a PVE within a HEI context. The added value of the PVE could be found in the representativeness, low fatigue and the usefulness of the results, which are all related to the PVEs conducted within the citizen-to-government context.

Conclusion

All in all, PVE shows promising potential to apply within professional bureaucracies like HEIs and therefore is of significant added value. Nevertheless, the preconditions and design principles surrounding the PVE need to be studied critically, as there is potential for adverse consequences if not implemented in a fully participatory manner. Bidirectional communication plays an essential role in fostering the PVE process. The main takeaways of this research for conducting a PVE within the HEI context are:

1. It is essential to acknowledge the distinctions between HEIs and the general population since professional bureaucracies have unique characteristics, such as a highly autonomous operational core. Involving this operational core is essential to ensure the strategic vision is supported. The PVE results show a positive response from participants when questioning whether they think giving their opinion on strategic topics as Convergence is important for them. Therefore, it could be beneficial to use all the knowledge and insights available within the operating core. Furthermore, much specialised information is only available within the operational core, making it even more important to ensure these employees participate.

2. Utilizing a PVE within the HEI context can cause challenges regarding the openness of the strategic process and therefore has a major drawback. To address the challenges, it is crucial to communicate clearly with the participants about how feedback will be provided to ensure transparency and trust in the employees. When employees experience a feeling of not being valued within the participatory trajectory, this might decrease their commitment towards the institution. Furthermore, the absence of bidirectional communication also leads to less employee engagement, eventually decreasing well-being and organisational outcomes. So, starting a PVE trajectory without establishing preconditions or design principles in advance can cause adverse effects and thus nullifying the potential added value of the consultation.

3. The utilization of a PVE can be fruitful in overcoming challenges related to subjective language. These challenges tend to arise particularly in contexts like talk shows or open meetings, where participants often lack sufficient time to carefully consider their words, resulting in more thoughtless communication. The multiple iteration rounds of a PVE and a focus on neutral language, help create a more unbiased tool for strategic formation. Given the inherent autonomic nature of the professional bureaucracy's core, characterised by critical academics within HEIS, it becomes even more imperative to identify shared dilemmas and objectively express them. Opting solely for open meetings or talk shows might lead to a higher likelihood of employees expressing their views autonomously, which could influence decisions in a particular direction and therefore give rise to subjective language. Moreover, the multiple iteration rounds also are of added value to the policymakers of the institutions, because of again articulating their own objectives facilitates clarity and insight. Even though institutions already exist for a long period, the process of reformulating goals in a distinct and focused manner remained beneficial.

4. The utilization of a PVE can be beneficial in overcoming obstacles caused by varying working hours within institutions. Organising live events most of the time excludes some employees due to their other (work-related) commitments, whereas a PVE allows greater flexibility in participation. Since varying working hours count for every organisation, this added value can be generalised to a greater audience.

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Abbreviations

CA	Convergence Alliance
CO	Convergence Office
Erasmus MC	Erasmus Medical Centre
EUR	Erasmus University Rotterdam
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HIWP	High Involvement Work Practices
HRM	Human Resource Management
LDE	Leiden Delft Erasmus
NWO	Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PVE	Participatory Value Evaluation
SD	Strategic Development
TU Delft	Delft University of Technology

1.

Problem introduction

This chapter describes the reason and development of this master thesis. The research is conducted at the Delft University of Technology in collaboration with and under supervision of Populytics. This thesis aims to create more insight into the added value of involving employees in strategic processes within professional bureaucracies. It will first emphasise the importance of the research by outlining the scientific and societal problem and its academic gap. Subsequently, the key concepts in this research, namely *higher education institutions, employee engagement, strategy formation processes* and *participatory processes* are described to clarify these concepts. The problem introduction and key concepts together will lead to the justification of the chosen case, after which the research questions are identified. Next, the scientific and societal relevance of this study will be presented. Finally, this chapter ends with the outline of the study.

1.1. A call for convergence

Current crises and transitions regarding climate, poverty and inequality clearly show the importance of collaboration between governmental organisations, multidisciplinary academic institutions and companies to meet the increasing complexity of societal challenges and the rapid development of technologies. These actual and upcoming societal challenges and developments require new policies and strategies. Moreover, due to the complexity, it is crucial to consider how to make citizens aware of these developments.

The Netherlands, as a nation, also confronts intricate challenges associated with ensuring its future resilience. The country aims to effect substantial transformations in its energy provision, reducing its reliance on fossil fuels and thereby making a substantial contribution to global climate change mitigation efforts (Bouma et al., 2023). The signals report 'Betrokken burgers' of the Planbureau van de Leefomgeving states that citizen engagement may well be the key to implementing transition policies and making the Netherlands more sustainable. According to (Bouma et al., 2023), engaging citizens in the policymaking process can facilitate the development of a broader and more comprehensive understanding of policies, thereby promoting increased support and acceptance of transitions. Additionally, citizen involvement has the potential to influence individuals' behaviour and empower them to initiate transitions themselves.

Whereas the involvement of a large number of citizens remains complicated, the rapid development of information technologies presents opportunities for enhancing citizen participation (Zheng & Schachter, 2017). Furthermore, using digital approaches of participation facilitates informing and communicating with citizens and reduces costs of the policymaking process.

Academic institutions play a vital role in researching and educating about transitions and sustainability. In this context as well, actively involving a maximum number of employees within these processes emerges as a crucial concept to foster successful transitions and sustainability initiatives. However, employee involvement, regarding those important strategic themes, within academic institutions remains relatively underexplored. A study into whether government participation methods can be adapted and applied to academic institutions holds potential. Such an exploration aims to understand how these methods could effectively promote employee engagement, act as a communication tool, and provide valuable insights for strategic policy makers to eventually drive transitions and sustainability efforts.

1.2. Participatory Value Evaluation

A nowadays increasingly and successfully used participation method by the Dutch government is called the Participatory Value Evaluation (PVE). Similar to other digital participation methodologies, PVE enables a large number of individuals to engage in the decision-making process. In a PVE, participants digitally get the possibility to decide about the same issues the policymakers need to decide on (Mouter et al., 2019). During the consultation, the participants will receive information concerning the different strategic policy choices which need to be made. Participants are required to choose one or multiple options from a predefined set, subject to specific constraints such as a limited budget or the need to achieve a particular objective. Subsequently, they are requested to explain their choices. The outcomes of the research regarding the weight of the consultations can serve as a research objective to deliver more effective policy advice.

Given the increasing desire for fostering transitions and the significant role that academic institutions, such as universities, play in facilitating these transitions, it becomes imperative to explore methods of involving employees in these processes. Research should focus on devising strategies to overcome the challenges associated with employee engagement to ensure their active participation. A digital way of participation like the PVE might be a possible tool as well within the strategic development processes. As a PVE usually is used in a citizen-to-government context, it is the question whether a PVE could be used to stimulate participation regarding new strategy and thus makes use of an employees-to-manager approach. Research by Heijnen (2020) already investigated the differences between applying PVE in a citizen-to-government context versus applying PVE within an employees-to-manager environment. According to this research, four main ways to use PVE in an employees-to-manager environment are proposed:

1. Use PVE as a convenient means to share their knowledge, experience and preferences.
2. Use PVE as a mechanism for constructing an accessible knowledge repository.

3. Use PVE as a methodology to acquire insights into the effects that different choices, thereby facilitating decision-making processes.
4. Use PVE as a medium to gather information from multiple departments and teams.

So, employees see potential in using PVE to benefit organisational efficiency or the information flow. As Heijen (2020) examined a single case study concerning an energy grid operator, further research should demonstrate whether the proposals mentioned above are also applicable in the academic environment and how the method is influencing their perception of engagement. In order to investigate the viability of implementing PVE in the academic environment as part of the strategy formation process, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive examination of the reasons behind the importance of involving and researching academic institutions in this context.

1.3. The third mission of universities

The worldwide emerging challenges and developments require the knowledge, forces and methods of different scientific disciplines to create integrated approaches. This perspective has led to the recognition of a "Third Mission" for higher education institutions, hereafter HEIs, which involves their active contribution to society, alongside their primary roles of teaching and conducting research (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020). In recent years, HEIs have faced increasing pressure to prioritise this Third Mission. Notably, the role of academic institutions in driving regional development has also garnered significant interest (Arbo & Benneworth, 2007). For instance, the Groeiagenda Zuid-Holland, an ambitious action and investment agenda of 80 governments, companies, and knowledge institutions in South Holland, emphasizes the importance of leveraging regional knowledge to accelerate digitalisation efforts in the area's top sectors and SMEs (MRDH, n.d.). Merging the scientific knowledge of different HEIs in South Holland can lead to innovative insights and approaches, generating meaningful societal impact. However, achieving this goal needs the explicit involvement of cities, regions, and business communities.

It is evident that HEIs must increasingly orient their strategies towards fulfilling the Third Mission. Yet, the operating environment of these institutions poses challenges, often leading to internal resistance. Social organizations like academic institutions encounter specific complexities, such as issues related to coordination, discretion, and innovation (Maassen & Potman, 1990). Recognizing and addressing these limitations during the strategy development process is crucial, as they could complicate the implementation of plans. Furthermore, the strategic vision of HEIs may encounter obstacles when confronted with the realities of day-to-day operations due to knowledge asymmetry between professionals and executives (De Bruijn, 2014). Due to the expertise of professionals, they sometimes have a completely different perspective on an organization's strategy from the views of the executives.

So, while embracing the Third Mission and aligning strategies accordingly is imperative for HEIs, it is equally essential to navigate the complexities and constraints inherent in their operational context to achieve successful outcomes.

1.4. HEIs as professional bureaucracies

Research by Maassen & Potman (1990) characterize HEIs as professional bureaucracies, which distinguish them from most other organisations. Within these professional bureaucracies, the knowledge and power lie within the so-called 'operational core', in where most of the activities are arranged around the experts (Hardy et al., 1983). As most of the development takes place at a higher hierarchical level, involving the operational core of the institutions is important to make sure the strategic vision is supported (Bidemi et al., 2018; Putseys et al., 2003). The essence of successful organisational change is that employees adjust their behaviour toward the desired change (Van Woensel, 2008). To accomplish this, the involvement of employees is important because when they perceive the feeling that their organisation does not value their contribution or care about their opinion, the commitment towards the organisation is likely to decrease (Wilkins et al., 2017). Besides, the perception of involvement of employees contributes to their work engagement, which leads to several positive organisational outcomes like organisational commitment and employee well-being (Rana, 2015). Furthermore, research has shown that involving employees and thus professionals in strategy dilemmas increase loyalty toward the organization, legitimizes motivation among the practitioners and raises many new ideas (Tavakoli et al., 2017). These rationales correspond to the three rationales for citizen participation in public policy, which are instrumental, substantive and normative (Mouter et al., 2021a; Stirling, 2006). Next to the legitimation of different choices through participatory approaches, involvement and thus participation will also decrease resistance to decisions because the public gets the opportunity to transmit their opinion on the strategic plan instead of solely participating during election periods (Edelenbos et al., 2006).

So, HEIs show distinct characteristics from other organisational entities, occur from their status as professional bureaucracies characterised by a high level of authority over their job and expertise within their operational core. This distinctive aspect of HEIs is interesting regarding the application of the PVE method, considering that respondents typically comprise citizens who are considerably reliant on governmental decisions. Conversely, employees within HEIs tend to have greater autonomy and occasionally manoeuvre decisions to align with their own interests. However, recognizing that citizen involvement also contains fostering participation across a diverse group, this research could delve into exploring the added value of implementing PVE within an organisational context. To identify a suitable organisational case, the preliminary step involves the identification and defining of concepts.

1.5. Introducing key concepts

The higher education institutions

Given that the primary emphasis of this research revolves around the domains of education and research, the utilization of PVE is particularly tailored to suit the educational and research-oriented setting. The terms "university" and "HEI" are employed interchangeably within the context of this study. However, since HEIs know a globally higher recognition in literature, this research predominantly adopts HEI instead of university in order to delve into the essence of the theoretical framework.

To define HEI, this research uses the definition established by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):

"*By higher education we mean universities, university colleges and other institutions that provide a post-secondary education and which normally involve an element of research and development work.*" (Arbo & Benneworth, 2007).

As mentioned before, HEIs have many more functions than just educating people. According to the research of Marginson (2014), HEIs brings many social benefits that positively impact the society as a whole and therefore also fulfilling their Third Mission duty. These benefits include, as mentioned before, (regional) economic growth, but also faster and wider spreading of new knowledge, higher cultural tolerance, building strong social networks in which active participation in social and political affair is encouraged and enhancing democracy. As the contributions and different functions of HEIs has great societal value, it is important to arrange an environment in which the HEIs have the opportunity to develop and change.

Strategy and its formation processes

Strategy can be defined as *realized* patterns in streams of decisions or actions or as *emergent* patterns, which just form rather than be formulated in an earlier stage (Hardy et al., 1983). As this research tries to answer a question which relates to the process of strategy formation within HEIs, the focus will be on *deliberate strategy*, which arises from realized patterns. Deliberate strategy refers to a strategic approach in which an organisation proactively and deliberately develops plans and actions to achieve specific goals and objectives. It involves a clear and deliberate direction based on different analysis and evaluation of internal and external factors. Fumasoli & Lepori (2011) add that for a pattern to be identified as a strategy, it must be acknowledged and embraced by members of the organisation as a collective pursuit towards achieving organisational goals.

Next to the various types of strategy according to Hardy et al. (1983), Chaffee (1985) describes three different strategy models. She mentions the linear, adaptive and interpretive model, which are not necessarily independent from each other. In linear strategy, the administrative layer of an organization has considerable capacity to change the organization. In adaptive strategy, the organization and its components adjust, either proactively or in response to changes of consumer preferences. The main assumption underlying interpretive strategy is that the reality is socially constructed, the organisation is an open system, and that the organisation is made up by cooperative agreements made by stakeholders with a free will. According to Maassen & Potman (1990), the interpretive strategy model fits the best the characteristics of HEIs. These two different approaches lead to the following definition of strategy in the context of higher education institutions:

Strategy in HEIs represents realized patterns of decisions and actions. It relies on the pursuit of organizational goals, acknowledges the socially constructed nature of reality, recognizes the organisation as an open system, and emphasizes the collective acceptance made by stakeholders acting with their own free will.

To come to a specific strategy, multiple processes are needed. The strategy formation process has several definitions according to literature. The most commonly used term for the process of strategy formation is the strategic planning process, which also has several definitions. Akyel et al. (2012) define the strategic planning process as:

"*Strategic planning is described as generating the future mission and vision of the institution in a dynamic environment and changing surroundings, determining strategic objectives and measurable targets, measuring the performances by predetermined indicators and monitoring and evaluating this process. It is a participative approach which enables the budget of an institution to be in accordance with the aims and targets in the strategic plan from a forward-looking point of view and gives priority to resource allocations.*"

Bidemi et al. (2018) presume that by acting through strategic planning, an organisation can predict changes in the environment and act pro-actively. The level of involvement of different employees in strategic planning greatly affects how effective the strategy will be.

Employee involvement and employee participation
The terms involvement and participation will be used interchangeably. The terms both refer to active participation of employees in decision-making processes and other organisational activities. As employee participation can also refers to different participatory processes focused on employee's job responsibilities and work processes, the two terms are scoped to the participation and involvement concerning decision-making processes around strategy formation. The involvement and thus participation is aimed at creating a sense of inclusiveness, collaboration and shared responsibilities in where employees have the opportunity to contribute their ideas, provide unput and influence decisions that direct or indirect impact their own work lives.

Employee engagement
The involvement of employees can be seen as an antecedent for employee engagement, which subsequently leads to different outcomes on well-being and organisational performance. A literature review by Motyka (2018) about employee engagement shows that there are several terms that describe work-related engagement. The terms "employee engagement" and "work engagement" are typically used interchangeably. As Motyka (2018) found that the majority of authors adopted the definition proposed by Schaufeli et al. (2002, p. 74), this study will also use this definition which describes employee engagement as:

"*Employee or work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor (e.g., being highly energetic), dedication (e.g., being highly involved in work) and absorption (e.g., being highly concentrated in work).*"

Various HRM strategies can contribute to enhancing employee engagement, such as improving job design to leverage motivating job resources, implementing job rotation and job changes to challenge employees and promote motivation, learning, and professional development (Schaufeli et al., 2002). According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), leadership also plays a crucial role in fostering employee engagement, particularly through transformational leadership that provides a clear vision, inspires and motivates employees, offers intellectual challenges, and demonstrates interest in employee needs. Furthermore, employee involvement programs, which aim to encourage diverse perspectives and ideas, can positively impact employee well-being and organizational effectiveness by increasing job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee morale, and productivity (Attridge, 2009). Lastly, effective communication also plays a critical role in the success of employee involvement initiatives, facilitating a bidirectional flow of information and feedback between management and the operational core (Grawitch et al., 2006).

1.6. Applying PVE to a transdisciplinary collaboration

To research the added value of applying PVE within HEIs, the Convergence Alliance has been selected as case. The Convergence Alliance, officially formed on the 7th of July 2021, comprises three academic institutions: Delft University of Technology (TU Delft), Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR), and Erasmus Medical Centre (Erasmus MC). The three institutions are joining forces to tackle challenges in the fields of climate change, sustainability, health, urbanisation and digitalisation. The alliance specifically launched five programs around the themes: Resilient Data, Health & Technology, AI, Data & Digitalisation, Pandemic & Disaster Preparedness and Healthy Start.

The selection of this case was deliberate for various compelling reasons. Firstly, the alliance is deeply committed to making a significant societal impact, aligning with the mission to fulfill the Third Mission of HEIs. Secondly, the scope of the physical research allowed for interviews with multiple stakeholders involved in the collaboration. This aspect provided valuable insights for the research; bot evaluative as case explorative. Thirdly, the timing of the study coincided with a crucial phase in the Alliance's strategic development. Presently, the Convergence Office is actively engaged in crafting a strategic narrative, with a specific focus on involving employees within the strategic formation process. The formation of this strategy can be seen as a multi-actor challenge, in which academic staff, students, professionals, municipalities, ministries and universities all have different interests. It is also a complex problem, due to amongst other things the differences in interest within these organisations and Dutch law and regulations. For instance, international ambitions can be interesting for an executive board, but can likewise feel threatening regarding pressure on current teachers. Due to the multi-actor background of the strategy and the changing and dynamic environment of the institutions, Convergence needs to strive to involve everyone in their strategy formation process, including employees at all levels (Aldraci et al., 2009). This involvement affects the level of employee engagement, which in turn lead to various positive outcomes.

The pursuit of meaningful employee participation in this endeavour makes the Convergence Alliance an ideal case for the application of PVE.

1.7. Research questions

All in all, to work on societal challenges and to foster transitions, involving citizen and employees are of great importance. As earlier research presents, the participation of citizens not only empowers individuals but also promotes collective ownership and responsibility in creating a better future for all. The literature about strategy formation and employee participation shows the importance of the involvement of employees in strategic planning. Nevertheless, the complexity and size of the institutions complicate an approachable way of participation. However, literature shows how PVE positively impact the decision-making processes regarding citizen issues. Recognizing and prioritizing the involvement of the key stakeholders is essential in navigating complex challenges and driving positive change at both the organisational and societal levels. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how the use of PVE could foster employee engagement in universities' strategy formation processes. The aim of this master thesis is to gain insights into the valuable impact of involving employees in strategic processes within higher education institutions. Since HEIs show distinct characteristics from other organisational entities, mostly due to their status as professional bureaucracy containing of an operational core with a high level of authority and expertise, this study strives to research the impact of this autonomy on the implementation of PVE within this context compared to the citizen-to-government setting.

Furthermore, with researching this subject, an attempt could be made to the research recommendation of Rana (2015), in which he proposes an empirical test of the relationships between high-involvement work practices and engagement. Besides, future research recommendations of Markey & Townsend (2013) are about the engagement of practice and academics. By designing and performing a PVE in the context of universities' strategy, an attempt at these recommendations could be made. Therefore, the main research question that this thesis seeks to address is:

> *"What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation*
>
> *within strategy formation processes of higher education institutions?"*

This question serves as the guiding compass for the study, delving into the potential benefits and impact of involving employees using PVE in the strategic decision-making processes of higher education institutions. By exploring this question, the study aims to shed light on the significance of employee engagement in for instance driving successful transitions and sustainability initiatives within academic settings, contributing to a broader understanding of how PVE can serve as a valuable tool in shaping effective strategies. Through a comprehensive analysis of the Convergence Alliance case, comprising Delft University of Technology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and Erasmus Medical Centre, the research endeavours to reveal valuable insights that can inform and optimize future strategy formation processes within the context of higher education institutions.

To answer the main research questions, the following sub questions are drafted:

1. *How are higher institution employees currently engaged in strategy formation processes?*
2. *What is the added value of Participatory Value Evaluations in other contexts?*
3. *What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation on employee's engagement within higher education institutions?*
4. *What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation for strategic policymakers within higher education institutions?*

Attempts to answer the research questions will be made by using different methods. To start with, an extensive scoping literature has been conducted to gain insight into the state-of-the-art literature regarding the earlier mentioned key concepts. Subsequently, a second literature review will focus on two previously conducted PVEs and their added value within the citizen-to-government context. However, the main method of the study will be designing and conducting a PVE. To eventually investigate the added value of the method, different interviews will be conducted with employees involved in Convergence, the Convergence Office and strategic development advisers.

1.8. Relevance of the research

This research aims to contribute to both scientific, societal and academic relevance by implementing and evaluating the use of PVE within a public social organisation, specifically focusing on the influence on the strategy formation process within a professional bureaucracy. By introducing the PVE, the study explores a new digital and efficient approach to involving employees in strategic decision-making processes in HEIs. With researching the added value of PVE for HEIs, attempts are being made to assist the academic institutions in developing strategy to evolve their Third Mission planning.

Additionally, the research holds academic relevance for the master's study program in Complex System Engineering and Management. The study aligns with the program's emphasis on complexity, stakeholder analysis, and multi-actor issues, as the PVE method and public participation are integral components of the mandatory courses in the master's curriculum. Therefore, the subject of this proposal matches well the master's content.

The primary focus of this research is to examine how the implementation of PVE is of added value in the strategy formation process of Convergence. The objective is to investigate the effectiveness of PVE in fostering both employee engagement and policy maker satisfaction and shaping inclusive policy advice within the context of universities. By gaining a deeper understanding of employees' preferences and values, the research aims to contribute to more inclusive decision-making processes. Furthermore, the study can provide practical insights to enhance digital participation methods in the academic field.

All in all, this research serves as a living lab, exploring the added value and relevance of utilizing PVE in the context of HEIs. It aims to assess the vital functioning of the network, identify the values and preferences of employees that the board is committed to, and explore the potential for additional idea input.

1.9. Report structure

In the following chapter, Chapter 2, a comprehensive scoping literature will be conducted, addressing literature to identify the state-of-the-art papers concerning participation in strategy formation processes within HEIs to eventually formulate the main research question. Subsequently, Chapter 3 will elaborate on the applied methods in this study. Thereafter, Chapter 4 will present the process of the design of the PVE, including a brief description of the used case. The outcomes of the PVE, the interviews and the literature findings are then described and illustrated in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 consists of the conclusion of the research after which Chapter 7 will present the discussion of the research.

2.

Literature review

This chapter includes an initial exploratory scoping literature review aiming to identify the state-of-the-art papers concerning participation in strategy formation processes within HEIs. Through this review, the gaps in existing literature can be revealed. The chapter begins by a short explanation on how the literature review has been conducted. Secondly, it will provide an overview of the context in which HEIs operate and therefore within which framework the strategy should be developed. This is followed by a discussion on the strategy formation processes of HEIs. Subsequently, the literature review aims to determine the extent and manner in which HEI employees currently participate in strategic formation processes, as well as examining the impact of this employee involvement on employee engagement. Ultimately, this chapter will identify different gaps in the existing literature, which will guide to the creation of the main research question.

2.1. Using a scoping literature

Initial exploratory research indicates a lack of systematic research into the application of a PVE in strategy formation processes of HEIs. Due to this gap, it is recommended to conduct a so-called scoping review (Hanneke et al., 2017). Following the guidelines from the study of Munn et al. (2018), this type of review has been carried out. Scoping reviews are useful when the purpose of the review is to identify knowledge gaps and clarify concepts. Furthermore, they are useful when an aim is to add evidence on different synthesises. Given the initial uncertainty about the available literature on employee involvement within academic strategy formation processes, a scoping review could help to give clear indication of the volume of studies available. Additionally, to clarify the key concepts and definitions of this study, followed by identifying and analysing the knowledge gaps, a scoping review is recommended as well (Munn et al., 2018). On the basis of this review, the main research question could be more supported, leading to the drafting of the sub-questions.

The literature reviews started with an initial search process, in where general search keywords are combined to explore a wide range of sources regarding the research topic. The database Web of Science has mostly been used as search tool, using a combination of the search string: "strategy" AND ("employee" OR "staff) AND ("participat*" OR "involvement" OR "cooperation") AND "higher education". By making use of the asterisk after 'participat', every possible ending was possible.

With this search string, an attempt was made to find any studies on employee involvement in strategy formulation of HEIs. Appendix A presents an overview of the choices within the literature study. The selection criteria of the articles were: 1) it had to be a case within academic institutions, 2) the result needed to be relevant to the main research question, 3) the paper needed to describe strategy processes and 4) the paper of book chapter needed to be fully available. As an additional search strategy, both backward and forward snowballing are used to find even more relevant information. With backward snowballing, one tries to find citations in a paper, usually by searching for relevant keywords within the bibliography. Besides, with forward snowballing one tries to find citations to a paper and thus look for research that built upon the knowledge of a certain paper (Wee & Banister, 2016). Eventually, some iterative searching has been done to clarify several concepts and definitions. This iterative process consisted of the change of some words in the search string but also of adding a few smaller and concreter search strings. The literature was then categorised to create a clear narrative in the literature review section. This also clarified the various gaps in literature.

A significant drawback of conducting a scoping review is that due to the broad nature of the research question, the resulting findings can also be broad (Hanneke et al., 2017). This could require additional research to analyse these findings and derive meaningful conclusions from them. Conducting a scoping review thus requires a considerable amount of work. During this study, this fact was taken into account in the time planning by adding an extra period for categorising all studies. Moreover, another limitation of conducting a scoping review is that within such a review is it not required to evaluate the rigor or quality of the included studies. As is also could be very insightful to read papers from different quality levels within the exploratory phase, this study does not have very specific quality requirements, except for the earlier mentioned selection criteria.

Eventually, 31 studies were reviewed, from which the sub questions of the research were established. Subsequentially, these sub-questions partly can be answered by making use of a case study. The first part of the literature review is about the untangling the complexity of HEIs.

2.2. The complexity of higher education institutions

HEIs can be categorised as civil society organisations, sharing several common characteristics. These characteristics include having a socially relevant mission and objective, relying heavily on national funding rather than pursuing profit, and being accountable to both governments and external stakeholders (Boonstra et al., 2017). When citizens of a society get higher education, it indirectly benefits a whole country by training and educating future generations of professionals who play diverse roles in society. These individuals contribute to the improvement of public life and help shape its direction (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017). However, social organizations, including HEIs, often confront highly complex environments. Research indicates that this complexity arises when the relationship between an organisation and its environment lacks clarity or is multifaceted (Boonstra et al., 2017). Social organisations operate within a dynamic tension among governments, markets, and communities.

Given the continuously moving nature of these relationships, there is no standardised relationship between organisations within this tension and their environment. As illustrated in Figure 1, universities tend to have a close relationship with the government, but the position of social organisations within this triangle is constantly evolving. This positioning not only influences an organisation's strategic decision-making capacity but also reflects its relationships with stakeholders.

Figure 1: The positioning of social organisations (Boonstra et al., 2017)
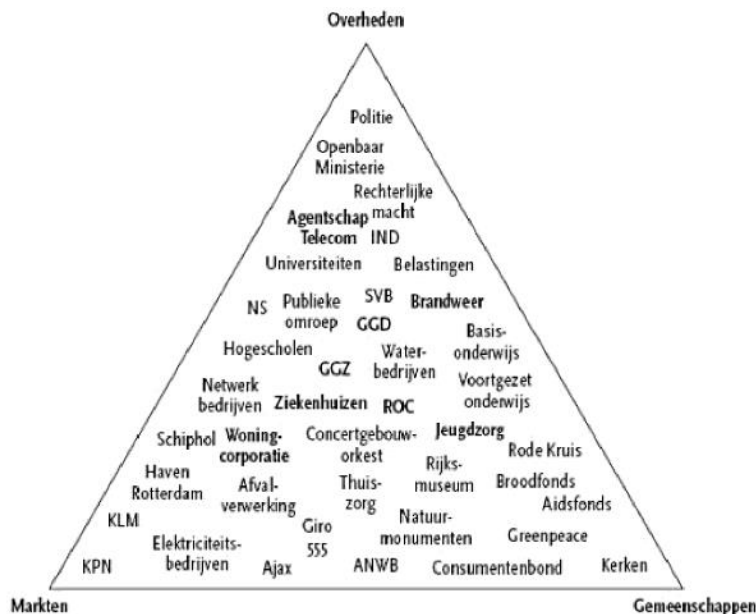
Literature shows multiple characteristics which contribute to the complexity of social organisations. Firstly, there is a diversity in government control. Some actions are stimulated by the government, while other actions need to be protected or even prohibited by law. It is hard to find patterns regarding the choices of how to control the organisations. Moreover, every new management could have different priorities which could change the way of control. Secondly, social organisations must deal with different levels of public governance. For instance, Dutch universities have the obligation to admit students from the European Union because of free movement agreements. Nationally, the Ministry of Education sets rules about the influx of students. On a lower level, municipalities also can set rules concerning for instance student housing. A third characteristic is about the value conflicts. Social organisations often have a lot to do with external parties like municipalities, the government, health institutions and citizens. These external parties differ in interest, which is sometimes even conflicting. As stated by Boonstra et al. (2017), the values and ideals of the parties are important. Because social organisations are closely linked to multiple parties, most of their missions are very generally articulated. Due to these generalities and conflicting interests, the missions provide little guidance and fuzzy visions. The last characteristic is a cause of the general mission and fuzzy visions; the difficult-to-measure results. For instance, only looking at the number of degrees does not directly approach social values like well-being or the future of young adults.

Within the field of social organisations, HEIs can be seen as unique organisations with their own characteristics. Research by Maassen & Potman (1990) characterize HEIs as professional bureaucracies, which distinguish them from most other organisations. Following Mintzberg (1980), an organisation consists of six basic parts: the operating core, the strategic apex, the middle line, the technostructure, the support staff and the organisations' ideology, as illustrated in Figure 2. The strategic apex consists of the owner or director of the organisation and is responsible for the continuity of the organisation by setting goals and developing strategy. The middle line translates these goals and strategy to various departments within the organisation and manages the operating core. The operating core is at the centre of Mintzbergs theory. Results as formulated by the strategic apex will only be realized if the operating core work efficiently and effectively. Next, the technostructure of an organisation concerns the support services which are closely related with the primary processes. Knowledge or skills are needed to fulfil these activities. These activities are often not outsourced. By contrast, the support staff does not directly affect the primary processes and therefore sometimes can be outsourced. Lastly, the ideology of the organisation is about the shared traditions, norms and values of an organisation. It comprises the culture of an organisation with which the organisation could distinguish itself from other organisations.

Figure 2: The six basic parts of an organisation (Mintzberg, 1980)
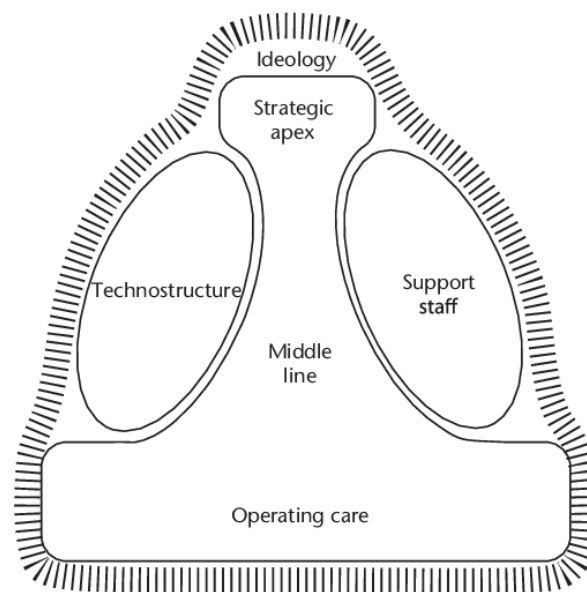
As stated by Mintzberg (1980), depending on the type of organisation, a particular basic part and coordination mechanism are the most important. In the case of HEIs, and thus professional bureaucracies, the knowledge and power lie with the operational core, in where most of the activities are arranged around the experts. The professionals from the operational core have great freedom to shape the work themselves by the standardisation of skills and knowledge. This is also underlined by research of Ruben & Gigliotti (2017), who describe these processes as academic freedom and self-direction. This is underlined by research of Maassen & Potman (1990) and (Fumasoli & Lepori, 2011) as well. They emphasize the autonomy and democracy of HEIs as their main characteristics.

There is limited power at the central level, the strategic apex, and the professionals in the operational core are almost working autonomously, which led to academic freedom and self-direction.

Additionally, some adverse characteristics of HEIs are the problems of coordination, discretion and innovation. Administrators, academics, staff and students have different core values and there is a lot of structural complexity. Often there are multiple and sometimes blurry missions and there are many stakeholders and cultures involved in the organisations. This complicates the implementation of changes and transition planning (Maassen & Potman, 1990; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017). By the ambition of implementing new strategy, these limitations are important consequences. To research the impact of these limitations on strategy formation, it is important to first elaborate on the definitions and characteristics of strategy formation.

So, HEIs primarily differ from other organisational entities due to their unique characteristics as a professional bureaucracy. To a large extent, this also constitutes the complexity of HEIs. Given that one of the main differences between citizen-to-government relations and employee-to-manager relations is related to the degree of autonomy within the operational core, this study will mainly focus on this characteristic and its influence on the outcomes of the PVE. This focus contributes to literature by involving a relatively autonomous group in a consultation process, as opposed to citizens who are largely reliant on government decisions. Since administrative decisions within HEIs often are about strategic choices, this research will delve more into the concept of strategy formation and the participatory trajectories within these formation processes.

2.3. The concept of strategy formation

Strategy is important because it helps bring people together and coordinate their activities. Without a strategy, an organization would be like a group of individuals working separately. Strategy ensures that everyone works together towards the organisation's goals and objectives, focusing their efforts in the right direction (Bidemi et al., 2018). The development, determination and implementation of an organisations' strategy can be referred to in different term, mostly depending on the context in which it is used. Firstly, strategy can be defined as *realized* patterns in streams of decisions or actions (Hardy et al., 1983). According to Hardy et al. (1983), strategy can also just form rather than be formulated in an earlier stage, named as emergent strategy. As this research tries to answer a question which relates to the process of strategy formation, the focus will be on deliberate strategy, as illustrated in Figure 3. Deliberate strategy refers to a strategic approach in which an organisation proactively and deliberately develops plans and actions to achieve specific goals and objectives. It involves a clear and deliberate direction based on different analysis and evaluation of internal and external factors. Fumasoli & Lepori (2011) add that for a pattern to be identified as a strategy, it must be acknowledged and embraced by members of the organisation as a collective pursuit towards achieving organisational goals.

Figure 3: Various types of strategies (Hardy et al., 1983)
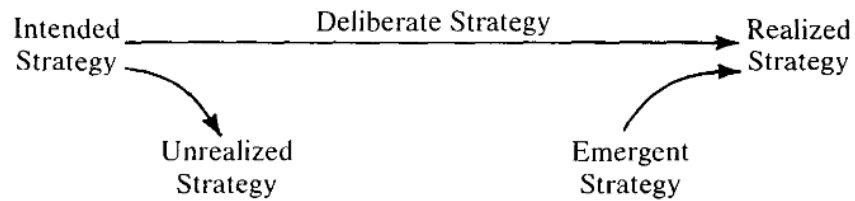
Next to the various types of strategy according to Hardy et al. (1983), Chaffee (1985) describes three different strategy models. She mentions the linear, adaptive and interpretive model, which are not necessarily independent from each other. In linear strategy, the administrative layer of an organisation has considerable capacity to change the organisation. In adaptive strategy, the organisation and its components adjust, either proactively or in response to changes of consumer preferences. The main assumption underlying interpretive strategy is that the reality is socially constructed, the organisation is an open system, and that the organisation is made up by cooperative agreements made by stakeholders with a free will. According to Maassen & Potman (1990), the interpretive strategy model fits the best the characteristics of HEIs. In summary, this leads to the following definition of strategy in the context of higher education institutes:

Strategy in HEIs represents realized patterns of decisions and actions. It relies on the pursuit of organisational goals, acknowledges the socially constructed nature of reality, recognizes the organisation as an open system, and emphasizes the collective acceptance made by stakeholders acting with their own free will.

To come to a specific strategy, multiple processes are needed. The strategy formation process has several definitions according to literature. The most commonly used term for the process of strategy formation is the strategic planning process, which also has several definitions. After conducting a literature review, Akyel et al. (2012) define the strategic planning process as:

"*Strategic planning is described as generating the future mission and vision of the institution in a dynamic environment and changing surroundings, determining strategic objectives and measurable targets, measuring the performances by predetermined indicators and monitoring and evaluating this process. It is a participative approach which enables the budget of an institution to be in accordance with the aims and targets in the strategic plan from a forward-looking point of view and gives priority to resource allocations.*"

Bidemi et al. (2018) presume that by acting through strategic planning, an organisation can predict changes in the environment and act pro-actively. The level of involvement of different employees in strategic planning greatly affects how effective the strategy will be. When there is a focus on including everyone in the planning process, it significantly improves the chances of achieving the desired outcomes. It is important to involve all parts of the organisation in the planning to make sure the plan includes everyone and increases the likelihood of successful implementation. As the strategic planning process also enhances the evaluation and control of the strategy, this research narrows down on the formation of the strategic planning, as part of the strategic planning process.

2.4. Strategy processes in higher education

As described in section 2.2, HEIs are professional bureaucracies, granting significant autonomy to their academic staff, the operating layer of the institutions. In the light of these characteristics, it is widely posited that the internal governance of HEIs primarily rely on shared decision-making processes, wherein the central administration has limited influence over organisational activities (Fumasoli & Lepori, 2011). Nonetheless, within the past few decades, a shift has emerged towards strengthening the role of the administrative layer and other governing bodies, resulting in a reduction of the power of the operating layer and a decrease in state control over organisational decisions (Stensaker & Vabø, 2013). Despite these changes, to make sure strategic processes in HEIs still succeed, it requires a detailed look at these processes and figuring out how the operational part, which still has a lot of autonomy, can be actively involved in making strategic plans.

The most important areas of strategy making in HEIs according to Hardy et al. (1983) are, next to the elaboration of the organisations' fundamental mission, the system input, the means to carry out the mission, the structure and methods of governance and the many ways to support the mission. The input of the system is amongst others about hiring academic staff, the maximum number of student enrolments and raising external funds. The ability to perform the mission is partly determined by means as the construction of campus buildings and facilities, and the purchase of research equipment. The structure and methods of governance consist of the design of the hierarchy within the HEIs and all kind of regulations regarding promotion and hiring. Lastly, the means to support the mission are closely related to every aspect around the HEIs support system, which includes everything from computers and alumni offices to printing facilities.

As stated by Hardy et al. (1983), due to the requirement of specialised expertise within HEIs, many of the decisions can only be made with the involvement of professors. Furthermore, many important decisions emerge from collective and interactive HEI processes. The collective processes can be split into four models of decision making: the collegiality model, the political model, the garbage can and the rational analysis. Within the collegiality model for HEIs, decisions are being made based on common goals and objectives for the organisation, but by a community of individuals and groups who may have different roles and specialities.

Because the decision making in this way is led by a common interest, the decision making is by consensus. As this wide consensus can be seen as unrealistic within HEIs, the political model might be a more realistic one. According to the political model, there exist differences between interest groups which cannot be easily bridged and solved by consensus. Therefore, political instruments are being used to serve their self-interest. Decision making tends to become political when the power position of particular groups is being threatened, for instance due to a shortage of resources, which also intensifies competition among the groups. When there is enough space to accommodate different goals, mostly in environments with a commonly shared mission, the collegiality model is more likely. However, neither of these two models will constantly dominate the decision-making processes. Some goals will be easily accepted by the common interest, while other goals will show clear behaviour of self-interest. So, in most situations, the collegiality and political model co-exist.

The garbage can is a third model which can be used to describe the processes of decision-making in HEIs. The model proposes that decision-making occurs when a collection of choices, problems, solutions, and decision makers converges. The goals are often unclear and the match between problems and solutions goes randomly. The model describes a chaotic reality of decision making; in place of the common- or self-interest from the previous two models, the garbage can more or less show the possible uninterest of organizations. Again, some of the decisions are not that important to anyone, but most of the time these decisions are not the central ones. When looking at other decisions, some might be important to some people while others may fit more in the area of the garbage can. The uninterest of the garbage can will, just like the common interest and self-interest, not dominating the decision-making process.

Lastly, the fourth model is about analytic processes. In here, a structured and systematic approach is being used to select the best alternative. The involvement of calculations and analysis of data is based on the belief on the objectivity of the decision-making process. In professional bureaucracies, individuals often use the analysis for their own interest to influence decisions. Furthermore, the rational analysis is an important model in HEIs for the directors, who often lack in direct knowledge regarding the case, to support their argumentation in decision-making. The analysis may also serve as a means of legitimizing decisions, communication, and persuasion. The rational analysis model can appear in the three other models. In the collegiality model, the analysis can be used to gain common understanding about a theme and to communicate this clearly to the outsiders. In contrast to the collegiality model, using the rational analysis in a political situation is often to convince the opposition. Likewise, the garbage can may be using rational analysis by focusing on one of the four streams. Due to the low participation- and interest levels in a garbage can situation, the errors and biased in analysis may be unseen.

As stated by Hardy et al. (1983), the decision-making process in HEIs can be characterized as a combination of the collegiality and political process, influenced by elements of the garbage can model and rational analysis. It is likely that a wide consensus within a HEI is unrealistic, due to the different interests for instance between the autonomous operational core and the more dependent support staff.

Nevertheless, fostering some level of consensus within the context of professional bureaucracies remains important for successful strategy implementation.

Given that the collegiality model is based on a decision making by consensus, employees actively need to participate to have their say on certain topics. To ensure the participation of the operational core in here, their involvement in designing the participatory process is essential. When making use of a PVE, this entails involving HEI employees within the design sessions to ensure the successful integration of the consultation within the organisation.

2.5. Rationales and challenges of employee participation

According to Markey & Townsend (2013), people typically want to participate in decisions that directly affect them. The term "participation" in this research will be defined as follows:

"*The degree to which a person participated or continually engages in organisational activities*" (Allen et al., 1997; Wagner et al., 1997, in Putseys, Steen & Hondeghem, 2003).

The participation of employees in strategy formation processes of HEIs stimulates the strategy-as-practice approach (Aldraci et al., 2009). This approach focuses on how strategy is actually carried out within the social and cognitive processes of organisations, rather than viewing strategy as an (intended) formal plan developed by the strategic apex. It emphasizes the active involvement of employees and other actors in shaping and carrying out strategy (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

A study conducted by Gallie et al. (2017) examines the relationship between organisational participation and organisational commitment, highlighting the positive impact of increased organisational participation on commitment levels. A study by Rana (2015) also emphasizes the positive effects of organisational participation on employee engagement, which lead to several positive organisational outcomes and employee well-being. In addition to organizational participation, the study of Gallie et al. (2017) also investigates task discretion as a form of participation and finds that both types of participation are associated with higher job satisfaction. Interestingly, the study reveals that task discretion has particular benefits for affective psychological well-being, while organisational participation plays a crucial role in fostering organisational commitment. These two forms of participation can be viewed as complementary methods of direct participation, which refers to the capacity of employees to personally influence decision-making at work on a task or organisational level. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to enhance opportunities for direct participation, thereby increasing employee influence across various organisational levels. It suggests that promoting direct participation, in its broader sense, is crucial for any policy initiative aimed at improving work quality.

Promoting direct participation or involving employees can be beneficial in designing a successful strategy (Segev et al., 2014).

Following 26 HEIs in Europe, cooperation with the academic staff, the operational core, is one of the most important factors in the strategic change process, especially at technical and specialist universities (Stensaker et al., 2014). The participation of employees and thus professionals in strategy dilemmas increase loyalty towards the organisation, legitimizes motivation among the practitioners and raises many new ideas due to the competence and expertise of employees (Tavakoli et al., 2017). The gathering of this knowledge can be compared with a controlling tool, which lowers the need to monitor after the changes have been made. Furthermore, a literature review by Putseys, Steen and Hondeghem (2003) shows how multiple researchers connect the creation of support with the participation of employees. When employees are fully informed, can think along and can decide during changing processes, this will lead to a feeling of ownership of the results. Subsequently, this sense of ownership fosters reduced resistance and accelerated acceptance of changes within the organisation. This can be attributed to the increased knowledge and understanding that employees gain regarding organisational activities and the subject matter they are being questioned about (Koch et al., 2019). Besides, employee participation can also lead to an increase in their creative capabilities and adaptive skills.

These rationales for employee participation correspond to the three rationales for citizen participation in public policy, which are instrumental, substantive and normative (Mouter et al., 2021a; Stirling, 2006). The instrumental rationale is about public support, the restoration of public trust and the need for participation in rapid transitions. The substantive rationale is about better results; how to improve the quality of the outcomes of the decision-making process. Here, new information and new perspectives could cause these better results. The normative rationale is about what is 'the right thing to do', in governmental settings this rationale is often about the democratic ideal. It could be further explored how these three rationales in the field of science and technology studies can be applied to the case of Convergence.

It should be emphasized that participation also has several challenges. According to Jäske (2019), who did a study on the influence of participation on perceived legitimacy at the local level in Finland, the introducing of participative innovations is not a straightforward solution for enhancing the legitimacy of local governments. It is important to consider the level of awareness among citizens regarding the available participation opportunities. Furthermore, the type of participation employed is crucial, with *discursive participation* yielding the most significant effects on procedural fairness. Discursive participation involves active citizen engagement in the political decision-making process through public discussions and idea exchange. It goes beyond voting in elections, emphasizing inclusive and constructive conversations where diverse perspectives are valued. Methods like citizen panels and deliberative polls are used to gather a range of opinions, explore conflicts, and develop jointly supported solutions.

These findings are consistent with the findings of Brännmark & Holden (2013), who researched employee participation within organisations. They, for example, also emphasize the significance of specific designs of participation.

However, their study highlights that while structured participation opportunities can offer benefits in terms of employee engagement, they also pose the potential risk of increased workload and role overload, which may counteract some of the positive effects. It needs to be further researched which possible designs of employee participation works in settings of HEIs.

2.6. Rationales of enhancing employee engagement

Employee involvement is considered an antecedent to employee engagement, which in turn has various implications for well-being and organisational performance. In a literature review conducted by Motyka (2018) on employee engagement, it was noted that different terms are used interchangeably to describe work-related engagement, such as "employee engagement" and "work engagement." Based on the findings of Motyka (2018), this study will adopt the definition proposed by Schaufeli et al. (2002, p. 74), which defines employee engagement as follows:

"*Employee or work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor (e.g., being highly energetic), dedication (e.g., being highly involved in work) and absorption (e.g., being highly concentrated in work).*"

Several human resource management (HRM) strategies can contribute to enhancing employee engagement. These strategies include improving job design to provide motivating job resources, implementing job rotation and changes to challenge employees and promote motivation, learning, and professional development (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Leadership also plays a crucial role in fostering employee engagement, particularly through transformational leadership that provides a clear vision, inspires and motivates employees, offers intellectual challenges, and demonstrates interest in employee needs (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Employee involvement programs, which aim to encourage diverse perspectives and ideas, can positively impact employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. These programs have been found to increase job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee morale, and productivity (Attridge, 2009) Additionally, effective communication plays a critical role in the success of employee involvement initiatives by facilitating a two-way flow of information and feedback between management and the operational core (Grawitch et al., 2006).

A study by Rana (2015) shows the relationship between high involvement work practices (HIWPs) and employee engagement. The HIWPs can be categorized into four core components known as PIRK: power, information, reward and knowledge and are designed to enhance employees' skills, motivation, access to information and empowerment, illustrated in Figure 4 (Guthrie, 2001). Rana (2015) stresses that further research is needed to empirically examine the relationships found.

Figure 4: High-involvement work practices (HIWPs) and employee engagement (Rana, 2015)
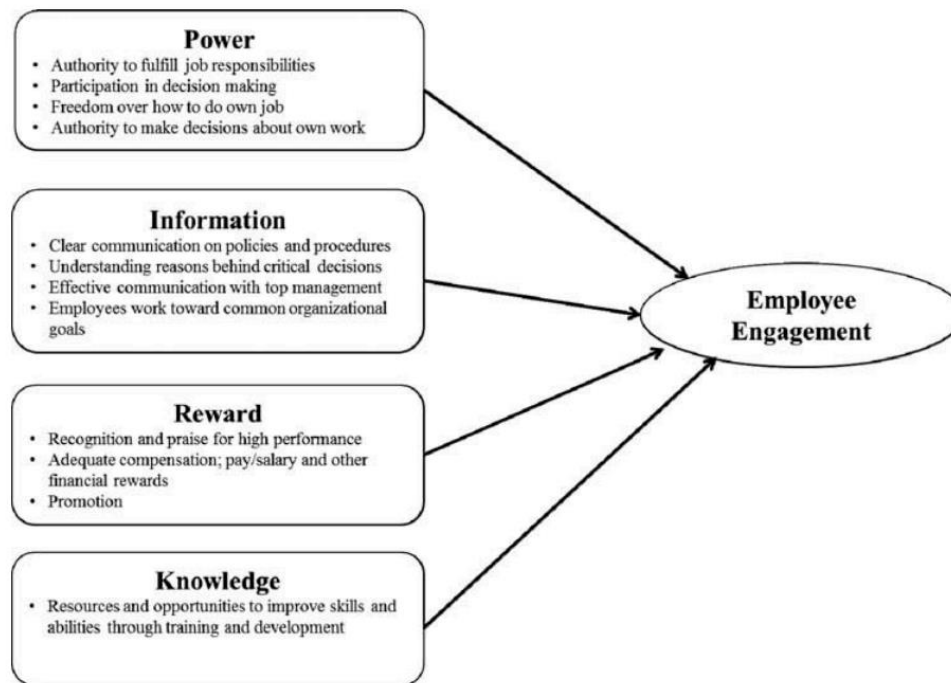
2.7. Employee participation in strategy processes of HEIs

Nowadays, there are many forms of participation among employees. According to Markey & Townsend (2013), it is key that managers are well-trained in understanding how to capture and use the voice of employees. Furthermore, the policy processes need to include dialogues between employers, employees and managers. When HEIs pay more attention to their communication through formal and informal means regarding the strategy making, it will lead to a greater degree of involvement of their employees and acceptation of the strategy (Aldraci et al., 2009; Fumasoli & Lepori, 2011).

Markey & Townsend (2013) emphasize the critical role of the context: what may work in one organisation will not necessarily work in another. As researched by Fumasoli & Lepori (2011), when a strategy is not endorsed by the operational core of the HEI, the strategy will be fragile and causes a negative impact on the HEIs capability to innovate. The determination of the amount of delegation to the academic core, relative to the strategic apex, depends on specific characteristics of the HEIs. As this research involves a strategy formation process in Dutch HEIs, it is important to explore the context of participation within strategy formation processes in HEIs. In the research of Stensaker & Vabø (2013), some of the researched universities provided details on how their participation within their strategic plans were organised. After publishing such details in their strategic plans, an often-made implicit assumption is that their ways of participation of students and staff have led to joint agreements and shared goals regarding the content of the strategy.

Nevertheless, there is little literature about specifically *how* to involve employees in the specific context of strategy formation of HEIs, and even less on how effective the different participatory tools are. And, as mentioned above, if the HEIs involve their employees, often wrong assumptions are being made regarding the shared vision of these employees. This again demonstrates the complexity of employee participation and the need to structure the different ways of participation and the corresponding effectiveness. However, the literature about participatory approaches for governmental issues has been more developed yet. A now commonly used participatory method in civil issues is the so-called "Participatory Value Evaluation". Moreover, the development of citizen participation already has a lot of literature around stakeholder engagement and its effectiveness. It remains to be investigated whether the methods and frameworks of citizen participation can be directly applied to employee participation. A study conducted by Heijnen (2020) has already examined the distinctions between implementing PVE in a citizen-to-government context versus its application within a corporate environment. The research proposes four primary ways in which PVE can be utilized within a company setting:

1. Using PVE as a convenient means to share knowledge, experience, and preferences.
2. Using PVE as a mechanism for constructing an accessible knowledge repository.
3. Using PVE as a methodology to gain insights into the effects of different choices, thereby facilitating decision-making processes.
4. Using PVE as a medium to gather information from multiple departments and teams.

Therefore, employees recognize the potential benefits of implementing PVE in terms of organisational efficiency and information flow. As Heijnen (2020) focused on a single case study involving an energy grid operator, further research is needed to determine the applicability of the proposals in the academic environment and how this method influences employees' perception of engagement.

2.8. Participation in the Dutch Governmental agencies

The involvement of participation surrounding the decision-making processes of the Dutch Government increasingly takes place by executing PVEs. With this method, participants virtually get the chance to step into the shoes of the decision-makers and need to decide about the same issues the policymakers need to decide on (Mouter et al., 2019). Involving participatory approaches as a government leads to more legitimate policy decisions, and it will also decrease resistance to decisions because the public gets the opportunity to input their opinion on the strategic plan instead of solely participating during election periods (Edelenbos, Domingo, Klok, & van Tatenhove, 2006).

During a PVE, participants are confronted with the policy dilemmas of decision-makers. They will see several policy options and the impact of these options. Choosing one of the options will always face a constraint, just as in reality. By using this method, large and diverse groups can participate due to digital entry barriers are low. Citizens can participate regardless of time, location, or physical presence (Mouter et al., 2021a). Furthermore, in a PVE two types of participants are often used: a paid panel to generate representative results and a group of participants in which anyone interested can participate.

The panel can be specialised on a topic due to their job of education whereas the open consultation group can gather new local insights for the policymakers. That these two different groups will provide a lot of information that has already turned out in the performed PVEs.

In the analysis of earlier conducted PVEs, several benefits and added value of using PVE can be identified. This study focuses on analysing two recently published reports on PVE projects. Firstly, research of Mouter et al. (2021b) examines the effective participation of citizens from Utrecht through PVE deployment. The study aims to align with five stakeholder goals: representation, low fatigue, usefulness, awareness, and meaningfulness. To assess whether the goals are achieved, the goals about awareness and meaningfulness are questioned in the PVE consultation and the goals representation, low fatigue and usefulness are questioned in interviews with civil servants. Furthermore, the representation could also be checked by analysing the descriptive statistics of the PVE. The results, as shown in Table 1, indicate that goals 1, 2, and 5 are fully met, while goals 3 and 4 are only partially met.

During the interviews with civil servants, it was revealed that the goal of 'representation' was achieved using PVE. The civil servants noted that PVE allowed citizens who typically do not participate in offline participatory approaches to get involved. They mentioned that the anonymity provided by PVE created a safe environment, encouraging more diverse participation.

Furthermore, the goal of 'low fatigue' was fully met as reported by the civil servants. They explained that the time investment per participant in PVE was significantly lower compared to offline meetings. The multiple tasks involved in organising offline meetings make them time-consuming, which is not the case with PVE. In a PVE, the preparation process does not require all these activities, resulting in much less time and effort. Additionally, the entry barriers of PVE for citizens are low as well, with participants needing only 20 to 30 minutes to complete the evaluation, regardless of their time or location (Mouter et al., 2021a).

Additionally, concerning the goal of 'awareness', the study found that 60 percent of the participants reported that they learned more about the choices the municipality has to make. Additional research shows that gaining insights into the benefits and drawbacks of policies, as well as a better understanding of their complexity, resulted in participants showing more sympathy and acceptance for the different decisions made by the government (Mouter et al., 2021a).

Moreover, the assessment of 'meaningfulness' of the PVE was conducted within the PVE itself. Among the participants, 55 percent thought that applying PVE is a good method for involving citizens in the specific subject, whereas 16 percent disagreed with this perspective. 68 percent of the participating citizens believed that the municipality should use PVE more frequently, 10 percent did not agree upon this statement.

Finally, the goal 'usefulness' was fully achieved0, as the insights of the PVE aligned with the preferences of citizens who were already in contact with the municipality. Additionally, the PVE generated a lot of qualitative information, providing civil servants with valuable insights into the underlying motivations of citizens that drive their preferences.

Table 1: Goals PVE within government-to-citizen context (Mouter et al., 2021b).

Goal	Description	Who is questioned	Goal accomplished
1) Representation	Enables the involvement of participants who normally do not participate	Civil servants	Fully
2) Low Fatigue	Minimal time commitment required for civil servants	Civil servants	Fully
3) Awareness	Promote awareness among citizens	Citizens	Partly
4) Meaningfulness	Citizens should experience the participation as meaningful	Citizens	Partly
5) Usefulness	Results should provide useful information for decision-making	Civil servants	Fully

In addition, complementary to the five goals, the civil servants also mention the importance of the bidirectional flow of information between policy makers and citizen in PVE. The PVE provides a platform for policy makers to communicate their choice tasks to citizens, who, in turn, can advise the municipality by participating. At the end of the process, civil servants share how the advice was utilized during a session where citizens can reflect on the results and conclusions drawn by the municipality. This two-way flow of information is seen as an added value of PVE.

The second report is about a PVE conducted in the municipality Súdwest-Fryslân (Spruit & Mouter, 2020). According to the participants, they appreciated the level of involvement and the clarity of the information presented. However, they also expressed that they did not receive many new insights and felt that certain aspects were missing from the consultation. Nonetheless, they acknowledged the value of the absence of suggestive questions during the process.

Finally, research by Mouter et al. (2021a) also mentioned the benefit of the PVE that participants feel more valued by the government as they experience a strong sense of inclusion through sharing their opinions. On the other hand, a drawback of using PVE for participation, as observed in the case of Convergence, is that the objectives of the evaluation should satisfy a broad range of stakeholders. When scoping down the focus on participants to for instance employees or students, it could be further researched whether the preparation time with stakeholders could still be minimalized and still realize benefits.

2.9. Participatory Value Evaluation in an organizational setting

In conclusion, existing literature about strategy formation and employee participation highlights the positive effects of employee involvement and communication on employee engagement, which in turn leads to improved well-being and organisational outcomes. A still underexposed opportunity and gap in the literature is to make use of a PVE in organisational settings and its empirical effect on employee engagement. Furthermore, previous conducted PVE studies present the positive outcomes regarding PVEs on representation, awareness, meaningfulness, usefulness and low fatigue.

Therefore, conducting research among a diverse group of employees could shed light on the perceived value of specific participation approaches and their impact on fostering a sense of engagement and hence improving the strategic formation processes. This research could add scientific value by empirically researching the effect of employee involvement on the strategic formation process of HEIs. A conceptual model of this research is presented in Figure 5, with the focus on the outlined part. Since the research of Rana (2015) also mentioned clear communication and understanding of reasons behind decisions as antecedents of employee engagement, and PVE has the possibility to also function as a communication tool, this possible relation is included in the conceptual model.

Figure 5: Conceptual model which illustrates the literature gaps of this study.
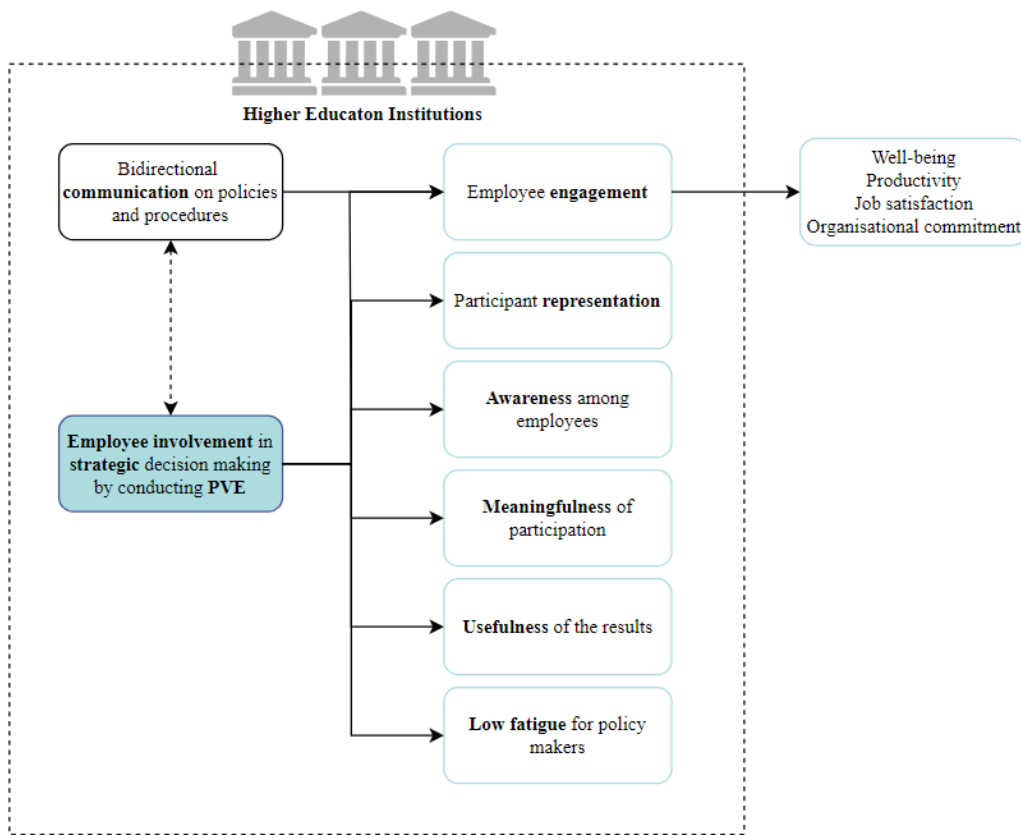
To investigate the benefits of using PVE in an organisational setting, it needs to be explored whether the benefits of PVE in a governmental setting can be adopted one-to-one. Bottlenecks here could be the differences in the complex environments, the possible difference in approaching the target group and different interests regarding the outcomes of the evaluation. This leads to the following research question:

"What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation

within strategy formation processes of higher education institutions?"

With answering this main research question, an attempt is being made to study the research recommendations of Markey & Townsend (2013) ad Rana (2015), by trying to engage practice and academics in an empirical way and to seek for the relation between employee involvement and employee engagement.

To answer the main research question, the following sub-questions have been drawn up:

1. *How are higher institution employees currently engaged in strategy formation processes?*
2. *What is the added value of Participatory Value Evaluations in other contexts?*
3. *What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation on employee's engagement within higher education institutions?*
4. *What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation for strategic policymakers within higher education institutions?*

The first sub-question is essential to gain a deeper understanding of the participatory methods currently used in HEIs and how they differ from the PVE. Answering this question will provide insights into the benefits and potential adjustments that could increase the effectiveness of PVE, compared to other methods.

Additionally, the second question is crucial as it explores whether there are significant differences between the relationship's citizen-to-government and employees-to-manager that may affect the effectiveness of the PVE. Understanding these differences will help to assess the appropriateness of using PVE in the context of employees within HEIs.

Lastly, the third and fourth sub-questions are crucial because they will offer valuable insights into the benefits of using PVE for both the employees and the strategic policy makers. Understanding how PVE benefits these key stakeholders will help to determine its overall impact on the strategy formation processes in the context of HEIs.

3.

Methodology

In this section, the approach of the research will be explained. As the main research question will be answered by using a case, the qualitative research approach will be further explained. Secondly, the case exploratory methods will be described. Moreover, the approach consists of an iteration of the literature gaps to establish the objectives of the research. Furthermore, sub-questions and their methods and data collection will be formulated, which will be used to reach the objectives and answer the main research question. Lastly, the different research choices which will be made will be presented in a research flow diagram in which the visualization of the structure of the research project can be seen.

3.1. Research approach

The research approach of this study is mostly exploratory. Yet little is known about how to involve employees in the process of strategy formation processes of HEIs, and how this involvement may lead to employee engagement. Therefore, this study is established to explore, discover and gain insight into the subject of participatory trajectories within strategy formation processes. Because another aim of this research is to understand and interpret the human behaviour regarding the use of the PVE within this context, the study also adopts an interpretive approach. This approach helps to understand the subjective experiences of the participants and the policy makers of the consultation. Furthermore, the study also adopts the abductive approach since the PVE is applied based on previous successes in governmental decisions. Therefore, it can be assumed that applying the PVE in the context of this study might also lead to a higher feeling of involvement and thus foster the feeling of engagement. These explanations are further explored in this study using different research methods.

Since the study is mostly exploratory, using a case and conducting empirical research could lead to more insight in the added value of PVE within the defined context, which has been examined in the literature review in Chapter 2. Subsequently, the case study consists of PVE as a main method, and interviews as supporting and deepening methods. By combining the iterative design process, stakeholder involvement, and the inclusion of complementary interviews, this research aims to comprehensively investigate the potential benefits and challenges of the PVE approach within the context of HEIs.

A visual overview of the research approach is presented in Figure 6. The following paragraphs will further elaborate on the above-mentioned methodologies. Firstly, the case study as an umbrella term will be presented.

Figure 6: Research approach visualised.
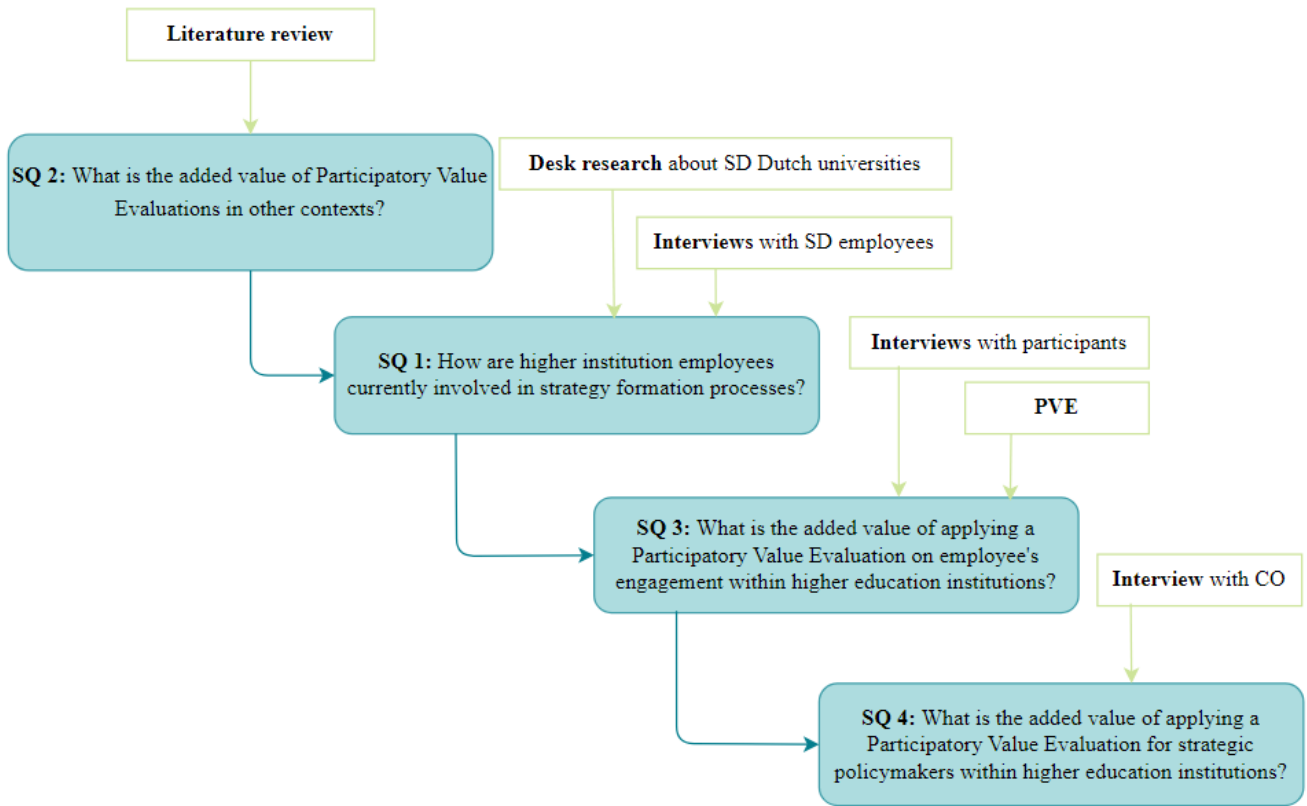
3.2. Case study research

The choice for using a case study is based on the fact that there is yet little empirical information available regarding the effect of using a PVE in strategy formation processes of HEIs, in which evaluating the use of this method on a particular case could gain more insights. This information gap requires empirical research and questioning methods, such as interviews or a PVE. The face validity questions of a PVE and the a posteriori interviews will also contribute to the evaluation of the literature review.

The case was bounded to focus on the strategy formation process of Convergence. The description of the case can be found in Chapter 4. With Convergence as a case, the literature gap could be explored by using a single case study. In this research, the case study approach of Yin (2012) has been used. Yin (2012) stated that there are multiple situations in which case studies can serve as an appropriate method to address a problem situation. Cases could for instance be used to answer descriptive questions or to investigate and understand complex issues in real-world settings (Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2012).

In this study, it will be investigated whether using PVE is of added value in the case of the strategy formation of Convergence. Furthermore, this research considers a real-life phenomenon to identify the added value of a scientific method. With a case study, it is possible to collect real-life data and study in-depth the events, involved actors and agreements made.

Different types of case studies can be distinguished. Firstly, a case study can consist of single or multiple cases. There are a few situations where only one case may suffice (Yin, 2012). As the case of Convergence is both unique as revelatory, it can be affirmed that the choice for a single case study is justifiably (Swanborn, n.d.; Yin, 2012). The case can be seen as unique, because the collaboration between the three institutions is the only collaboration in the Netherlands between HEIs and an academic medical institution. Furthermore, the case is also revelatory as the researcher of this study has access to the staff of the three institutions by unique exception.

Within a case study, it should also be determined whether the case is holistic or embedded. In an embedded case study, there are multiple units of analysis within the case, whereas a holistic case study examines the case as a single entity. As this study is about a single organization but with different analysing units, it is an embedded single-case study. An overview of the different types of case studies can be seen in Figure 7.

The analysing units of a case study refers to a specific entity, group, organization or situation that is being analysed within the study. It can refer to an individual, a team, a department, a company, a community or any other relevant component of the case. The choice of the analysing units enables this study to gather necessary data and relevant aspects to generate insights corresponding to the strategic formation process of Convergence and the corresponding perspectives of their employees.

Figure 7: Designs for case studies (Yin, 2012)

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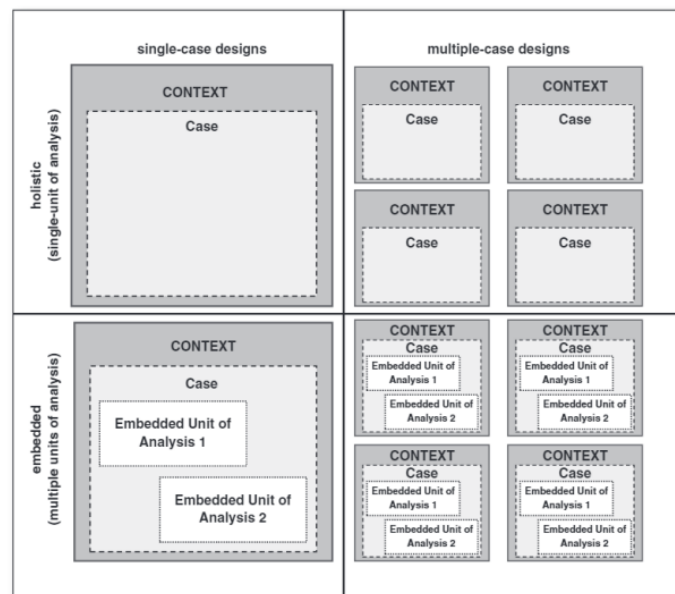
Since the PVE is conducted across three institutions with multiple departments, this study consists of multiple analysing units. The population for this case study comprises employees from the three institutions that have been either currently or previously involved in Convergence. These units are selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the possible differences of the departments and institutions regarding their perspectives on participatory trajectories within strategy formation processes. After executing the PVE, multiple analyses could be applied, which are explained at paragraph 3.7. A visual overview of these units can be seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Units of analysis Convergence
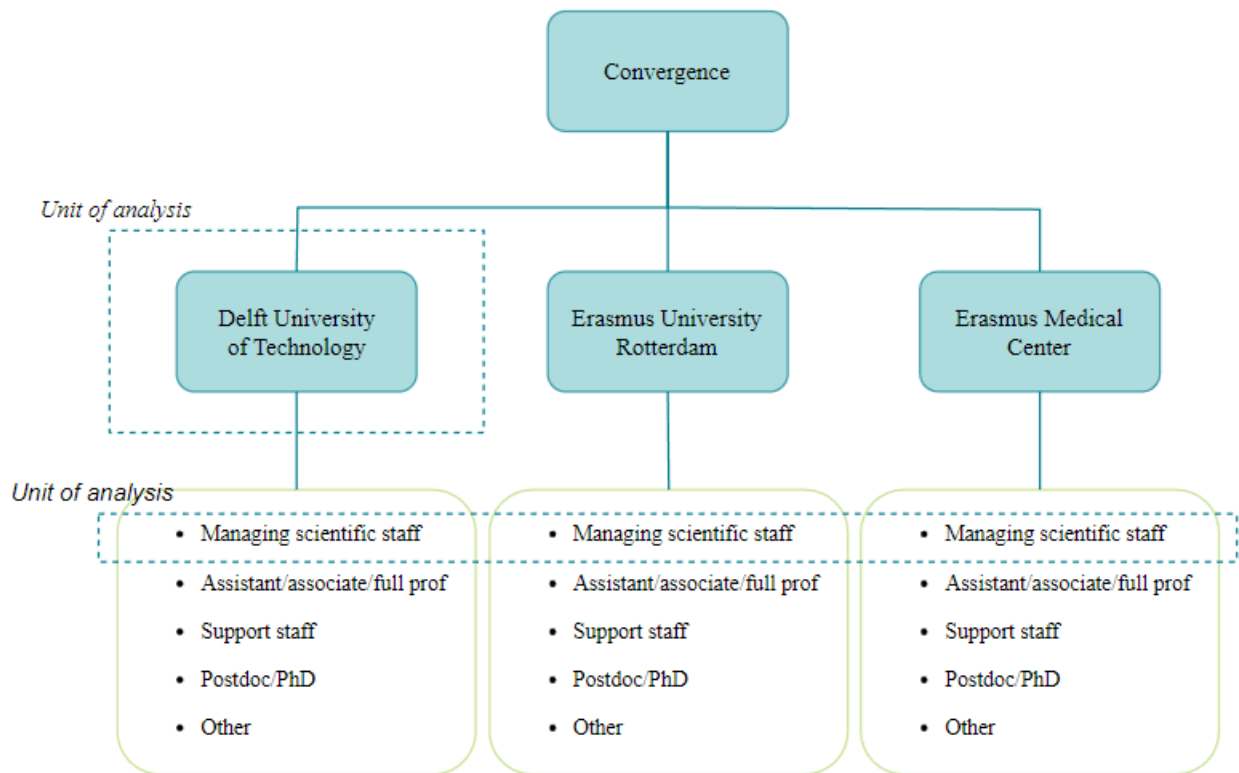
To provide a comprehensive overview of the case, it is encouraged to use multiple methods to collect and analyse data in a case study (Harrison et al., 2017). Methods that will be used during this research are conducting a PVE including a design session, desk research and interviews which are often employed as case study methods.

3.3. Participatory Value Evaluation

Given that the PVE is a relatively new method, and only used a few times within organisational context, the initial step in initiating a PVE was to ensure that the strategic development department understood the method and her rationales. This was accomplished through an interactive workshop conducted in collaboration with employees from Populytics and the strategic development department of the TU Delft and Convergence.

The objective of this workshop was to create support for the method so the PVE phase of the study can proceed smoothly. Furthermore, the workshop aimed to provide insights into the perceived added value of using PVE in a university context. Subsequent to this workshop, the PVE design process could started. The design process is focused on putting the knowledge gaps of Convergence into words. Moreover, the PVE is established to answer the following research question:

> *SQ 3: What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation on employee's engagement within higher education institutions?*

The design process

To evaluate the effect of applying a PVE in the academic context on employee engagement, firstly a design process is needed to come to valuable questions to ask the employees within the consultation. A design session, together with the Convergence Office and employees from the three different institutions took place. The duration of the session was about 2 hours and there were 10 employees actively designing, together with two researchers from Populytics. Further explanation of the (way to the) design session can be found in Chapter 4.

The data of the design session was gathered by filling in blank spaces on two A1 posters, which served as possible designs for the PVE, see Appendix D. Following the design session and the collection of valuable input, the final version of the Participatory Value Evaluation (PVE) was established. A comprehensive overview of the design process is presented in Figure 38, as provided in Appendix C.

Data gathering

Next, the design could be imported into the online platform Wevaluate, which is developed by Populytics. This platform stands out as the sole platform capable of incorporating various choice tasks of a PVE. It provides access to playfully layered information through both mobile and desktop devices. Moreover, the online tool exhibits scalability, allowing for broad participation in the consultation, extending to the entire Netherlands if desired. For the PVE, the sampling method used is called voluntary response sampling, which is classified as non-probability sampling. The sample consists of people who selected themselves into the survey. It is unclear whether the sample will be representative for the population, due to the lack of information regarding the population.

The PVE was launched on the 23rd of June 2023 and closed the 9th of July 2023. The consultation could be accessed through the following link: www.convergence.raadpleging.net. The dissemination of the consultation link to employees within Convergence has been undertaken by the Convergence Office, who have distributed it via email with the request to share it among colleagues. Furthermore, the researcher has utilized her LinkedIn network to promote the consultation through a post that has garnered significant attention and multiple shares. The population of interest for this study consists of employees affiliated with Convergence. Unfortunately, there is a lack of sufficient information regarding the precise number of employees involved within the Convergence Alliance.

Hence, sufficient respondent participation is crucial to ensure the legitimacy and validity of the results. To increase the validity and legitimacy of the PVE results, a few interviews are conducted to discuss the method with participants.

3.4. Interviews

As can be seen in Figure 6, interviews will be conducted during three different moments in the study. All three interviews use a semi-structured approach, in which a combination of predefined questions and flexibility for more in-depth conversations, see Appendix B. The structure is needed in order to compare and analyse the answers of the three institutions. However, due to the possibility of a more in-depth conversation, possible new relevant knowledge or ideas can be shared. The interviews with the strategic development employees and the PVE participants took around fifteen minutes. The interview with the Convergence Office took around 45 minutes. Prior to the interviews, the interviewees are asked to fill out an informed consent form. By completing this document, the respondent conforms their willingness to anonymously participate in the research and their agreement to be cited. Since the interviews only take fifteen minutes and there will only be seven interviews, the interviews can be analysed by using Word and summarising and coding the different questions.

Interviews with employees from the strategic development departments
Since there is little literature available about the advantages and disadvantages of different participatory methods within strategic formation processes of HEIs and what different methods exists, interviews with strategic development (SD) employees could gain more insight. Conducting these interviews seeks to learn more about participatory methods used in the past in times of strategy development of the three institutions. The aim of the interviews is to answer the first sub questions of this study, namely:

> *SQ 2: How are higher education institution employees currently involved in strategy formation processes?*

The interviewees are selected based on their function within the HEIs. Since each of the three institutions has their own strategic development department, three senior staff members who can explain the current situation and their findings are sufficient for this study. Because the data gathering of the PVE takes two weeks, these weeks can be used to conduct the interviews. The interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams.

Interviews with PVE participants
Subsequently, interviews are conducted with three participants of the consultation. Because the questions regarding the PVE are mostly of ordinal scale, with the interviews a more elaborated qualitative data collection could be established. Within the interview, the interviewee will be asked about the added value of a PVE, the extent to which the participant feel heard, the extent to which the participant gain a better understanding of Convergence and their feeling of engagement to their institution.

The questions can be found in Appendix B. The aim of these three interviews is to answer the third sub question of this study, namely:

SQ 3: What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation on employee's engagement within higher education institutions?

The interviewees are selected based on their involvement with HEIs. One interviewee is a research fellow of Convergence, one interviewee is managing scientific staff and the other interviewee is supporting staff. The choice of these interviewees is based both on availability within the network of the researcher as on the aim to interview three involved employees with different professional categories, to gain insight in the different perspectives. Two interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams and one interview physically in Delft.

Interview with the Convergence Office

Lastly, a semi-structured interview with the Convergence Office is conducted to study their experiences with conducting PVE within the strategy formation process of Convergence. With this interview, it could be evaluated to which extent they could share their information about Convergence, how they experience the gathered data, and which results they find useful and which less. The questions are based on different findings in literature, to establish feedback to conclude with. Important to mention is the timing of the interview. Due to the summer holidays of the researcher and the employees and the timespan of this study, the interview has been conducted before all the results are fully analysed. The results which were yet analysed and therefore included in the interview are illustrated in Chapter 5.

3.5. Data handling

Participatory Value Evaluation

After the closure of the PVE, the results can be analysed by conducting a descriptive analysis. The results are all combined in one Excel-file which can be retrieved from Wevaluate. To answer the research questions, the outcomes of the PVE regarding the experiences of the participants will be summarised and interpret per question, after which they will be presented in graphs and diagrams to insightfully present to the Convergence Office. The statements which will be analysed are:

- This research steered my choices in a certain direction;
- I trust this is a fair research;
- I thought it was an important topic to give my opinion on;
- This method contributes to my feeling of engagement for the institution I am working for;
- The institutions should involve their employees more often through this method.

The ratings of the questions will globally lead to an employee's perspective of the PVE. Since one of the main assumptions of literature was the effect of employee involvement on an employee's feeling of engagement, this statement is added additionally.

Furthermore, these statements will be compared to two previously conducted PVEs in citizen-to-government context. All the statements consist of a five-point ordinal scale from completely disagree to completely agree. Both the modus as the mean will be used to gain insight in the retrieved dataset. The modus will show the most frequent chosen answers whereas the mean shows the 'average' behavior of the respondents.

Interviews with employees from the strategic development departments
The outcomes of the interviews with the SD employees will be sorted per mentioned method and the corresponding advantages and disadvantages. Subsequently, a table will be created to give a clear overview of the retrieved data. Furthermore, the difficulties and best practices will be compared and point by point summarized.

Interviews with PVE participants and the Convergence Office
Since the interviews with the PVE participants needs to contribute to answering sub question three, the interview results will be summarized per question to gain insight in the similarities and differences of the participants on the different topics.

Interview with the Convergence Office
The interview results of the Convergence Office will be of direct input for answering sub question four. The results will be summarized per interview question, which are related to different topics originated from the literature review in Chapter 2.

3.6. Validity and reliability

Several aspects related to the validity and reliability of the study needs to be discussed. First, due to the small sample size of the people who were interviewed, there is a saturation limitation. While aiming for a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives on PVE and different participation methods, the small number of participants may have had an impact on the amount of insights gained.

Regarding external validity, there was a challenge as the Convergence Office was responsible for the dissemination of the consultation. This limited the control over the spread of findings and their representation beyond the initial scope.

Since the PVE was the main method of this study, this most likely enhanced the reliability of the study, because the PVE nowadays is a commonly employed standardized measurement approach. This choice leads to confidence in the consistency and accuracy of the measurements.

However, the lack of clarity regarding the population size has also affected the study. As a result, the sample size remains ambiguous and may not fully account for the entire population's diversity and characteristics.

Furthermore, as a single case study, the research possesses certain limitations. It primarily serves as an exploratory investigation and cannot test theories extensively. While the findings provide valuable insights, they should be interpreted with caution regarding generalizations to broader contexts.

4.

Design of the PVE

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the design of the main method of the case study, the PVE. It will firstly delve into the objectives and aims of Convergence, as well as provide insights into the development phase of the collaboration. Given that the PVE phases differ in participation levels, a distinction will also be drawn between the meaning and degrees of participation within the PVE process. Additionally, it will outline the reasons why Convergence is considered an appropriate and relevant case for this research. Subsequently, the design phase of the PVE will be further explained.

4.1. The Convergence Alliance

The Convergence Alliance is a collaborative initiative involving the TU Delft, EUR and Erasmus MC. In response to the complex challenges of the contemporary society, the Convergence Alliance emphasizes the importance of transdisciplinary collaboration. The primary focus of the Convergence Alliance is to combine strengths, knowledge, and methods through transdisciplinary collaboration (Convergence, n.d.). The alliance is structured around various research pillars (see Figure 9). Currently, the Convergence Alliance encompasses the following pillars: Resilient Delta; Health and Technology; AI, Data and Digitalisation; Pandemic and Disaster Preparedness; and Healthy Start. The administrative layer consists of members of the executive boards of all three institutions. Besides, different working groups are active to explore the possibilities to further develop the collaboration.
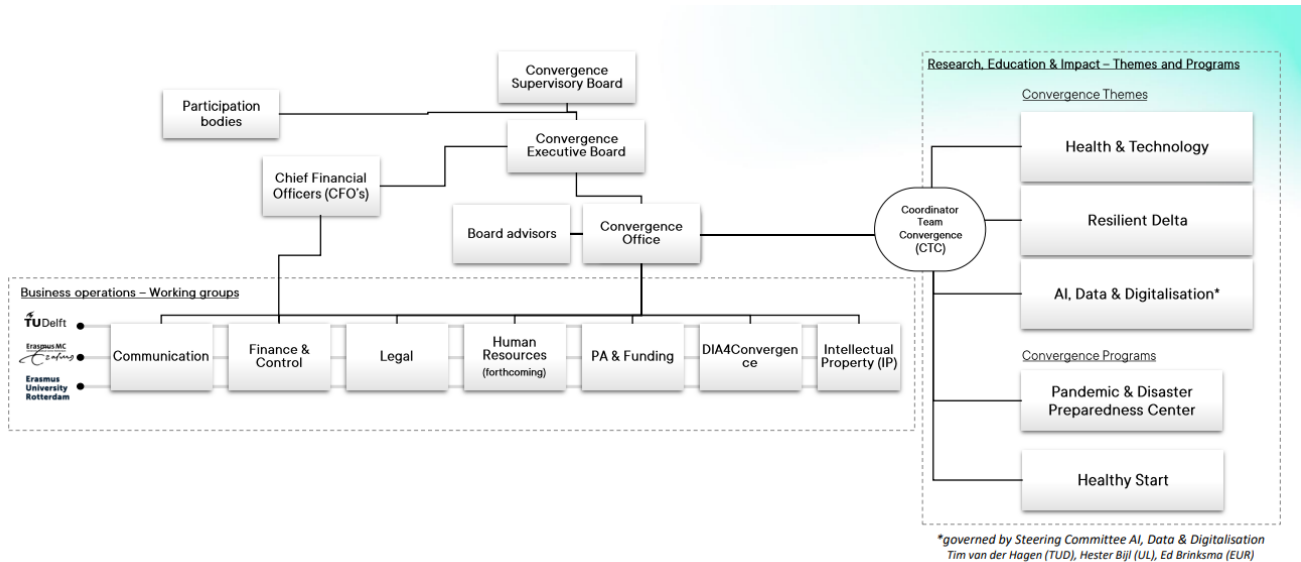
It is worth noting that the alliance is constantly evolving to adapt to the dynamic nature of the world, with new and pressing challenges emerging. Consequently, additional pillars are being added to address these evolving challenges.

As presented in Figure 10, Convergence is now developing their collaboration trough different advisory groups, dialogs, consultations and reports. At the end of 2023, formal decisions need to be made regarding the future strategy of Convergence. Because of the phase they are currently in, they are interested in their employees' opinion concerning the new strategy agenda. To create a consultation about this subject, an extensive period of designing is needed.

Figure 10: Working agenda Convergence 23-26

4.2. The degree of participation within a PVE

The PVE is associated with various levels of public participation and empowerment. To explore the different levels of participation within a PVE, the degrees of participation will be further explained by using the Ladder of Decision Making from Gallagher (2002), as depicted in Figure 11. This tool build upon the similar model of 'the Ladder of Public Participation' from Arnstein (1969).

Figure 11: Ladder of Decision Making (Gallagher, 2002).
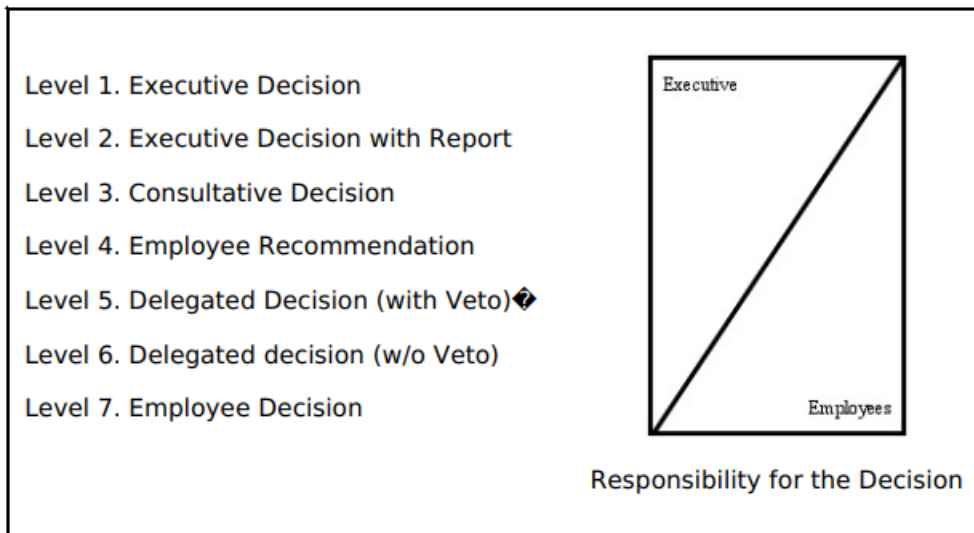
At the first level, decisions are solely taken by the executives without (or minimal) informing the employees. In level 2, decisions remain under executive control but are communicated to the employees, offering them a chance for providing feedback. Subsequently, in level 3 employees are being asked to share their ideas in a general way. In here, employees have the possibility to influence the decision by sharing their values, information and alternatives. Nevertheless, the ultimate decision-making authority remains with the executives.

Next, in level 4 the executives assign or delegate the decision-making process to one or more employees, who then present their recommendations to the executives for the final call. Within level 5, employees gain power to make decisions, yet the executives retain the authority to veto if necessary. Level 6 is the same as level 5 but without the veto option. Here, the executives offer support through subsequent evaluation periods. Lastly, level 7 of the ladder empowers employees to make decisions without informing the executives, potentially following standard reporting procedures like regular meetings or annual reports.

When comparing this study's PVE with Gallagher's distinct levels (2002), the consultation process aligns with level 3, while the design phase better fits within level 4 or possibly level 5. If the consultation process incorporates more bidirectional communication, with predetermined feedback cycles involved and priorly communicated, the PVE could shift to a higher level.

During the design process, the degree of executive intervention in the dilemma definitions influences whether the PVE aligns more with level 4 or fully empowers employees to shape the consultation. In the context of the Convergence PVE's design process, it leans towards level 4, a point that will be further expanded upon in the upcoming sections.

4.3. Justification of the case

Before proceeding with the design phase of the consultation, a thorough evaluation of the case's appropriateness in addressing the research questions is important. The selection of Convergence as a case for this study is supported by multiple reasons:

- **Relevance:** the case is relevant due to the development phase of their strategy and the organisations' desire to involve employees.
- **Uniqueness:** the case is unique in a way that there has been no previous study concerning an academic collaboration and the possible use of a PVE. The specific context requires careful study.
- **Accessibility:** the case is accessible due to the network of the researcher. Sufficient information like strategic documents is available. Moreover, the employees of Convergence are almost every day reachable. Therefore, the case provides a rich data availability.
- **Feasibility:** the timeline of the desire of employee participation is in line with the graduation timeline of the researcher. The case can be studied and analysed within the established time boundaries.
- **Research objectives:** the case of Convergence aligns with the objective of this research, namely, to explore whether a PVE could have a positive effect on employee engagement. This can be tested trough conduct a PVE on employees involved in Convergence.

The above compelling reasons make the case of Convergence well-suited for the case study. The justification of the case was the kick-off of the entire design process of the PVE. A comprehensive overview of the design process is presented in Figure 32, as provided in Appendix C.

4.4. The design session

In collaboration with the Convergence Office, a subject for conducting a PVE has been defined. The office expressed interest in gathering their employees' opinions regarding the new strategy agenda. Creating a comprehensive consultation on this matter requires a substantial period of designing, which also serves as an opportunity to gather knowledge about the case study's content.

Initially, multiple exploratory conversations were conducted with the Convergence Office to gain insights into the current situation and the specific needs of the three corresponding academic institutions involved (see Table 2). This information not only provided a better understanding of the situation but also indirectly influenced the design of the PVE. After a few iterations, a design session was organized in collaboration with stakeholders from the three institutions. A total overview of the meetings with Convergence can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Overview of the meetings with Convergence.

Date	Description	Stakeholders	Outcome
28-03-2023	Exploratory meeting for conducting a PVE	Strategic development TU Delft and Populytics	- Explore possible cooperation. - Identify suitable case.
17-04-2023	Workshop to introduce PVE within the organisation	Strategic development TU Delft, Convergence Office and Populytics	- Employees understand usefulness of method.
21-04-2023	Introduction Convergence Office	Convergence Office and Populytics	- Cooperation officially established.
28-04-2023	Aligning the PVE design	Convergence Office and Populytics	- Ambitions defined. - Actions defined.
11-05-2023	Aligning the PVE design	Convergence Office and Populytics	- Ambitions redefined. - Actions redefined.
02-06-2023	Design session	Convergence employees, CO and Populytics	- New ambitions and actions added.
09-06-2023	Aligning the PVE design	Convergence Office and Populytics	- Visual design improvements to PVE tool. - Improvements to information texts within the choice tasks.
20-06-2023	Aligning the PVE design	Convergence Office and Populytics	- Last language-related changes.

The design session comprised a diverse group of twelve stakeholders, including employees contracted at the three institutions associated with Convergence. The Convergence Office extended an open invitation to all individuals involved in the research programs of Convergence. During the session, a brief presentation about the PVE method was delivered, followed by an interactive opportunity for participants to provide feedback on the existing concept and contribute new ideas. The design of the session involved incorporating dedicated blank spaces on posters to encourage the generation of new ideas. Detailed notes were taken to capture the data during this phase of data collection. After the design session and the collection of valuable input, the final version of the PVE was developed, encompassing the insights and suggestions provided by the stakeholders.

4.5. Outcomes of the design session

As illustrated in Figure 12 and 13, the data collection primarily involved active participation from the participants, utilizing post-it notes and free-form text on posters. The session provided a platform for discussing existing statements and allowing for the introduction of new ones, encouraging open discussions. Throughout the session, inputs were systematically bundled, ensuring both participants and researchers maintained a clear overview of the topics that had been addressed.

Figure 12: Design session 1   **Figure 13:** Design session 2

In preparation for the session, two posters were created (see Appendix D). The first poster centred around the ambitions of Convergence, asking the respondents the question: "What is important for you to achieve as Convergence?". The poster already included the following statements:

- Convergence must prioritize the economic development of the region.
- The individual identity of each institution must be safeguarded.
- Foster increased collaboration in research.
- Convergence should focus on the social contribution of the three institutions.
- Enhance collaboration in educational initiatives.
- Provide more administrative support from Convergence.
- Strengthen the international reputation and appeal of the three institutions.
- Enhance the visibility of Convergence within faculties.
- Streamline and accelerate the collaboration process.

These statements served as a starting point for the discussions during the session, providing a foundation for participants to build upon and contribute their insights. During the session, the statements illustrated in Figure 14 has been added. After the design session, a new version of the PVE was established. This version was discussed with the Convergence Offices, after which the final version was compiled, see Appendix E. The multiple iteration rounds ensured a clearing articulation of the consultation. Specifically, the asked question on poster 1 has been changed to "What should be the main ambitions of Convergence?".
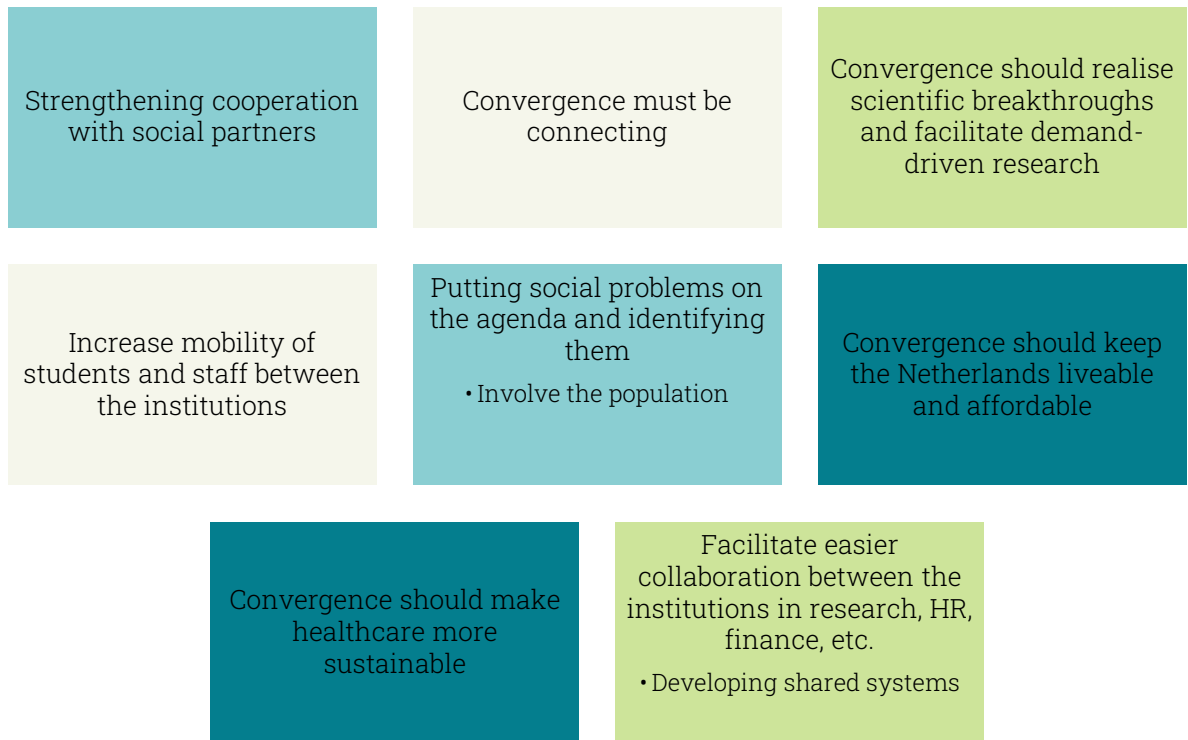
The second poster focused on more tangible actions of Convergence, inviting respondents to allocate the Convergence budget. The poster already featured the following statements:

- Developing transdisciplinary education
- Allocating funds to joint research proposals
- Investing in the organization of conferences with shared themes
- Budget allocation for attracting new researchers to Convergence programs
- Funding scientific staff with permanent contracts
- Pursuing additional research funding
- Investment in facilities and data exchange organization

During the session, participants added the statements as illustrated in Figure 15 to the second poster, contributing their valuable insights. These contributions further enriched the discussion and provided a more comprehensive view of the suggested actions to be considered within the Convergence budget allocation.

Commitment to making each other's collaborative research infrastructure more accessible + data collection	Increase physical connection between institutions (bike lanes, shuttle bus, car/scooter sharing)	Set up knowledge matrix to have an overview of the possibilites to collaborate
Commitment to campus development (buildings and accessibility) - place where it is easy to connect with each other	Improving content website and internal/external communication tools	Alignment between events; bundling activities/events on 1 day? More targeted and efficient?

In conclusion, the design session proved to be instrumental in shaping the contours of the PVE by incorporating diverse perspectives and therefore approaching saturation. The active involvement of employees from the three institutions brought valuable insights, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the current affairs regarding Convergence. The session not only enriched the content of the PVE but also brought critical issues and thoughts of employees into sharp focus. By engaging a wide range of stakeholders, the design session fostered a deeper and more nuanced exploration of Convergence, ensuring that the consultation is representative of the various viewpoints within the Convergence context. Moreover, this inclusive approach allowed to take into account all concerns, making the PVE findings more credible and relevant.

5.

Results

This chapter presents the findings of the case study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the qualitative data obtained from interviews with strategic development employees. Subsequently, the descriptive statistics of the PVE will be examined to gain an understanding of the response rate and its characteristics. Following this, the relevant results of the consultation are analysed to understand the state-of-the-art perspectives on Convergence. These relevant outcomes consist of analysing the relevant validity questions, focused on assessing the effectiveness of conducting a PVE on employee engagement. Thereafter, the interviews about evaluating the PVE with the employees involved in Convergence will be discussed. Finally, the interview with the Convergence Office about their perspectives on the PVE will be presented, including some key results of the PVE.

5.1. Insights from the interviews with strategic development employees

To explore the various participatory methods employed by higher education institutions, interviews were conducted with strategic advisers from the three strategic development departments of the Convergence institutions. Table 3 provides an overview of the mentioned methods, along with their corresponding advantages and disadvantages. In some cases, certain cells remain empty as the interviewees did not identify significant (dis)advantages for those methods.

During the interviews, the institutions revealed several challenges they face in their participatory processes. These challenges include student involvement, the time it takes to build a community, the time to organise participatory trajectories, defining concrete strategic themes and having a good balance in attending staff. Additionally, another challenge mentioned is the frequency on how many times you should ask your community to think along. Furthermore, using a middle-up-down management approach could cause significant challenges for the executive board. However, the operational layer eventually plays a crucial role in effecting change. Trust in employees plays a vital role, and the middle-up-down principle emerges as a key factor in driving organisational changes.

As a best practice, Executive Boards should communicate a sense of ownership to the staff, making them feel that the strategy belongs to them. Trusting and involving employees becomes of importance in this process. Additionally, there should be a feeling of mutual trust; the will to engage in discussions with each other.

Table 3: Methods currently used within HEIs.

Methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
Involving and introducing employees involved with strategic topics in the newsletter, thereby also inspiring other employees.	Making the strategy more tangible and concrete.	
Using external places to facilitate the conversation and gain input from employees.	Employees who never speak to each other get into discussions which yields all kinds of new insights. Involving the community early is important to make a strategy more of the people and foster the community feeling.	It could be a hard task to make sure the content of the sessions is objective and of added value.
Thematical groups with an open invitation.	Employees have the option to participate in discussions on topics that interest them.	It could be a hard task to make sure the content of the sessions is objective and of added value.
Stakeholder sessions for the employees not yet involved in thematical groups.	Involving employees which initially weren't involved.	Due to different working hours of employees difficult to plan.
Making use of platforms.	Accessible way of asking questions to employees and to answer questions from employees.	
Using a toolbox which managers can use with their teams (middle-up-down management).	The short modules of the toolbox do not take a lot of time and can be used multiple times within one team.	Executive Board is critical on making use of middle-up-down management.

Talk shows	Accessible way of speaking about strategic topics	You are not aware of the fact with who you are discussing. The absence of a chat function significantly diminishes the participatory process.

In conclusion, institutions currently utilize a wide range of participatory methods. Nonetheless, the extent to which these methods truly embody participatory principles and whether there might exist more effective and efficient alternatives remain important considerations. The PVE could position itself in various ways within these participatory methods and its challenges and benefits.

Firstly, PVE can contribute to enhancing student participation by easily sending them reaching out to them through emails containing the consultation link. Furthermore, actively involving policy makers, academic staff and students within the design process can facilitate the definition of strategic themes in a smoother manner.

Nonetheless, the PVE could also learn from the use of toolboxes and platforms, wherein employees get even more freedom to continuously ask questions and share their perspectives. This concept of "open strategizing" methods fosters two-sided communication between managers and employees, which is currently limited within Convergence. Complementary implementing a platform could help ensure that feedback is communicated to the employees before, during and after the PVE. This possibly also enhances the employees feeling of belonging and therefore mutual trust.

Furthermore, it could be valuable to further research how often students and employees would like to be involved. Given that executing a PVE takes some time, though significantly less than, for instance, attending a talk show or open meeting, it might be a method that can be used more frequently.

5.2. Descriptive statistics from the Participatory Value Evaluation

The descriptive statistics summarizes the most important findings from the PVE. The partly filled consultations are removed after which 64 respondents remain. As there is no information available regarding the population of involved employees of Convergence, these statistics all serve as exploratory statistics. To gain some insight in the participants, first some demographic statistics will be presented. These statistics consist of the distribution between the institutions, the professional categories, the involvement in the Convergence programs and whether the participants collaborated with the other institutions before Convergence started. Subsequently to the demographic statistics, the evaluative questions will be analysed, as described in Chapter 3.

Demographic statistics
As can be seen in Figure 16, there was a relatively higher participation for employee from TU Delft than EUR and the Erasmus MC in the consultation.

Additionally, the consultation was most completed by support staff, followed by (assistant/associate/full) professors (Figure 18). The distribution of the involved employees per program is almost equal, as can be seen in Figure 19. Figure 17 illustrates the ratio of participants having earlier collaborated with one of the institutions.

Figure 16: Participant working at institution.
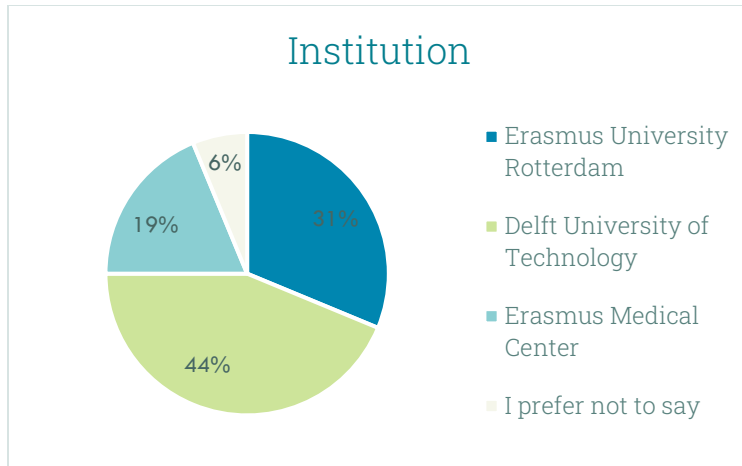
Figure 17: Participant collaborated before Convergence.
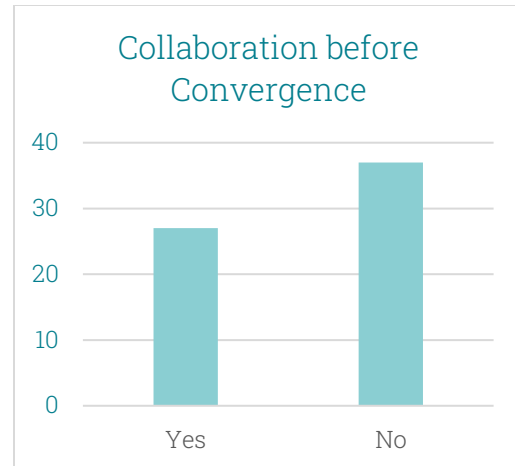
When respondents answered 'yes' to the question of whether they had collaborated before, they were presented with an additional question: "In what way did you cooperate with any of the other institutions involved?" The possible answers included: collaboration in the LDE (Leiden, Delft, Erasmus) collaboration initiative, participation in joint research projects, involvement in NWO (Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research) grants, engaging in educational activities, contributing to the facilitation of ICT infrastructure across multiple universities and pursuing a PhD at another university.

Figure 18: Professional category of participants.
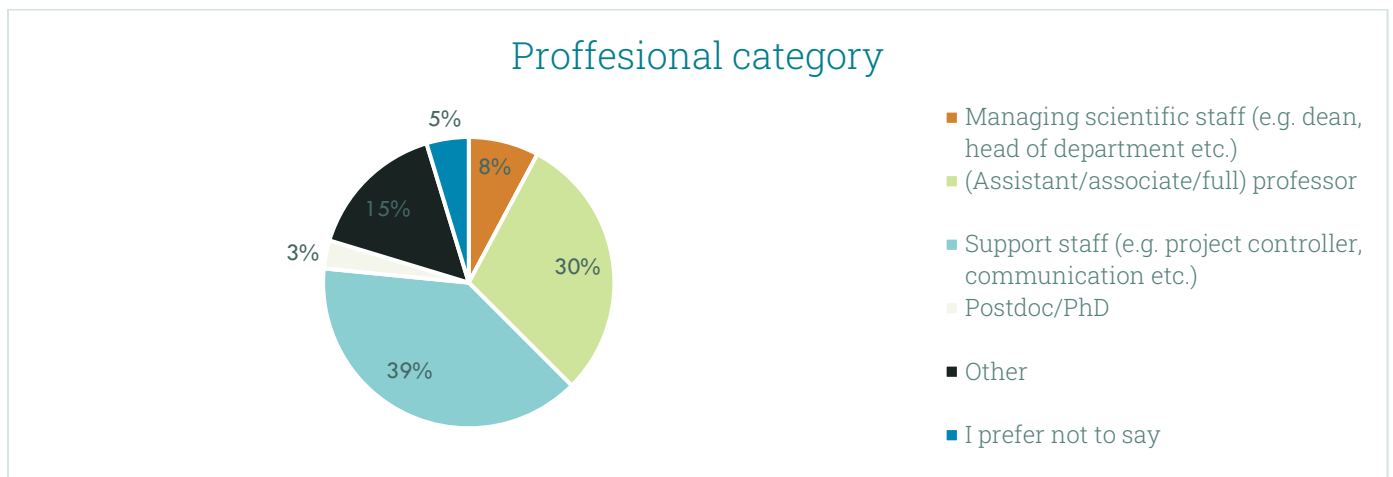
The recruitment methods were not specifically aimed at obtaining a sample that is representative of the population of Convergence, as the specific population is unclear. Therefore, it is not surprising that the obtained sample is equally distributed per institution.

Figure 19: Involvement within program.
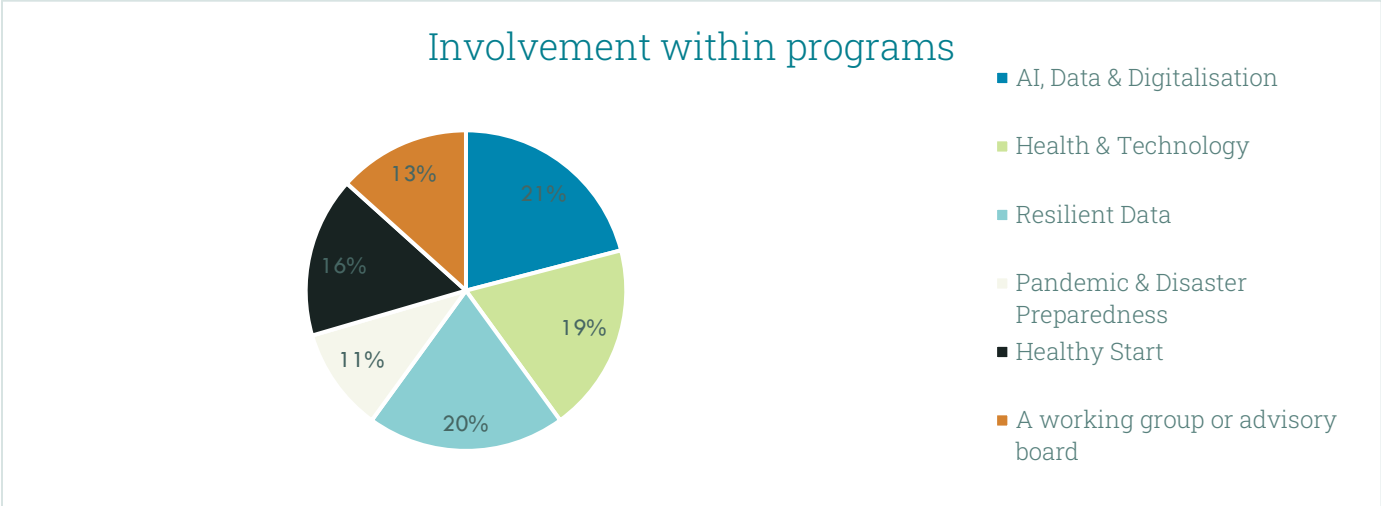
Descriptive statistics about the 'questions regarding the consultation'
To evaluate the consultation, a few questions are added to the consultation. These questions consist of five statements with an ordinal scale, a rating, two open questions about the how the participants experienced the consultation and two multiple choice questions. To start with, the respondents rated the method with a 6.6. This rating is between the average range of consultations which is between 6.3 and 7.2.

The first statement inquires whether the consultation influenced the participants' choices in a particular direction, as depicted in Figure 20. Interestingly, 30 percent of the respondents agree with this statement. It could be worthwhile to conduct further research to understand the reasons behind this perceived influence. Although some respondents experienced a feeling of being steered, most of the respondents trust the consultation is fair research, as depicted in Figure 21.

This research steered my choices in a certain direction

I trust this is a fair research
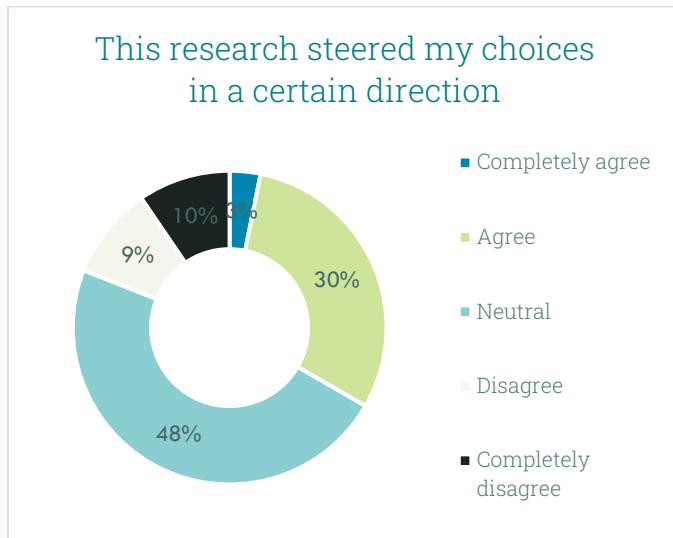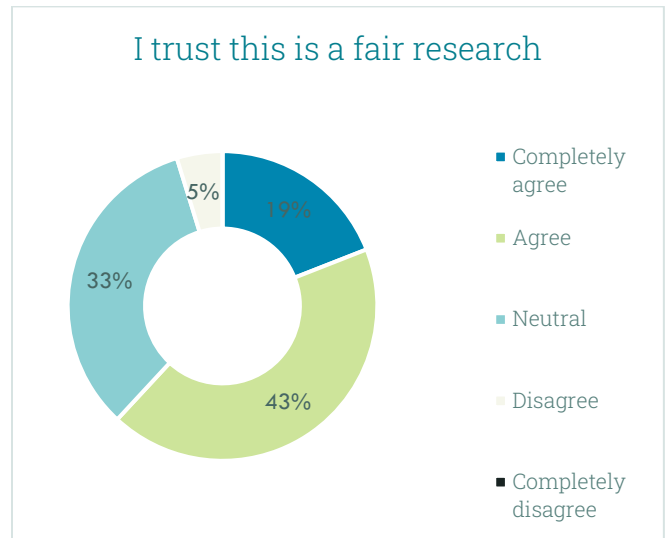
Statements three and four, as illustrated in Figure 22 and 23, provide insight into the participants' perspectives on the topic of the PVE and about using the method more often. As can be seen, the data reveals that 81 percent of the respondents thought Convergence is an important topic to give their opinion on, when combining the answers *agree* and *completely agree*. However, 47 percent of the respondents thinks the institutions should use the PVE more frequently to question their employees. Since there are no qualitative questions regarding these statements, it remains unclear how the employees would like to be involved when giving their opinion on topics like Convergence.

Figure 22: Questions about the consultation - statement 3.
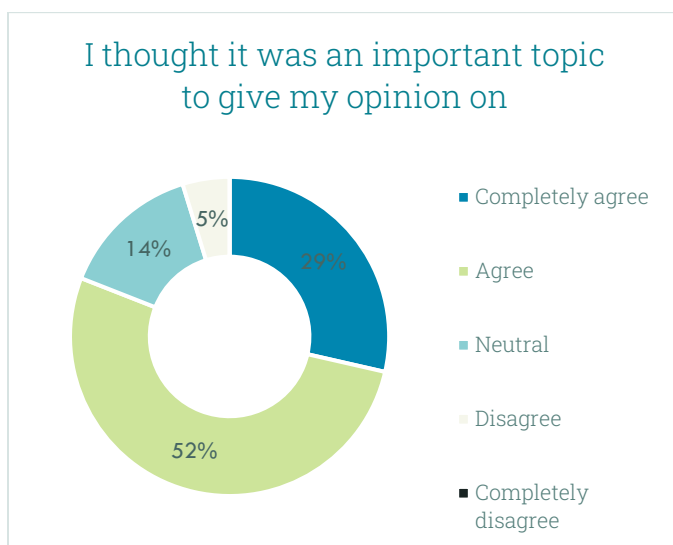
Figure 23: Questions about the consultation - statement 4.

I thought it was an important topic to give my opinion on

The institutions should involve their employees more often through this method
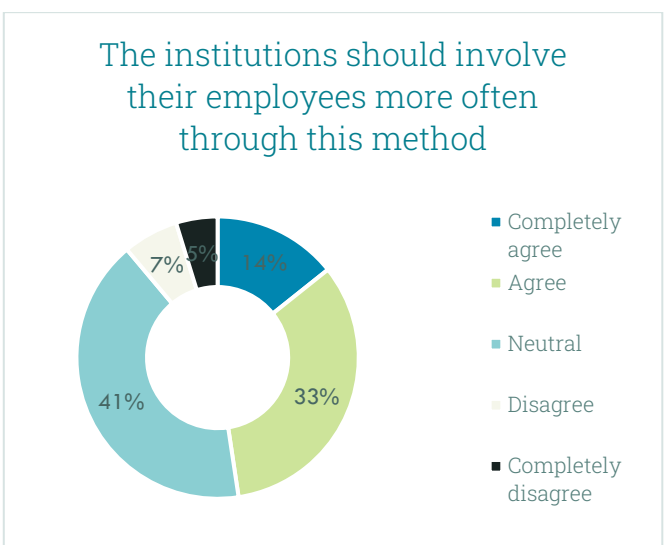
The final statement is about the feeling of engagement of the participants towards the institution they are working for. 45 percent of the respondents agreed upon this statement.

This method contributes to my feeling of engagement for the institution I am working for

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Completely disagree
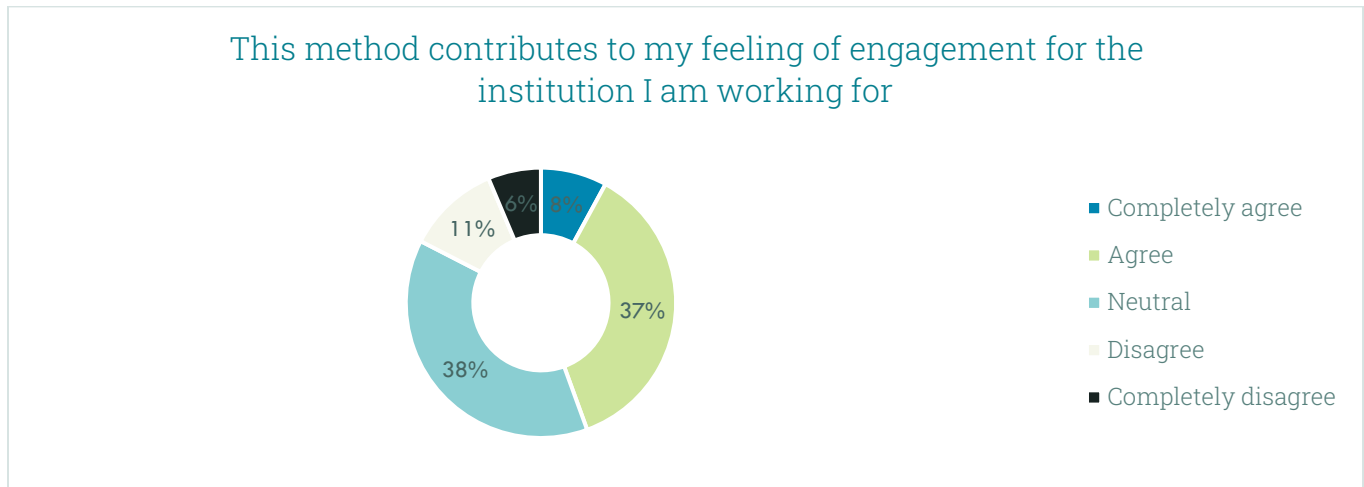
Subsequently to the statements and rating, the respondents were asked about the aspects they like and disliked about the study. The answers are clustered and summarized. The respondents liked the following aspects of the research:

- The distribution of points is an innovative way
- The realistic view of the possibilities and the fact that not everything is possible
- The possibility to openly contribute due to asking a large audience to participate
- The change to give anonymous feedback
- That the research is thorough and clear with good questions
- That the research feels rather objective
- The information button which gave a good insight into what certain priorities or possible actions would imply
- The possibility to motivate and explain your answers
- That it gives a platform to express opinions to the executive board

The respondents disliked the following aspects of the research:

- The feeling that the questions are made from a top-down perspective and steered towards generating positive feedback
- The many open questions and therefore the time it took
- The design could be more effective and easier to use
- The unclarity about how the results will be spread and if there will ever be a feedback moment
- That the answer options sometimes feel restrictive: there might be other goals and ambitions. Some important topics like funding and cultural differences were hardly covered
- That the survey is only shared with people who are currently involved in Convergence

Finally, the participants were asked to answer to more multiple-choice questions regarding Convergence. As depicted in Figure 25 and 26, the participants mostly do not agree with the statement about the PVE helped them to learn more about Convergence. Regarding the results of the PVE, 50 percent of the respondents wants the Executive Board to significantly weight the outcomes and 26 percent even want them to heavily weight the outcomes into their considerations regarding the strategic narrative of Convergence.

Figure 25: Questions about this research - MC1
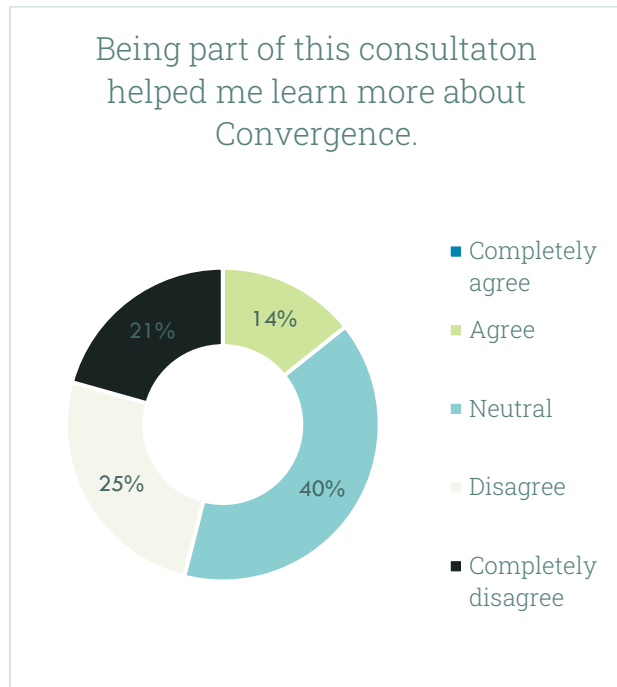
Figure 26: Questions about this research - MC2
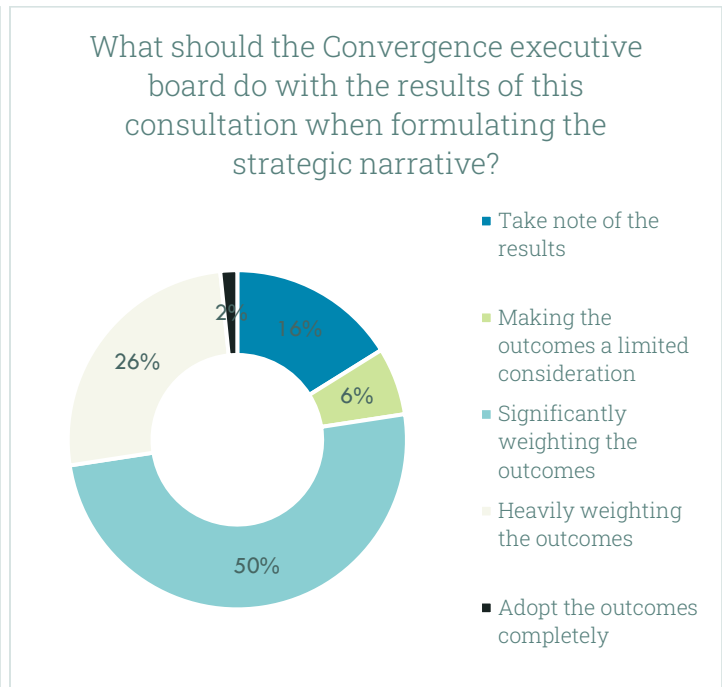
5.3. Insights from the interviews with Convergence employees

Just as the interviews with the SD employees, three employees involved within Convergence are interviewed to question them about their experience with the PVE. The responses are gathered per question and presented in the Figures 27, 28, 29 and 30.

The first question asked is whether the respondents perceived the PVE to be of added value and why. The responses varied among the interviewees, as illustrated in Figure 27. While two respondents were positive, citing their lack of familiarity with the overarching Convergence organization as a reason, the other respondent felt that there was insufficient background information to provide a comprehensive response to the questions.

Figure 27: Interview question 2: added value of PVE

"Yes, I did not know the future plans and the focus from Convergence as a collaboration. I do know now and I like to **think along** and **being involved**."

"Yes! Very important! There is a need to look at **what people are up against**. Especially with the employees who are really part of the programs. **Managers don't know** everything. PVE allows for **many voices**."

"No, some **important aspects** are not included. Too many questions with **too less background information**. I would have liked to see more about the **current problems** Convergence is facing. And also more about **ambitions** rather than concrete themes: the more concrete the more context is needed."

Next, the second question addressed whether the interviewees felt more or less heard after completing the PVE. One interviewee highlighted the potential influence of the position within Convergence on this aspect. Another interviewee expressed feeling less heard, mainly because after completing the PVE it is unclear how feedback from the Executive Board to the participants will be communicated. In contrast, the third interviewee did feel more heard, appreciating the possibility to think along about the more significant decisions of Convergence.

Figure 28: Interview question 3: feeling of being heard.

"I already felt heard in my role at the university, so **I don't necessarily feel more heard**. This is due to my local status. However, I do believe that it varies **depending on the position**."

"Not necessarily. However, I do feel like I was able to make my voice heard. But because it is not explained what will be done with the results and **how feedback will be provided**, I don't feel really heard."

"I feel **more heard**. Before, I didn't necessarily feel heard because I hold a relatively small position. Now, however, I feel like **I can contribute to the broader discussions** and I have a say in the large matters."

Subsequently, the third question consult the participants about the effect of the PVE on their understanding of Convergence. Two of the interviewees reported that they gained a better understanding, particularly regarding the overarching aspects of Convergence. They found the information provided under the info buttons to be helpful in gaining this perspective. One of the interviewees mentioned that they already had a significant amount of knowledge on Convergence beforehand.

Figure 29: Interview question 4: a better understanding of Convergence.

"Yes, especially regarding the **current state and the potential future directions**. It was helpful to have some basic knowlegde about the questions and goals."

"Yes, particularly about matters concerning **the overarching aspects of Convergence**. This was largely due to the information provided under the **info buttons**."

"No, I **already knew** a lot."
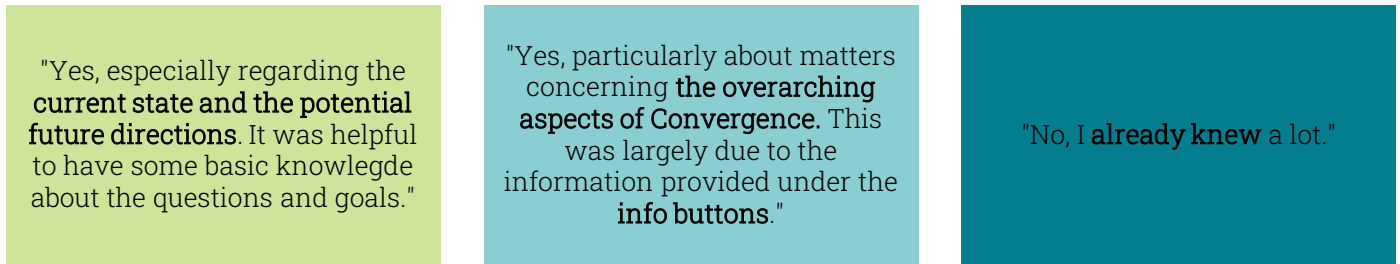
In the final questions, the interviewees were asked about their feeling of engagement to their institution during the PVE process. Two interviewees did not feel very engaged. One of them suggested that the one-way communication should become more two-sided with the Executive Board. The other interviewee mentioned that for this person it was no different to a survey. On the other hand, the third person did feel more engaged throughout the process, mostly due to the transparency of the communication about the purpose of collecting employees' feedback.

Figure 30: Interview question 5: engagement.

"No, it currently feels more like a **one-way communication** tool, whereas you would also like to receive feedback. The quiestionnaire also **has litle relevance to the institution**."

"Not really, it is **not different from a survey**. Side note: scientists are a challeging audience, they can be quite stubborn."

"Yes, there is **transparency** in communication about the purpose of collecting our feedback."

5.4. Insights from the interviews with the Convergence Office

To discuss the added value of the PVE with the Convergence Office, is it necessary to present a few content related outcomes of the PVE. To gain insight in the possible differences between the institutions and between different professional categories, both the goals and actions are disaggregated accordingly, as can be seen in Figures 31-34. Furthermore, the average main outcomes of the PVE are depicted in Appendix F.

Results of the PVE

Figure 31: Main goals of Convergence - per institute.
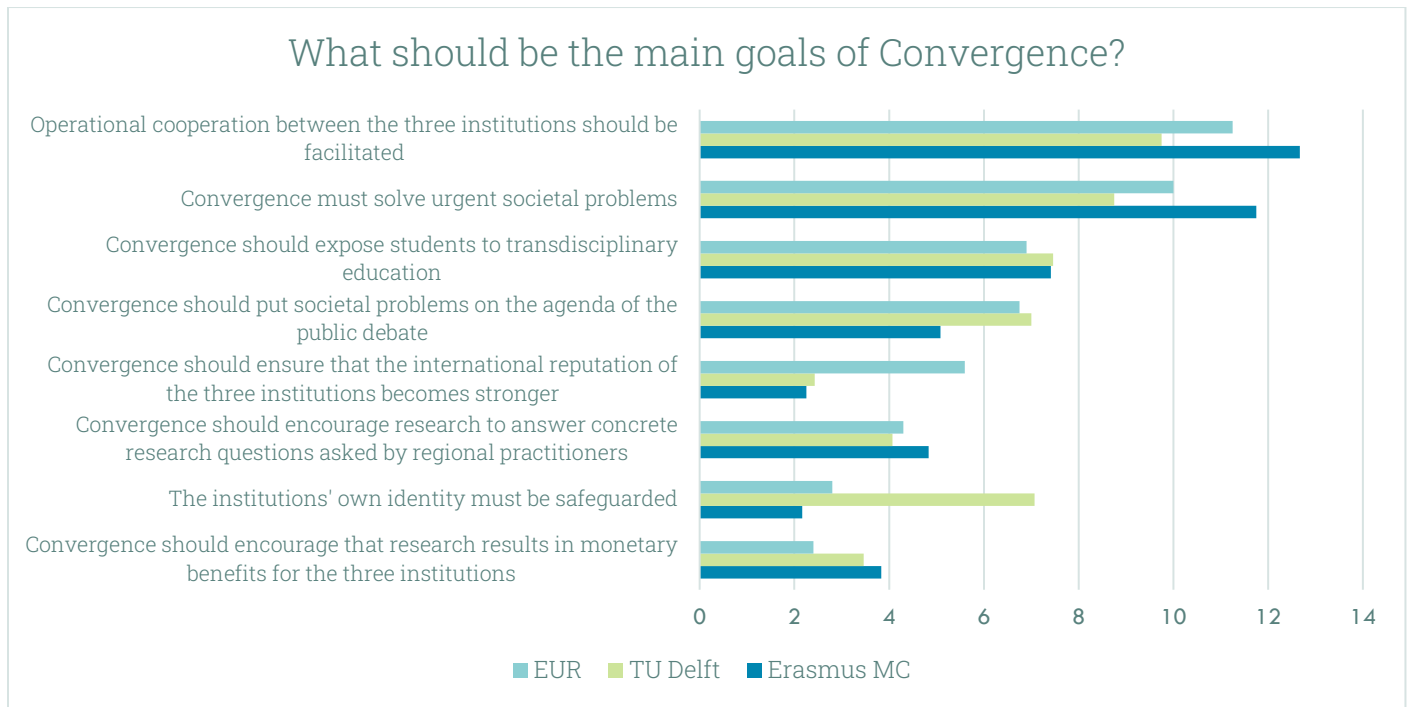
As presented in Figure 31, there are a few notable outcomes. Firstly, the goals about operational cooperation and about solving urgent societal problems are the most important ones for all three institutions. Secondly, the international reputation holds nearly double the significance for employees at EUR compared to the other two HEIs. Subsequently, employees at TU Delft place greater importance on safeguarding the university's identity, whereas this goal appears to be less critical for the other two institutions.

Figure 32: Main actions of Convergence - per institute.
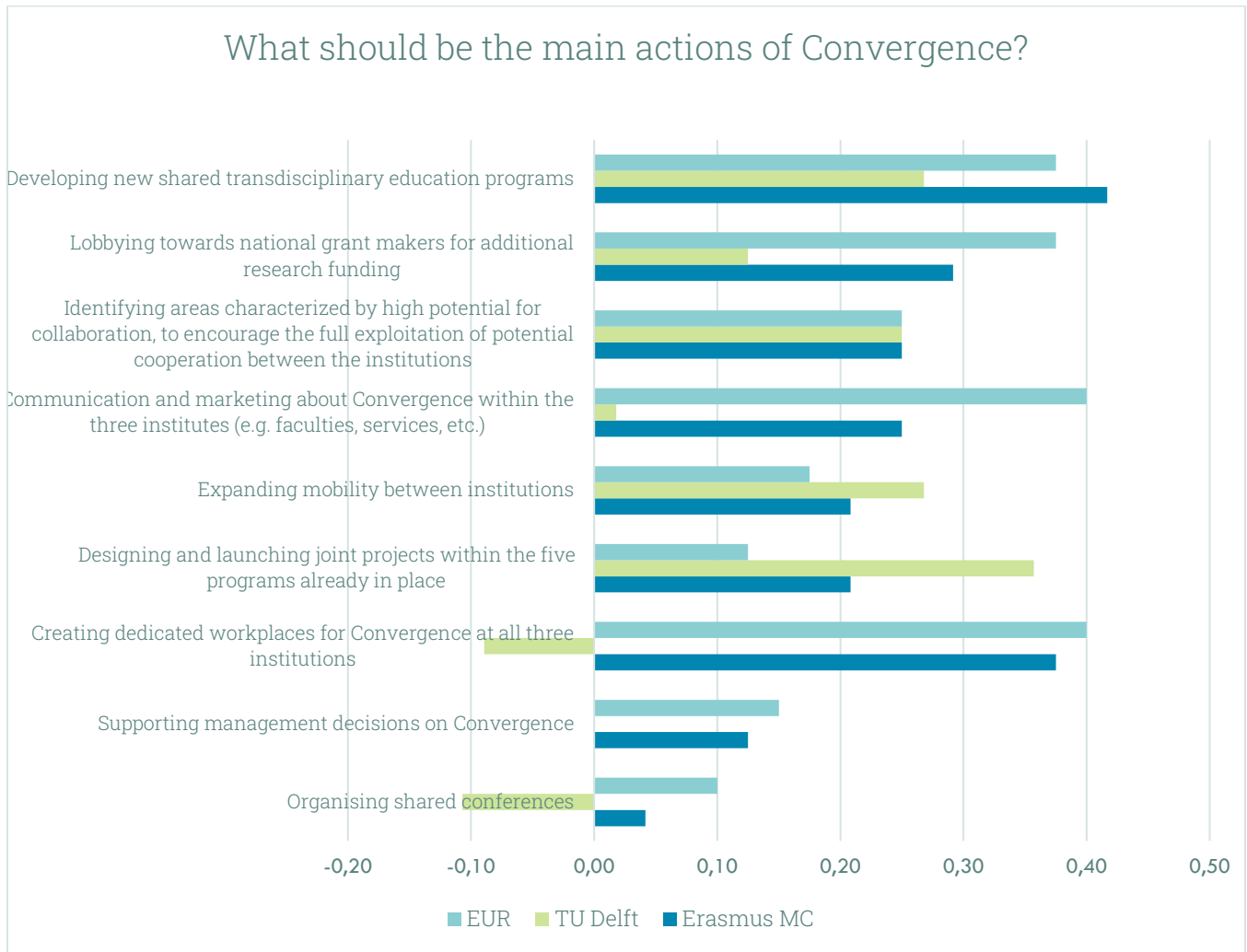
Figure 32 shows the the variations in preferences among the institutes regarding the actions of Convergence. Interestingly, only two actions receive a negative average: creating a dedicated workplace and organizing shared conferences and organising shared conferences. According to employees of the TU Delft, there should be less commitment to these two actions. Nevertheless, However, employees at EUR and Erasmus MC believe that creating dedicated workplaces deserves more attention. Furthermore, communication within the institutes is considered more crucial by employees at EUR and Erasmus MC, whereas TU Delft employees feel that the current level of communication is already satisfactory. Instead, TU Delft employees prioritize focusing on designing and launching new joint projects within the five programs of Convergence. This indicates a divergence in viewpoints among the institutions on the several actions to be taken.

Table 4: Cross table of institutions and professional categories.

	(Assist/associate/full) professor	Postdoc/PhD	Support staff	Managing scientific staff	Other	I prefer not to say	Total
Delft University of Technology	7	1	11	3	5	1	28
Erasmus Medical Center	3		5	2	2		12
Erasmus University Rotterdam	8	1	7		3	1	20
I prefer not to say	1		2			1	4
Total	19	2	25	5	10	3	64

Table 4 provides an overview of the number of employees categorized by their institutes. As can be seen, the categories 'Postdoc/PhD' and 'I prefer not to say' each have three or fewer participants. Given these small numbers, their representativeness is considered too low to include them in the subsequent figures and analysis.

Figure 33: Main goals of Convergence - per professional category.
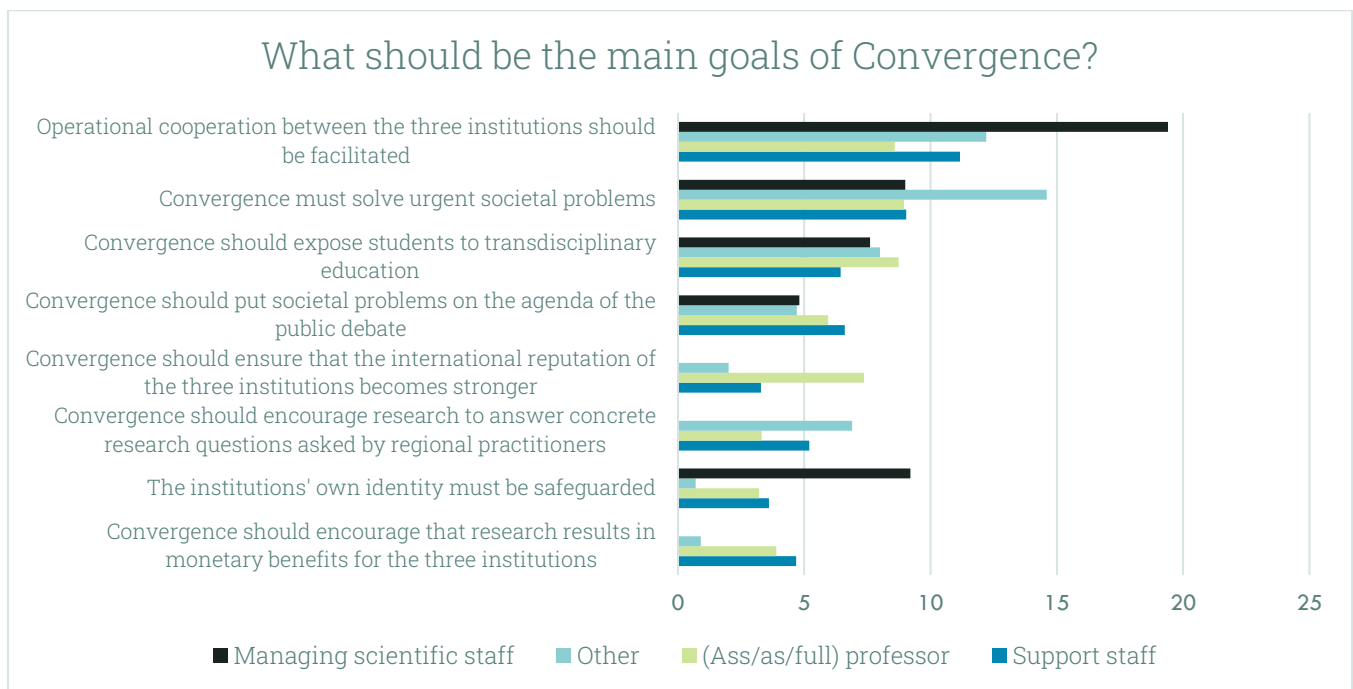
Subsequently, Figure 33 illustrates the average results of the main goals of Convergence based on the different professional categories. As can be observed, the managers of the scientific staff believe there should be a significantly higher commitment to enhancing operational coordination between institutions. The other categories agree with this, though to a lesser extent. Furthermore, the (assistant/associate/full) professors think that Convergence should put more emphasis on making the international reputation stronger. Lastly, the safeguarding of HEIs own identity is important for managers of the scientific staff.

Figure 34: Main actions of Convergence - per professional category.

What should be the main actions of Convergence?
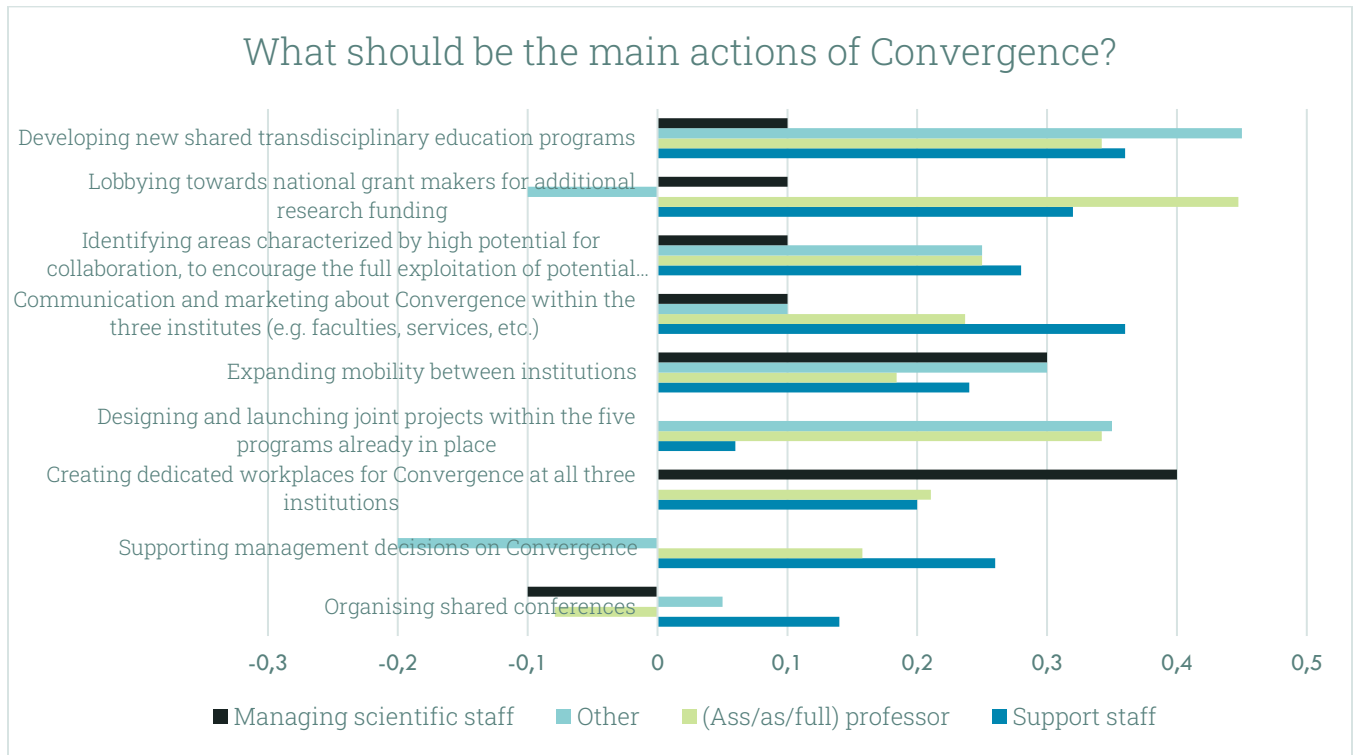
Lastly, most differences can be seen within the commitment for actions within Convergence, across various professional categories, as depicted in Figure 34. The responses of the managing staff mostly differ from the other categories. For instance, they consider it crucial to increase commitment for creating dedicated workplaces, while they do not emphasize the design and launch of new joint projects. Also, they, together with the (associate/assistant/full) professors, believe that less emphasis should be placed on organizing shared conferences. However, the action that receives the strongest support is the development of new shared transdisciplinary education programs.

Results of the interview

The interview questions consist of a few general questions about the experience of the Convergence Office with the PVE, coupled with some questions related to the literature concerning the dynamic between citizens and government entities. A few key citations are illustrated in Figure 35.

Firstly, the interviewee was asked about their experiences with the PVE process. Remarkably, the process led to significant clarification for the Convergence Office itself. Conducting the interviews and design sessions forced the employees to think about their own goals. Even now that they have been on the road for a few years, it was felt to be very useful to reformulate their goals clearly and sharply. Moreover, the process fostered a sense of positivity among the program coordinators of the five programs.

This was mainly due to the fact that this research went into depth and the genuine curiosity of the Convergence Office towards their staff's viewpoints. The excitement of the coordinators began to build right from the moment the study was announced.

Next, the CO also underscored the intention to use the PVE as a communication tool. By reaching medium involved employees, they intend to inform them about the bigger picture.

Furthermore, the Convergence Office was also asked about the extent to which the PVE initiative was representative. Given their limited experience in conducting extensive participation trajectories in the past, the outcome provided a big contrast. Normally, the office only spoke to employees within smaller settings, primarily conversating with the coordinators. However, with executing a PVE, there can be heard a much greater divergence of employees. Nevertheless, the Office wished for a larger number of respondents in the PVE. They emphasized that a considerable responsibility in this regard also lies with the administrative layers within the institutions.

Subsequently, the Convergence Office emphasizes the low fatigue of the PVE. They state that while organising a PVE requires an investment, the benefits regarding the insightful outcomes and the extensive reach outweigh the work put in.

Moreover, the outcomes presented in Figures 30-33 are valuable insights for the Convergence Office. Currently, the results partly confirm CO's gut feelings regarding specific cases. The results will help the CO to steer more focused by exposing different gaps and critical matters. The differentiation in professions also will help them steer more effectively.

Additionally, they were asked about the follow-up steps. The results will be input for the dialogue they plan to hold with the programs and their management boards about the way forward. Furthermore, the results will also be used during the working conference next October and serve as guidance for the directors of the institutes. Subsequently, these directors can use the insights during conversations, including those with faculty deans and department heads.

Finally, the CO was questioned about their desire to use the PVE method more frequently. They mention that they will not conduct a PVE thrice a year, but they do wish to employ this method more regularly. They believe that by incorporating the results from earlier PVEs, they can refine the content. Conducting a PVE once a year maybe will be too time consuming, for both the employees as for the CO themselves, although the idea of conducting a PVE annually might provide valuable information.

Figure 35: A few key citations from the interview with the Convergence Office.

"For ourselves, it also provided **clarification**. We were forced to think about our own goals by the conversations and design sessions."

"Previously to the PVE, we had to rely on employees' opinions through the conversations wih the coordinators. With the PVE, we can hear **a much greater divergence** of people."

"The time commitment very much **outweighs the outcomes** and the **wide reach** of the consultation."

"Although the idea of conducting a PVE anually might provide valuable information, it is **too heavy**."

6.

Conclusion

This study aimed to address the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation (PVE) within the strategy formation processes of higher education institutions (HEIs). Since the world is currently facing multiple crises and transitions, the collaboration between governmental organisations, multidisciplinary academic institutions and companies is crucial to tackling the increasing complexity of societal challenges. Involving the population in these dilemmas gives policymakers guidance in their processes. The PVE is an increasingly used method by Dutch governmental institutions to consult the Dutch population about these different societal dilemmas. The involvement of citizens leads to several positive outcomes, for instance the facilitation of development, understanding of policies, increased support and acceptance of transitions, stimulating proactive initiations and actively informing and communicating with citizens.

Since the topics around transitions, crises and sustainability are also main topics at HEIs, an active involvement of employees via PVEs might also benefit these institutions. Due to the so-called Third Mission of HEIs, they have the obligation to actively contribute to society alongside their primary roles of teaching and conducting research. The active involvement of employees also fosters understanding of policies, increased support and new initiations regarding the societal challenges. Nevertheless, employee involvement within academic institutions still needs to be explored within literature studies.

However, the HEIs and citizens cannot be compared one-to-one. Whereas the power and knowledge of governmental institutions and citizens often lay more on the governmental side, this research shows that within professional bureaucracies the power and knowledge lie within the operational core. Within this core, the professionals, mainly comprising academic staff, have great freedom to shape their work based on standardisation of skills and knowledge. This academic freedom and self-direction set professional bureaucracies apart from other institutions. In contrast, citizens often have less autonomy and therefore are much more vulnerable for new policies. The limited power at the administrative level of professional bureaucracies makes it essential to involve the almost autonomously operating core in policy implementation and strategic processes. This ensures that the policy implementation around strategy will eventually work out.

This master thesis explores whether the successful governmental participation method, the PVE, can be adapted and effectively applied to the academic context. The research seeks to understand how the PVE could effectively promote employee engagement, serve as a communication tool, and provide valuable insights for strategic policymakers to drive transitions and sustainability efforts in HEIs eventually. The main question of this study is:

"What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation

within strategy formation processes of higher education institutions?"

The research uses a case study approach, focusing on the Convergence Alliance, comprising Delft University of Technology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and Erasmus Medical Centre. A PVE is designed and subsequently applied to involved Convergence employees, originating from the three institutions. To eventually answer the main question, multiple sub-questions have been drafted. Since the target groups of the PVE in professional bureaucracies and governmental institutions differ, the first sub-question of this research addresses the differences between these two contexts and how this might influence the effectiveness of PVE in HEIs. An attempt to study this question is made by answering the following question:

SQ 1: *What is the added value of Participatory Value Evaluations in other contexts?*

To answer this question, two previously conducted citizen-to-government PVEs are analysed, together with an earlier PVE study conducted within a company. Literature turns out that using PVE within a company context can be of added value through:

1. Using PVE as a convenient means to share knowledge, experience, and preferences.
2. Using PVE as a mechanism for constructing an accessible knowledge repository.
3. Using PVE as a methodology to gain insights into the effects of different choices, thereby facilitating decision-making processes.
4. Using PVE as a medium to gather information from multiple departments and teams.

Comparing these outcomes to the results of the PVE of Convergence, all four statements are also fully accomplished within the context of HEIs. There is gained much information and therefore knowledge about the preferences and motivations of the employees. Furthermore, by asking questions regarding their workplace and professional category, the insights can be presented per department and team.

Subsequently, the two other previously analysed PVEs are situated within the citizen-to-government context. One of the studies examines effective citizen participation through PVE in Utrecht and the other one is a PVE conducted in the municipality Súdwest-Fryslân. The goals they aimed to meet were representation, low fatigue, usefulness, awareness, and meaningfulness.

Goals about awareness and meaningfulness are assessed through the PVE consultations, while representation, low fatigue, and usefulness are examined in interviews with civil servants. Descriptive statistics of the PVE also illustrated the representation. Results in Table 5 show full achievement of goals 1, 2, and 5, and partial achievement of goals 3 and 4.

Table 5: Added value of previously conducted PVEs in different contexts.

Goal	Description	Who is questioned	Goal accomplished
1) Representation	Enables the involvement of participants who normally do not participate	Civil servants	Fully
2) Low Fatigue	Minimal time commitment required for civil servants	Civil servants	Fully
3) Awareness	Promote awareness among citizens	Citizens	Partly
4) Meaningfulness	Citizens should experience the participation as meaningful	Citizens	Partly
5) Usefulness	Results should provide useful information for decision-making	Civil servants	Fully

Civil servant interviews reveal that the 'representation' goal is met via PVE, enabling engagement from citizens who do not usually participate offline. Anonymity in PVE fosters a secure environment, encouraging diverse participation. Subsequently, the 'low fatigue' goal is fully met, as PVE requires less time than offline meetings. Next, regarding 'awareness,' most of the participants learned more about municipal choices, which insight foster sympathy and acceptance for government decisions. Further, for the goal about 'meaningfulness', a slight majority find PVE effective for involving citizens. Most believe PVE should be used more by the municipality. Lastly, the 'usefulness' goal is fully achieved, aligning PVE insights with the preferences of citizens already in contact with the municipality. PVE yields qualitative information, offering civil servants valuable insights into citizen motivations. Participants also acknowledged the value of the absence of suggestive questions during the process and the level of involvement and clarity of the information presented.

As employee involvement within academic institutions still needs to be explored, one of the sub questions is to gain more insight into the participatory methods which are currently used at HEIs, and their corresponding advantages and disadvantages. The following sub-question addresses this:

SQ 2: *How are higher institution employees currently engaged in strategy formation processes?*

The institutions within Convergence employ diverse participatory methods to involve their employees in strategic formation processes. The most commonly used method is open meetings, where employees are openly invited to participate. However, organising these meetings cause challenges, concerning the open meetings' content objectivity and the reach of employees.

For instance, employees from the Erasmus MC are working in different time slots, making it difficult for everyone to attend these open meetings. The use of PVE could tackle these two disadvantages, as they are carefully and iterative designed with the active avoiding of subjective language. Also, the PVE can be filled in whenever an employee is available.

Two more individual-focused methods are the use of newsletters and the talk show. The aim of these two mediums is to inspire other employees, but only attract a few participants to be actively engaged in writing the newsletter and speaking on the talk shows.

Additionally, one of the institutions uses a platform in where they can actively send statements to all their employees, but also to openly answer their questions. The PVE differs from the platform in terms of openness. Whereas the PVE is entirely anonymous, and its answers are only visible to researchers, the platform allows all employees to respond to each other's questions openly. Further research could explore how this open strategy forming approach and the PVE can complement each other.

In conclusion, the institutions currently utilize a wide range of participatory methods. Nonetheless, the extent to which these methods truly embody participatory principles and whether there are more effective and efficient alternatives remain important considerations. As can be seen, the PVE overcomes the obstacles of objectivity and scheduling but may lag with its openness.

To explore how employees experience the use of a PVE in the strategic formation process, the following sub-question is addressed in the study:

SQ 3: *What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation on employee's engagement within higher education institutions?*

To answer this question, both interviews and evaluation questions after the PVE were conducted. Within the statements, an often-chosen option is the 'neutral' option. To draw conclusions, this study focused on the (completely) agree or (completely) disagree options. The consultation shows that 30 percent of the respondents agree with the statement "This research steered my choices in a certain direction". Further research could identify the rationales of this feeling. Nevertheless, most of the respondents trust that the consultation is fair research.

Regarding the employee's engagement within HEIs, the consultation results shows that a significant majority, 81 percent, thinks Convergence is an important topic to give their opinion on. This could imply that involving employees within strategic formation processes is preferred and could be further researched by, for instance, conducting interviews. 47 percent of the respondents think the institutions should use the PVE more frequently to question their employees. Besides, 45 percent of the respondents agreed that using PVE increases their feeling of engagement towards the institution they are working in.

The outcomes of these statements indicate that the PVE can be partly considered meaningful, thus fulfilling the goal of meaningfulness, as supported by literature and shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Goals PVE of employees within HEIs compared to literature.

Goal	Description	Who is questioned	Goal accomplished in literature	Goal accomplished in this study
Awareness	Promote awareness among citizens	Employees	Partly	Partly
Meaningfulness	Citizens should experience the participation as meaningful	Employees	Partly	Partly
Communication	Feeling of a two-way flow between policy makers and employees with no suggestive language	Employees	Fully	Partly

Additionally, the interviewees mention that the PVE is of added value because they now have gained a better understanding of Convergence as an overarching phenomenon, which adds to the goal of awareness in Table 6. However, one interviewee did not think the PVE is of added value because it missed a lot of background information due to the over-concreteness of particular statements. This indicated that the goal of awareness was partly fulfilled. Furthermore, the PVE could be of more added value by including how the Executive Board will provide feedback. This lacking feedback also decreases the feeling of engagement towards the institution. Furthermore, this lack of bidirectional communication makes that the goal of communication is not achieved fully. However, the interviewees agree with the absence of suggestive language within the consultation. Another interviewee mentions that the feeling of engagement has increased. Moreover, the interviewees who are not active on a managerial level gained a better understanding of Convergence. So, these findings show how the PVE also serves as a way of communicating, as hypothesized in Figure 30.

Since the PVE is a manner of involving employees within strategic decision-making and the participants of the PVE mostly agreed upon the agreement whether the PVE positively influenced their feeling of engagement towards the institution they are working, it could be concluded that a PVE is of added value regarding an employee's feeling of engagement. However, the interviewees do not fully agree with this and would like more bidirectional communication with the Executive Board. As has been hypothesized, clear communication within a PVE also can be seen as added value as specifically mentioned by the interviewees. It could be further researched whether this way of communication also directly influences employee's feelings of engagement.

The fourth sub question addressed the perspectives of the policy makers, in this thesis the Convergence Office.

SQ 4: *What is the added value of applying a Participatory Value Evaluation for strategic policymakers within higher education institutions?*

To answer this question, an interview with the Convergence Office was conducted. Subsequently, the results of this interview can be compared to literature about previously executed PVEs and their added value within different contexts. To ascertain whether the aims, and subsequently the benefits, related to representation, low fatigue, and usefulness are similarly attained within the context of HEIs, the interview with the CO includes three questions concerning these objectives. The interview confirms the successful achievement of all three objectives, as detailed in Table 7.

Table 7: Goals PVE of policy makers within HEIs compared to literature.

Goal	Description	Who is questioned	Goal accomplished in literature	Goal accomplished in this study
Representation	Enables the involvement of participants who normally do not participate	Policy maker	Fully	Fully
Low Fatigue	Minimal time commitment required for civil servants	Policy maker	Fully	Fully
Usefulness	Results should provide useful information for decision-making	Policy maker	Fully	Fully

Given that the CO typically interacts primarily with program coordinators, the introduction of the PVE process provided a notable contrast in terms of representativeness. A much wider range of employees was engaged, fulfilling the goal of representation. Moreover, even though organising a PVE demanded a considerable investment of time, the benefits regarding the insightful outcomes and the extensive outreach outweighed the efforts invested. Consequently, the objective of minimizing fatigue was also satisfactorily met. Another goal derived from the citizen-to-government PVE literature was about usefulness. The CO also confirmed the insightfulness of the results, thus confirming the attainment of the usefulness goal.

The achievement of these three goals implicates the comparable effectives of applying the PVE approach within the context of HEIs as opposed to citizen-to-government interactions. However, to further explore potential added value, there are also asked some open-ended questions. In response, the CO highlighted the value of again articulating their own objectives with clarity and insight. Even though Convergence is a few years old already, the process of reformulating goals in a distinct and focused manner remained beneficial. Furthermore, the announcement of the research fostered feelings of positivity among the program coordinators. The CO also mentioned that the PVE can also partly be used as a communication tool, enabling less involved employees to gain a comprehensive understanding of Convergence's bigger picture. Finally, the CO mentioned the added value of when the respondents sitting in the chairs of the management, it helped employees see the results of decisions more clearly because they experience the consequences.

In summary, the PVE shows promising potential to work within professional bureaucracies like HEIs and therefore is of significant added value. The main takeaways of this research for conducting a PVE within the HEI context are:

1. It is essential to acknowledge the distinctions between HEIs and the general population since professional bureaucracies have unique characteristics, such as a highly autonomous operational core. Involving this operational core is essential to ensure the strategic vision is supported. The PVE results show a positive response from participants when questioning whether they think giving their opinion on strategic topics as Convergence is important for them. Therefore, it could be beneficial to use all the knowledge and insights available within the operating core. Furthermore, much specialised information is only available within the operational core, making it even more important to ensure these employees participate.

2. Utilizing a PVE within the HEI context can cause challenges regarding the openness of the strategic process and therefore has a major drawback. To address the challenges, it is crucial to communicate clearly with the participants about how feedback will be provided to ensure transparency and trust in the employees. When employees experience a feeling of not being valued within the participatory trajectory, this might decrease their commitment towards the institution. Furthermore, the absence of bidirectional communication also leads to less employee engagement, eventually decreasing well-being and organisational outcomes. So, starting a PVE trajectory without establishing preconditions or design principles in advance can cause adverse effects and thus nullifying the potential added value of the consultation.

3. The utilization of a PVE can be fruitful in overcoming challenges related to subjective language. These challenges tend to arise particularly in contexts like talk shows or open meetings, where participants often lack sufficient time to carefully consider their words, resulting in more thoughtless communication. The multiple iteration rounds of a PVE and a focus on neutral language, help create a more unbiased tool for strategic formation. Given the inherent autonomic nature of the professional bureaucracy's core, characterised by critical academics within HEIS, it becomes even more imperative to identify shared dilemmas and objectively express them. Opting solely for open meetings or talk shows might lead to a higher likelihood of employees expressing their views autonomously, which could influence decisions in a particular direction and therefore give rise to subjective language. Moreover, the multiple iteration rounds also are of added value to the policymakers of the institutions, because of again articulating their own objectives facilitates clarity and insight. Even though institutions already exist for a long period, the process of reformulating goals in a distinct and focused manner remained beneficial.

4. The utilization of a PVE can be beneficial in overcoming obstacles caused by varying working hours within institutions. Organising live events most of the time excludes some employees due to their other (work-related) commitments, whereas a PVE allows greater flexibility in participation. Since varying working hours count for every organisation, this added value can be generalised to a greater audience.

The demand of transdisciplinary educated people and the increase in worldwide crises makes the acceleration of awareness to as many people as possible a crucial activity. To do so, it is time to break the mold of participation and involve all the smart higher education institution brains into the decision-making processes. Let's cross boundaries, together.

7.

Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion based on the findings and methods used in this study. First, the contribution of the research is discussed. Thereafter, the limitations of the research are discussed. Finally, some recommendations for further research will be presented.

7.1. Contributions of the research

Academic impact

While prior studies have focussed on participatory processes within companies, the effectiveness of PVE within a governmental context and the positive effects of citizen and employee involvement, this research aimed to fill the academic gap about exploring the added value of PVE within higher education institutions. Since literature shows the positive impact from PVE on the decision-making processes regarding citizen issues, it could be hypothesized and therefore researched if and how the PVE might positively affect employees and policy makers within HEIs as well.

By conducting a literature review, doing interviews and executing a PVE, this research gained a lot of new knowledge surrounding the added value of PVEs within HEIs. Firstly, literature shows multiple studies on the positive effects from so-called high involvement work practices on employee engagement. To empirically research these findings, a case study has been set up after which a PVE is designed to apply to the chosen case, called Convergence. The study emphasized the importance of viewing HEIs as professional bureaucracies, which may support in explaining the differences between the governmental context and the HEI context when applying a PVE. Furthermore, the study highlighted both the perceived added value by employees as by the policy makers of HEIs and explored earlier used participatory methods of universities. In this way, the study academically contributes by exploring the perspectives around performing a PVE in the context of HEIs.

By comparing the results of this study with outcomes of previously conducted PVEs within the citizen-to-government settings, it can be observed that the differences are not that substantial. However, a few notable distinctions have emerged, which could offer interesting insights for further research.

To start, the employees within HEIs and, consequently, professional bureaucracies, have, as expected, a critical perspective toward the method. Consistently, aspects like the use of non-suggestive language, the extent of involvement in the design process, and the establishment of bidirectional communication flows reoccur as significant aspects of attention.

The insights learned from the citizen-to-government context can be really useful when looking at how managers communicate and interact with their employees and therefore supports employees-to-manager relations. This research underscores the PVE's ongoing potential to enhance added value, emphasizing the importance of transferring lessons learned from one context to another.

Societal impact

Given the empirical nature of this study, its societal significance lies in the valuable insights derived from PVE and interview outcomes, which can contribute to the expansion of PVE into new domains. The findings hold relevance for organisational policy makers and researchers from Populytics. However, it is important to emphasize the exploratory nature of the study. The study provides various insights in the advantages and challenges of applying a PVE within HEI context but does not determine whether universities or other professional bureaucracies should adopt the method.

Furthermore, the societal impact is also directly evident within the results of the PVE and the evaluative interviews with Convergence employees. The majority of the employees express the importance of giving their opinion on topics like Convergence. Introducing PVE more frequently positively impacts the employees feeling of engagement. Enhancing a more bidirectional way of communication surrounding the PVE process, the societal impact can even increase due to the fostering of feelings of employee engagement.

7.2. Research limitations

The first point of discussion concerns the choice for conducting a scoping literature review. Since the findings of a scoping literature do have a broad nature, it took a lot of time to fulfil the literature review. This somehow limited the time for the development of the empirical research consisting of the PVE. Furthermore, within the scoping literature review, there were no rigor or quality criteria regarding the papers. Future research may dive deeper into a more structured way of literature review, based on the first exploratory findings of this research.

Secondly, there are some aspects related to the validity and reliability of the study which needs to be discussed. First of all, the number of interviewees will not lead to saturation. However, the interviews mostly served as an explanatory method to motivate the perspectives on the PVE. As the results of the interviews vary, further research may focus even more on conducting interviews, since the results provide many concrete insights and therefore serve as possible adjustments for the development of PVEs in HEIs.

Another limitation of the study is about the external validity. Since the Convergence Office was responsible for the dissemination of the consultation, there was no control over the equality of participants. This could have influenced the results, as it is not clear who received and who did not receive the invitation for the consultation.

A second discussion point regarding external validity is about the applicability of the findings on other situations. As the professional bureaucracies do have their own unique characteristics, a lot of the rationales correspond to the governmental rationales for executing a PVE. However, it should be taken into account that the employees of HEIs are quite autonomous. Nevertheless, they still appreciate to be asked about strategic topics like Convergence, which makes it plausible that other organisations might benefit from the PVE results as well.

Additionally, the lack of clarity regarding the population size has also affected the study. As a result, the sample size remains ambiguous and may not fully account for the entire population's diversity and characteristics. The population was vaguely scoped by 'employees involved within Convergence', without any concrete numbers. A clearer view on the number of involved employees could gain a more transparent outcome of the research.

Furthermore, as a single case study, the research possesses certain limitations. It primarily serves as an exploratory investigation and cannot test theories extensively. While the findings provide valuable insights, they should be interpreted with caution regarding generalizations to broader contexts.

Subsequently, the main time-consuming part of the PVE process is the design phase. Within this phase the researcher needs to find out what is going on among the employees, which questions are still unanswered and what dilemmas are there. When conducting a PVE, this is a crucial phase regarding the content of the PVE. It could be further researched to what extent the design phase and thus the eventual content of the PVE, influences the employees feeling of involvement and engagement.

Regarding the face validity of the research, it could be discussed whether the question about the feeling of engagement needs more clarification. The term 'engagement' might be differently interpreted and thus giving a vague picture of the possible effect from PVE on engagement. Moreover, it could be further researched which specific aspects of the PVE influences an employee feeling of engagement.

For the simplicity of the research, the Erasmus MC is also assumed to be a HEI. However, the Erasmus MC mainly serves as hospital and therefore might need a different approach when also including employees who are not involved in any research or education related activities.

Furthermore, the interviews about participatory methods are only conducted with employees from the Strategic Development departments. However, it could have been that employees from for instance

Human Resource Management might have had more knowledge about participatory methods and the effect on employee engagement within HEIs.

7.3. Recommendations for further research

As this study has an exploratory approach, multiple findings for further research have been found. Three main proposals are done to kick-start follow-up research.

1) **Add the question "Would you have liked to be involved in the design of this PVE?"**
Since there are a few respondents expressing concerns about the consultation having a top-down perspective and being geared towards generating positive feedback, along with comments about the design's potential for improvement in terms of effectiveness and ease of use, and the feeling of restrictiveness in the questions, involving a larger audience in the PVE design process might help mitigate these issues. To explore this possibility, the question 'Would you have liked to be involved in the design of this PVE?' could be introduced at the end of a PVE. As researchers themselves also use a significant number of methods, it is plausible that they are interested in co-designing the consultation. When it turns out that employees are indeed keen to be involved, there could be organised an open call to invite employees to participate in the design process. This approach could potentially address the concerns raised and lead to a more inclusive and effective PVE.

2) **Research on who needs to define the dilemmas within a PVE.**
Next to researching the willingness of employees to participate in the design process, second research could be about how the employees should be involved in the design process and about who has the final say on the dilemmas which will be included in the consultation. Since the Erasmus MC has good experiences with the use of a platform, this open strategizing tool might be of added value within the process of a PVE. Moreover, due to the autonomously working operating core of HEIs, a lot of knowledge lies within this organisations part. It could be questioned if the operational core would be a better part of the organisation to set the dilemmas, instead of policymakers. Further research could be about how the PVE could position itself within open strategy and about the possible shift of responsibility regarding the dilemmas to the operational core.

3) **Study the design principles and preconditions of conducing a PVE within HEIs.**
The term 'participation' can easily be used as a buzzword. During this research, it became clear that a real participatory process needs to exist of participation throughout the whole trajectory. Having a bidirectional information and communication flow proved necessary. Furthermore, using participation and participatory tools without involving the results in the final decision making negatively affects trust. Therefore, it is necessary to study the design principles and preconditions of executing a PVE process within HEIs. Which leadership style is needed? As written in literature, executing deliberate strategy needs to be acknowledged and embraced to achieve organisational goals. Further research could be about how a PVE need to be used in such a way the added value will comes into its own.

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Appendix A: Literature review

Figure 36: Literature review search plan

Identification	Screening	Eligibility	Included

(TS="higher education" OR TS="universit*")
AND (TS="strategy formation" OR
TS="strategic development" OR TS="strategic
planning" OR TS="strategic change") AND
(TS="particip*" OR TS="co-creation" OR
TS="employee involvement")
Web of Science with criteria full available
(n=95)

Initial screening for studies with employee
involvement or participatory approaches within
strategy formation processes of HEIs
(n=24)

Forward and backward snowballing from the
articles to gain more insight into the definitions
of the key concepts (*employee involvement,
employee engagement, strategic processes*
and *higher education institutions*)
(n=7)

Articles included in literature review
(n= 31)

Non-relevant records excluded
(n=71)

After screening
(n=24)

Appendix B: Interview questions

Interview strategic development (15 min)

1. Wat is uw functie binnen strategic development?
2. Hebben jullie in het verleden gebruik gemaakt van medewerkersparticipatie trajecten? Hoe zagen deze trajecten eruit?
3. Wat waren hier de voor- en nadelen van?
4. Waar lopen jullie tegen aan bij het betrekken van medewerkers?
5. Wat zijn best practices?

Interview PWE respondenten (15 min)

1. Hoe bent u betrokken bij Convergence?
2. Vindt u de PWE van toegevoegde waarde? Waarom wel of niet?
3. Voelt u zich meer of minder gehoord na het invullen van de PWE? En waarom?
4. Heeft u door het invullen van de PWE een beter beeld van Convergence? Waarom?
5. Heeft de PWE effect op uw gevoel van engagement bij de instelling waar u werkt?

Interview Convergence Office (45 min)

1. Hoe hebben jullie het PWE-proces ervaren? Waarom wel of niet?
2. Hebben jullie het idee dat de representativiteit van participatie is toegenomen? Hebben er deelnemers deelgenomen die normaal niet participeren? Waarom wel of niet?
3. Was het jullie intentie de PWE ook te gebruiken als communicatiemiddel? Waarom wel of niet?
4. Hoe ervaarden jullie de tijdsbesteding aan de PWE? Waarom wel of niet?
5. Leveren de resultaten bruikbare inzichten op? Waarom wel of niet?
6. Wat gaan jullie doen met de resultaten nu deze bekend zijn?
7. Zouden jullie de PWE vaker willen inzetten? Waarom wel of niet?
8. Los van de positieve aspecten die jullie reeds hebben genoemd, zijn er nog andere noemenswaardige PWE-aspecten van toegevoegde waarde?

Appendix C: PVE process
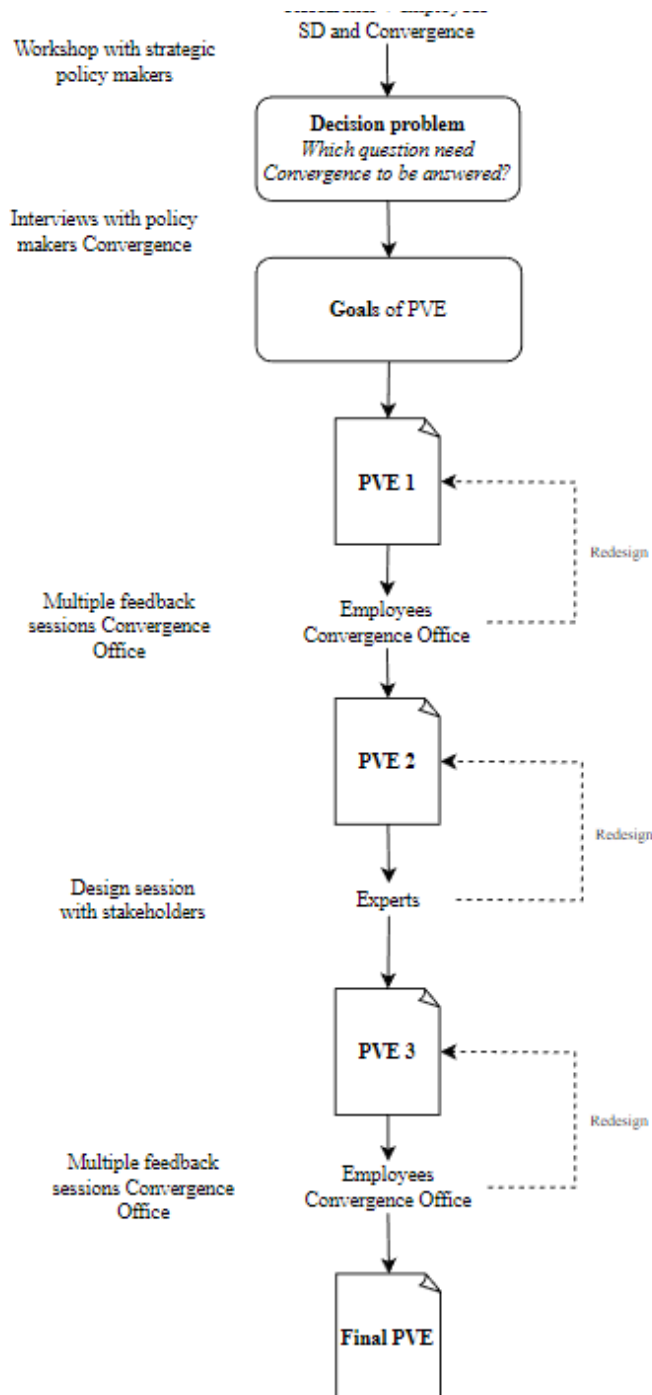
Concept-keuzetaak 5: Verdeel 100 punten over de waarden

Wat is voor u belangrijk om als Convergence te realiseren?

De inspanningsmogelijkheden van Convergence zijn beperkt. Wat moet de CA volgens u vooral realiseren? U heeft 100 punten te verdelen.

	Eigen identiteit van de instellingen bewaken		Meer bestuurlijke ondersteuning vanuit Convergence
Convergence moet zich meer inspannen voor de economische ontwikkeling van de regio		Meer gemeenschappelijk onderzoek	Convergence moet ervoor zorgen dat de internationale allure van de drie instellingen sterker wordt
	Meer gemeenschappelijk onderwijs		Versnellen van het samenwerkingsproces
Convergence moet gericht zijn op de maatschappelijke bijdrage van de drie instellingen		Actievere inzet zichtbaarheid Convergence op faculteiten	

3/100

Gespreksvragen

- Welke opties missen we?
- Staan er opties die minder logisch zijn?
- Welke reacties wekt dit ontwerp bij je op?
- Wat bevalt goed en wat minder goed?

94

Verdeel je budget

POPULYTICS
What would you do?

Gebruik de sliders om meer of minder geld toe te kennen aan de verschillende manieren waarop Convergence gefinancieerd zou kunnen worden. Wat zou jij doen als je jaarlijks 15 miljoen zou mogen verdelen?

i Ontwikkelen van transdisciplinair Convergence onderwijs

[Bedrag]

Financiëren gezamenlijke onderzoeksvoorstellen

Geen extra budget   [Bedrag]

i Investeren in de organisatie van congressen met gemeenschappelijke thema's

Geen extra budget   [Bedrag]

i Geld naar aantrekken nieuwe onderzoekers binnen de Convergence programma's

Geen extra budget   [Bedrag]

Kosten Convergence
Maximaal 15 miljoen

5 miljoen euro

Overige effecten

Wendbaarheid

Continuïteit

Groei

Verdeel je budget

POPULYTICS
What would you do?

Gebruik de sliders om meer of minder geld toe te kennen aan de verschillende manieren waarop Convergence gefinancieerd zou kunnen worden. Wat zou jij doen als je jaarlijks 15 miljoen zou mogen verdelen?

I Geld naar het aantrekken van nieuwe onderzoekers binnen de Convergence programma's

Geen extra inzet (0 punten)   [Budget]

i Financiëren van wetenschappelijke staf met vaste contracten

Geen extra inzet (0 punten)   [Budget]

i Werving additionele onderzoeksfinanciering

Geen extra inzet (0 punten)   [Budget]

i Investeren in de facilitatie en organisatie van data-uitwisseling

Geen extra inzet (0 punten)   [Budget]

Kosten Convergence
Maximaal 15 miljoen

5 miljoen euro

Gespreksvragen

- Welke opties missen we?
- Staan er opties die minder logisch zijn?
- Welke reacties wekt dit ontwerp bij je op?
- Wat bevalt goed en wat minder goed?

Appendix E: PVE design

Page 1

Figure 38: Introduction PVE

Page 2

Page 3.1

←

A few more questions

At which institution are you contracted?* (1/4)

- ○ Delft University of Technology
- ○ Erasmus University Rotterdam
- ○ Erasmus Medical Center
- ○ I prefer not to say

Which professional category best fits your current job?* (2/4)

- ○ Managing scientific staff (e.g. dean, head of department etc.)
- ○ (Assistant/associate/full) professor
- ○ Support staff (e.g. project controller, communication etc.)
- ○ Postdoc/PhD
- ○ Other
- ○ I prefer not to say

Page 3.2

- ○ Support staff (e.g. project controller, communication etc.)
- ○ Postdoc/PhD
- ○ Other
- ○ I prefer not to say

Are you familiar with Convergence?* (3/4)

- ○ Yes, I am involved or have been involved in (a part of) Convergence
- ○ I know Convergence a little bit
- ○ No, I am not familiar with Convergence
- ○ I prefer not to say

Before Convergence started, were you already collaborating with any of the other institutions involved in Convergence? (4/4)

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Next →

Page 4

Page 5: Choice task one: distributing point to the different goals of Convergence

Page 6: Motivation for the goals who got point and a general motivation for the ones who did not

Page 7: Explanation choice task two

Page 8.1: Choice task with sliders about the main actions of Convergence

Page 8.2: Choice task with sliders about the main actions of Convergence

Page 9: Motivation for each slider option

Page 10: A few more questions

Page 11.1: Questions about this research

Questions about this research

Please indicate whether you agree with the statements below* (1/6)

	Completely agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely disagree	Prefer not to say/I don't know
This research steered my choices in a certain direction	○	○	○	○	○	○
I trust this is a fair research	○	○	○	○	○	○
I thought it was an important topic to give my opinion on	○	○	○	○	○	○
This method contributes to my feeling of engagement for the institution I am working for	○	○	○	○	○	○
The institutions should involve their employees more often through this method	○	○	○	○	○	○

What rating do you give to this survey? (2/6)

Select ⌄

Page 11.2: Questions about this research

What do you like about this research? (3/6)

What do you dislike about this research? (4/6)

Being part of this consultation helped me learn more about Convergence. (5/6)

○ Completely disagree

○ Disagree

○ Neutral

○ Agree

○ Completely agree

Page 11.3: Questions about this research

○ Completely disagree

○ Disagree

○ Neutral

○ Agree

○ Completely agree

What should the Convergence executive board do with the results of this consultation when formulating the strategic narrative? (6/6)

○ Take note of the results

○ Making the outcomes a limited consideration

○ Significantly weighting the outcomes

○ Heavily weighting the outcomes

○ Adopt the outcomes completely

Next →

Page 12: End of the consultation

Thank you!

What is next?

The results are analysed by researchers at Populytics whereafter they will be used to assist us in making choices concerning the future of Convergence.

convergence

Appendix F: PVE outcomes

What should be the main goals of Convergence?

Operational cooperation between the three institutions should be facilitated

Convergence must solve urgent societal problems

Convergence should expose students to transdisciplinary education

Convergence should put societal problems on the agenda of the public debate

Convergence should ensure that the international reputation of the three institutions becomes stronger

Convergence should encourage research to answer concrete research questions asked by regional practitioners

The institutions' own identity must be safeguarded

Convergence should encourage that research results in monetary benefits for the three institutions

What should be the main actions of Convergence?

Developing new shared transdisciplinary education programs

Lobbying towards national grant makers for additional research funding

Identifying areas characterized by high potential for collaboration, to encourage the full exploitation of potential cooperation between the institutions

Communication and marketing about Convergence within the three institutes (e.g. faculties, services, etc.)

Expanding mobility between institutions

Designing and launching joint projects within the five programs already in place

Creating dedicated workplaces for Convergence at all three institutions

Supporting management decisions on Convergence

Organising shared conferences

0,00   0,05   0,10   0,15   0,20   0,25   0,30   0,35

Appendix G: List of events attended

Tabel 1: Attended events and meetings

Event or meeting	Aim
Attending an online core team session with the province of Noord-Holland for developing the design of a PVE	Learning how to iterate within the design phase of a PVE
Attending a physical design session with the province of Noord-Holland and different stakeholders for designing a PVE	Learning how to organize an efficient and effective stakeholder session to gain as much as possible valuable insights for designing a PVE
Attending a congress from the PBL named 'Betrokken burgers'	Gaining more insight in the rationals of actively involving citizens in different societal matters and how these rationals may also are applicable in the context of this thesis
Organizing a workshop at the strategic development department of the TU Delft	Giving the employees a clear understanding of the PVE, including making the PVE a more understandable tool myself by creating the presentation