ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ABE *E-MERGE*/BCCAMPUS INITIATIVE

BY

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Athabasca
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ABE *E-MERGE*/BCCAMPUS INITIATIVE submitted by JANTHEA HARKESS in
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my two daughters, Kaitlin and Brittany, who have throughout their lives shared me with my work and studies so that I could achieve this goal. This accomplishment will hopefully encourage them to pursue their goals and to never lose sight of them.

ABSTRACT

The evolution of the Adult Basic Education (ABE) *e-merge* initiative in British Columbia (BC) is the focus of this historical-comparative analysis. To place this research in context, the ABE *e-merge* initiative's design, development, and implementation is compared to the Applied Business Technology (ABT) and the Associate of Arts (AA) programs that initially formed the greater *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative. This case study provides a taxonomy of the history of adult distance education in BC to provide a framework in which to place the evolution of the ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative. This research will add to the current literature on adult distance education and ABE, and it will open the door to further research as this analysis attempts to explain the forces that determine the direction of BC's public post-secondary system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Very little research has been conducted on the Adult Basic Education (ABE) *e-merge* initiative and its evolution within the greater *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative in British Columbia (BC). As this system-wide change is taking place in BC's public post-secondary education system, it is important to look at history in order to understand the past and to wisely direct the future. Therefore this historical-comparative analysis will document the history of adult distance education in BC to provide the context in which to frame the evolution of the ABE *e-merge* initiative.

The Province of British Columbia, through the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer & Technology (C2T2), facilitated the Provincial *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative to accommodate the diverse needs of adult learners. C2T2's mandate is to "support educators' efforts to provide students with access to quality, relevant, and flexible learning opportunities" (C2T2, 2002b*)*. The Centre provides educational resources and services in curriculum development; educational technology; teaching, learning and assessment; student transitions; and institutional effectiveness for the post-secondary system in British Columbia. As such, C2T2 has been instrumental in taking a system-wide, grassroots approach in the development of this initiative through its innovative, consultative, and collaborative approach to curriculum and program development. This approach is reflected in the description of the *e-merge* initiative on C2T2's website, which states that the *e-merge* initiative is

a system-wide project for the development of online courses and programs in British Columbia. It involves multiple post-secondary institutions in a collaborative effort to share curricula, support services, administrative services, and credentialing (C2T2, 2001c, p. 1).

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) component of this Provincial initiative focuses on the collaborative system-wide delivery of ABE courses online.

This thesis documents the evolution of the ABE *e-merge* component within the greater *e-merge* initiative and the public post-secondary system as a whole in the form of an historical-comparative analysis. In so doing, this research will add to the literature on the history of ABE and record the new developments taking place in ABE and in adult distance education in British Columbia (BC).

Statement of Purpose

This research will provide a comparative analysis of the phases of adult distance education in BC's public post-secondary system that will provide a taxonomy from which to compare the evolution of the ABE *e-merge* initiative with the greater *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative. In so doing, it will compare the development of the first three *e-merge*/BCcampus programs. It will also discuss and compare the resources needed for the design, development, and implementation of these online programs as well as the roles and perspectives of the people involved. Finally, this research will place the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative within the historical context of adult distance education in the Province of BC as a whole. Therefore, it will focus on the question: *What is the ABE e-merge project, and how did it evolve?*

Statement of the Problem

Since the Adult Basic Education (ABE) *e-merge* project is a new initiative for the Province of British Columbia, there is very little written about it. The Applied Business Technology (ABT) project was the first of these initiatives to be developed and implemented; however, the project is still *e-merging* (so to speak), consequently leaving much room for further research. In the Fall 2002, the ABE *e-merge* project was just being developed. The Provincial Level Technical and Professional English, the Advanced Level Computer Studies, and the Intermediate Level Math courses were just being piloted. The problem at that time was that the literature about the BC *e-merge* project was primarily focused on the Applied Business Technology (ABT) *e-merge* component, since it was the first to be implemented. Since Adult Basic Education (ABE) serves learners with unique needs, ABE evolved under different conditions than its counterparts ABT and Associate of Arts (AA). As it developed from the grassroots and was funded under the umbrella of the *e-merge* initiative, there has been very little written about the ABE *e-merge* project and how it has evolved within the greater initiative in relation to traditional ABE projects. Therefore, this research will look at the unique characteristics of the ABE *e-merge* initiative, its significance, and the conditions under which its evolution has taken place.

The Contribution This Study Will Make to the Literature

The contribution this study will make to the literature will be not only to provide information on what is happening in Adult Basic Education in BC, but it will be also to clarify the process and framework for others interested in establishing

similar programs. It will open the door to further research so that educators and decision-makers can learn from, and can continue to build on, the good practices to meet the needs adult learners and society as a whole. Therefore, this study will be of interest to professionals involved in adult basic education and adult education in general. As the ABE *e-merge* initiative progresses, this research will also help direct future projects that will come as a result of this initiative.

Background and Significance of the Problem

As the ABE *e-merge* project is in its initial stages of development, there is very little documentation on its evolution. Most of the information written about this project is located on the *E-merge: BC online program*'s website. This website, developed by C2T2 provides

- Background information about e-merge
- Reports and research papers related to the progress of e-merge courses and programs
- Resources to assist with the design, development, and implementation of online courses and programs
- Descriptions of roles and contact information
- A showcase of exemplary work (C2T2, 2001c).

This information helps current and prospective participants in the *e-merge* project and others involved in adult education by providing documentation on the project's evolution.

Although much has been written about the history of adult education in BC, little has been written about distance adult basic education and how it has evolved in BC. The focus of much of the literature has been on the need for distance education to offer access and choice by utilising new technologies and on how those technologies have impacted the development and delivery of adult education. This research will add to this literature and will extend the existing chronologies to include online adult basic education. It will also add to the current databases of information on online initiatives taking place in British Columbia and Canada. It will help to put the *e-merge*/BCcampus' evolution, and particularly that of the ABE Online initiative, in context within the system as a whole. As such, it will be a valuable contribution to the current literature about ABE, distance education, and distributed learning.

Limitations

A major limitation of this research is that it is a single case review of adult basic education in BC. Its focus is on one geographic location and one particular program. The extension of these findings to other programs or other venues is in the hands of the reader.

Delimitations

The major delimitation of this research is the scope of it. In order to keep the project manageable, only samples of people who were involved in the *e-merge* initiative were captured. There have been many people involved in some way with this initiative; however, only sixteen of those who were involved with ABE and the *e-merge* iniative were targetted. Also, due to the time required to trace all secondary

sources, only those provided by or referred to by the interviewees and other sources located through search mechanisms, as required by the researcher, have been used. Therefore, this research sample is not representative of the whole public post-secondary system in BC.

Research Design

Since this research is intended to understand a particular social event, the Qualitative Research Paradigm was used as the framework for the study (Cresswell, 1994, p. 161). Within the Qualitative Research Paradigm, a case study based on an historical-comparative analysis will record the central events that caused the ABE *e-merge* project to evolve within the greater context of the Provincial *e-merge* initiative. A case study design suits this research as it "explores a single entity or phenomenon ('the case') bounded by time and activity (a program, event, process, institution, or social group) and collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time" (Cresswell, 1994, p. 12). The historical aspect of this research is defined in the case of an historical thesis, since "the methodology consisted of accessing documents that speak to a set of particular events (e.g., the factors surrounding the evolution or emergence of a large-scale distance education institution)" (Athabasca University, n.d., p. 10). The comparative analysis will focus on the idiosyncrasies of each project, particularly ABE, as they have evolved within the greater *e-merge* initiative and the British Columbia post-secondary system as a whole. Within these definitions, this research has been

conducted from the perspective of a case study based on historical-comparative research methodology.

An advantage of using this qualitative framework is that it left some room for exploring, before refining, the research. This exploration lent itself to developing an understanding of the evolution of this initiative within the greater system. It allowed the question and time frame to be broadened so that a more comprehensive study could be conducted to document the ABE *e-merge* initiative and its genesis. As a result, this thesis will document the evolution of distance learning in BC, and it will then compare the development and implementation of the ABE *e-merge* program with those programs that preceded it in the *e-merge/*BCcampus initiative as a whole*.*

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

Overview of the Theory and Research Literature

ABE is a key component in the college, institute and agency system. With dropout rates in some communities as high as 45% in the school system (Huget, 2002, p. 23), ABE has a significant social, political, and economic responsibility in providing opportunities for adults to upgrade their education. Consequently, G. Selman, M Seman, Cooke, & Dampier (1998) refer to adult education as "social or citizenship education" (p. 382-383). Without being provided the opportunity to learn of their opportunities, roles, and responsibilities as learned citizens, many adults cannot meet their potential and, consequently, cannot contribute positively to Canadian society. Therefore, access and choice and lifelong learning have been continuing themes in much research that has been conducted in adult education.

Neuman (2000) provided the theory from which this research was framed. The historical-comparative analysis construct allowed a qualitative review and analysis of the history of adult distance education in BC while comparing the development and implementation of the programs that now form part of the *e-merge/*BCcampus initiative. This research has revealed that as well as access and choice and lifelong learning being fundamental to the evolution of this initiative, several other themes have come through that open the door for further research. For example, the themes of collaboration, of relationships between horizontal and vertical systems within this initiative and the post-secondary system as a whole, and

of trust have been dominant. A review of the literature shows that these themes appear to meet the criterion of social capital as put forth by Daniel, Schwier, and McCalla (2003). A review of their literature on social capital and its relevance to virtual communities reveals that a great deal of social capital appears to have been invested in the ABE/*e-merge* initiative that warrants further research.

Trust and collaboration are key to the theory of social capital. Daniel, Schwier, and McCalla (2003) survey key research areas in social capital, and how social capital and trust can be extended to virtual communities, including virtual learning communities and distributed communities of practice. According to the authors, social capital has become an important research area in the social sciences and humanities to address social problems in temporal communities; however, "little has been done to extend this understanding to virtual communities" (p. 2). The authors define social capital as

> an imprecise social construct that has emerged from a rather murky swamp of terminology, but it is still useful for exploring culture, society and social networks . . . Social capital highlights the central importance of networks of strong personal relationships that develop over a period of time. Such relationships, it is argued, provide a basis for trust, cooperation, and collective action (Daniel, 2003, p. 2).

However, according to Daniel, Schwier & McCalla (2003), some authors more recently have adopted a more institutional tone. Researchers are attempting to analyse the social structures that contribute to organisations. For example, they are

analysing the institutional effectiveness of inter-organisational relationships and co-operation, as well as the horizontal relationships among similar firms and the vertical relationships in supply chains; they are also analysing multidirectional links to sources of technical knowledge, human resources, and public agencies. Researchers see this form of capital as the "stock" that is created when a group of organizations develop the ability to work together for mutually productive gains" (p. 2). They see it as powerful as physical and human capital.

Daniel et al. (2003) provide a meta-societal definition of social capital put forth by the World Bank (1999). The World Bank refers to social capital as the glue that holds together the institutions, relationships, and the norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions, rather than as the sum of the institutions that underpin a society (p. 2). The authors acknowledge that there is not a single definition of social capital, but they classify it into two major categories: the structural dimension and the content dimension. From this they have developed a working definition of social capital in virtual learning communities as a "common societal resource that facilitates information exchange, knowledge sharing, and knowledge construction through continuous interaction, built on trust and maintained through shared understanding" (p. 3). When taking this into consideration, one can see that there is a huge amount of social capital invested in the *e-merge/*BCcampus initiative and particularly in the stock of the ABE component.

Although there is no conclusive way to measure social capital as yet, the authors have ascertained the benefits, pitfalls, and implications of social capital. The

benefits of social capital allow people to resolve collective problems more easily and implement mechanisms, such as social sanctions to cope with breaches in social norms. Therefore social capital can preserve social norms in the community and reduce delinquent or selfish behaviour. When extended to educational institutions, the World Bank (1999) recognised that educational institutions were more effective when parents and local communities were actively involved. "The mentoring, networking and mutual support associated with high levels of social capital contributes to success in education" (Daniel, 2003, p. 3). By minimising transaction negotiation, imperfect information and layers of unnecessary bureaucracy, social capital benefits firms because it facilitates co-operation and co-ordination. This co-operation and co-ordination provides firms a competitive edge because of efficiency gains in time and the allocation of more resources to producing and marketing a better product at a higher volume. Consequently, social capital can bridge cultural differences by building a common identity and shared understanding. Through continuous interaction, social capital enables people to identify common interests and builds trust, which ultimately promotes better knowledge sharing due to established trust relationships, common frames of reference and shared goals. The Collaborative Online Delivery (COD) project that is discussed in this research is an example of where a project lacked knowledge-sharing and did not establish trust relationships, common frames of reference and shared goals with all participants in the initiative, which consequently led to its demise. Therefore, one could assume that the social capital invested in it was exclusive in nature.

Pitfalls of social capital are that communities that exhibit highly cohesive forms of social capital can promote exclusiveness to those within the community at the expense of others who are not part of the community, which may not be beneficial to society. Social capital is also problematic for researchers because it lacks theoretical specificity that may cause it to be viewed simplistically and link one cause to one variable, such as the simplistic rationale put forth above in relation to the COD project. Social capital must be recognised as multivariate in nature. Researchers have looked at three dimensions of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking. "Bonding social capital refers to relationships with people who are alike. . . . Bridging social capital is establishing relationships with people who are different. . . . Linking social capital refers to relationships with people in power" (p. 4). While bonding is considered good for building specific reciprocity and mobilising solidarity within a community, bridging is better for building links to external assets and for information diffusion. Consequently, studies have suggested that "social capital is created through purposeful action and resultant knowledge can be transformed into conventional economic gains" (p. 4). Therefore one can assume that social capital can benefit both individuals and the community to which they belong; however, there are pitfalls they may face that may be determined by their connectedness through bonding, bridging, and linking. The extent to which an individual can derive economic gains, however, is determined by the extent to which the individual is connected to others in the community.

This theory appears to provide the construct for further research to look at the communities that are involved in the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative, both the horizontal and the vertical frameworks, to "take stock" of the social capital that has been invested, and needs to be invested, for its ongoing success. As stated in Daniel et al. (2003),

> Fountain (1998) defines social capital as the institutional effectiveness of inter-organizational relationships and cooperation—horizontally among similar firms in associations, vertically in supply chains, and multidirectional links to sources of technical knowledge, human resources, and public agencies. This form of capital, Fountain argues, is as powerful as physical and human capital, and is the "stock" that is created when a group of organizations develop the ability to work together for mutually productive gains.

Therefore, in the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative, the horizontal framework would include the learners, the faculty, the support systems, and the courses and programs. The vertical framework would include the Ministry, the post-secondary administrators, faculty, students and their governing bodies: unions, articulation and professional committees, and other relevant agency representatives. Researching these bonding, bridging, and linking relationships will provide data to further understand and enhance this virtual learning community.

When studying virtual communities and social capital, Daniel et al. (2003), state that social capital

depends on the development of social relationships and these relationships

are built on social connections. But social connection requires people to

become aware of the people with whom they connect (socio-cultural

awareness), and under what circumstances they can obtain peer-support,

collaborate, learn, and work (knowledge awareness) together as a

community. Understanding socio-cultural and knowledge backgrounds of

individuals and their communities are critical to the development of trusting

relationships, which in turn influences the development of social capital in

virtual learning communities. It is reasonable to speculate that these variables

will play out differently in virtual settings [than in temporal settings], given the

physical separation and relative anonymity of community members, and the

social barriers imposed by technology (p. 7).

The evolution of the e-merge/BCcampus initiative has happened as a somewhat

trusting relationship, and it has developed through collaboration and co-operation.

For example, several interviewees stated that for the initiative to succeed, it had to

have the support of the grassroots. Therefore, consultations, presentations, and

communications took place with all parties involved, as well as with many who were

not, to develop a trust relationship that would enable the project to proceed

collaboratively. According to Daniel et al. (2003), the most important shared

characteristic in virtual learning communities and distributed communities of practice

is collaboration (p. 10). Since collaboration has been key to the development and

delivery of adult education in the post-secondary system in BC, and, in particular, to

the development and delivery of the e-merge/BCcampus initiative, the theoretical

framework of social capital could provide the framework for further research into the

collaborative, virtual learning environment and the distributed communities of

practice of the e-merge/BCcampus initiative.

Historical context of the research in relation to current research literature

Selman (1977) has documented the history of Adult Education in BC and

Canada. His chronology provides a timeline of the early history of adult education

that helped to put this research in the context of the history of distance education in

BC. His more recent publications, with Dampier (1997) and Dampier, M. Selman,

and Cook (1998), have provided a national perspective in which this research could

be also be placed. Selman et al.'s research with other studies and data have helped

to develop the framework for this historical-comparative analysis of the Provincial

ABE *e-merge* initiative and how it has evolved within the greater *e-merge*/BCcampus

initiative and British Columbia's distance adult education history.

Selman et al. (1998) discuss public policy and how tuition-free access to

Grade 12 for adults over the age of nineteen years of age in the public school

system in BC has helped to ensure continued support for adult basic education in

the 1990s in spite of fiscal restraints. They state that "[t]he college system has all but

abandoned ABE because they receive no funding for these programs" (p. 253).

Their statement appears to be true in the early 2000s. The present government has

discontinued the envelope funding that has previously supported various agencies,

programs, and learners in ABE programs in the province. It has instead shifted to a

block funding formula that allows institutions to allocate resources based on local priorities and preferences, rather than to the targeted recipients that were identified in the envelopes. Selman et al.'s (1998) conclusion is that adult education in British Columbia in the latter half of the 1990s appears to be piecemeal and fragmented. They noted the emphasis being on "prior learning assessment and recognition, distance education and learning outcomes—in each case, with particular reference to work-related training" (p. 253). This continues to be true. Their concern that "[p]rivate, for-profit training is increasing while publicly funded adult education in support of citizenship, culture and community building languishes in a policy vacuum" (p. 253) addresses some of the philosophical concerns faced by adult educators and, in particular, those currently in ABE in the public post-secondary system in BC.

Selman et al. (1998) acknowledge that it "has become commonplace to recognize that technological, environmental and economic changes are fundamentally altering people's lives" (p. 355). These changes were what motivated the move to online education. However, they also observe that "there is increased social fragmentation, with more people holding more strongly to specific affiliations connected with race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or political and religious views than to nation states or other larger and more heterogeneous groupings of people" (p. 356). This fragmentation then can be linked to their topic of "Distance Education and Educational Technology" (p. 380) where they discuss the different sectors of distance education and the issues associated with them. Selman et al.

(1998) group these issues into "Learner Issues" and "Social Issues" (pp. 382-383), some of which are the issues currently being faced by the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative.

Although some of the issues have been addressed since the date of their publication, some of them have not. For example, issues relating to the control of the learner over the content and processes of the course, the emotional commitment of the student to the course, the concern about the distinction between information and knowledge, the availability of equal access to advanced technologies and educational opportunities, and the contribution distance education will make to "social or citizenship education" are still, according to the authors, in need of attention (pp. 382-383). Selman et al. state that

> [t]here is concern on the part of many adult educators that a combination of conservative government policies and trends towards professionalism in the field of practice are producing an adult education enterprise—especially in the public sector—which is increasingly concerned with vocational and academic aspects and correspondingly less interested in the social and citizenship dimensions of adult learning in this country (p. 389).

This concern is very real to ABE educators, since ABE learners, more than others, tend to bring to the system unique needs that require the social and citizenship dimensions of adult learning. As the government continually looks at student success rates and for measurable learning outcomes according to vocational and professional requirements, an accurate measure ABE students' learning cannot be

taken. Unlike workplace training where students learn readily identifiable skills and knowledge about a particular profession or trade, many ABE learners often need to learn how to learn and to develop the confidence and social skills necessary to function in the academy and the workplace before they can enter workplace training. Adult Basic Education Student Outcomes studies in the past have shown that in the case of ABE students, measurable outcomes in relation to their learning experience take longer to be identified. Consequently, when Selman et al. (1998) address the "budget crunch" that has been taking place in adult education, the above social issues conflict with educational policies that "have been highly determined by the needs of the job market and by the over-riding concern for deficit reduction" (p. 389). These factors have greatly influenced the evolution of the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative and initially caused the breakdown of trust and collaboration in earlier attempts at system-wide change.

Gaber (2003), on the other hand, explores the history of the college, institute and agency system in BC, focusing on voluntary collaboration within the system and its swings between centralisation and decentralisation. He cites Schuetze & Day (2001) as arguing that the college, institute and agency system in BC as being one of the most co-ordinated and integrated systems in Canada. In his research, Gaber found that co-ordination, integration, and voluntary collaboration occurs on system-wide initiatives at many levels between autonomous institutions. However, there has been ongoing tension caused by the need to work as a coherent system and the continuing desire to maintain institutional autonomy.

Gaber found that much has been written about the historical development of British Columbia's post-secondary system in terms of important legislation, policy development, and events that have led to the co-ordination that is evident in the system. However, he found that there has not been research to document "the historical roots of the collaboration and the relationship between collaborative efforts and provincial coordination" (Gaber, 2003). He further states that research "has not been done to study specifically the movements between decentralization and centralization of the system of the last 40 years and the related theme of autonomous institutions moving towards becoming a system" (Gaber, 2003). He notes that "such research is becoming increasingly important as the college, institute and agency system in British Columbia has become more differentiated and fragmented, and coordination among institutions has become more difficult" (Gaber, 2003). These observations also support the need for further research that may fit into the domain of social capital as presented by Daniel et al. (2003).

Dennison (2003) attributes this differentiation, fragmentation, and lack of co-ordination to college administrators and instructors bearing workloads "which severely constrain the time and energy that they are able to devote to analytical thought and writing about the environment in which they work" (Gaber, 2003, Foreword). Dennison also notes that this situation is unfortunate, as "Canada's colleges are exciting, vibrant, and innovative institutions. They have opened the door to further education to thousands of Canadians, young and old, who had long been denied that opportunity in the past" (Gaber, 2003, Foreword). Dennison's (2003)

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comments tie into the "social issues" identified by Selman et al. (2003) and to the theory of social capital as proposed by Daniel et al. (2003). They also identify the need for further research on the effects of restraint and market place ideology on adult education.

Farrell's (2001) study of the major developments that are influencing the evolution of virtual education monitors the developments and looks at the implications of virtual education globally. In this study, Farrell acknowledges the need for further research of virtual education. He states "the biggest challenge for most governments as they attempt to attain the ideal of peace, freedom and social justice, while striving at the same time to position themselves to generate more wealth and compete in a global market" (p. 1) will be the provision of education. Farrell's "challenge" matches to some degree to the "social issues" that Selman et al. (1998) identify. However, their perspectives differ when it comes to the fundamental ideology of education. While Farrell (2001) sees education as a means for governments to meet the "challenge" of being more competitive globally and increasing their wealth, Selman et al. (1998) express concern that this may be the case. They see the pursuit of more wealth and global competitiveness as causing private, for profit training to increase at the expense of publicly funded adult education. Selman et al., like Gaber (2003), note that while adult education has been getting much more attention than in the past, it has become increasing more fragmented. Under funding and lack of specifically designated funding is causing learners to be lost in the greater system and the competing systems within it. In so

doing, the focus of "citizenship education" is being lost. According to Selman et al. (1998), "There is widespread concern on the part of experts from various fields and from many in the general public that our democratic practices are being dangerously weakened and that executive and administrative decision making is coming to dominate public life" (413-414). They comment that

> many adult educators are concerned about this question. How can we strengthen the voice of the public interest, as distinct from private interest in Canadian life? How can we reinforce what Roselle, Coleman, Putnam and others have termed our "social capital"—the "network of civic engagement" in our society?" (p. 414).

Selman et al. (1998) propose "the creation of independent research and educational organizations devoted to the study of public questions" (p. 414) may be the answer. Selman et al. also see "social capital" as a means for further research into adult education.

Gaber's (2003) concern about the lack of research of "the historical roots of the collaboration, of the relationship between collaborative efforts and provincial coordination . . . of the movements between decentralization and centralization of the system, . . . and the related theme of autonomous institutions moving towards becoming a system" also reiterates similar concerns. He, too, opens the door to further research and discussion. The research that he conducted can also be viewed from the perspective of measuring social capital invested in the college, institute and agency system in BC.

Moran (1991), on the other hand, provides a social history of the Open

Learning Institute (OLI) and the Open Learning Agency (OLA). Her research focuses

on how a new higher education institution establishes itself in its community, the

consequences of choosing non-traditional methods of doing so, and the impact of

external pressures and influences on it. Her research provides a case study that

allows comparisons to be made and helps to put the evolution of the *e-*

merge/BCcampus initiative in historical perspective. Moran's research interests

include the history and politics of distance and higher education. Moran (1993) saw

the history of education as being marked by three phases, the third of which she was

entering at that time. This research builds on the historical timeline established by

both Selman (1977) and Moran (1993) and moves it to the next century.

Ongoing Research

Rumble and Peters over the past thirty years have been conducting a

pedagogical analysis of distance education. Peters is known for his "industrialization"

model and Rumble for his "transmission" model. They have documented the

evolution of distance education and how technology has affected the paradigms and

philosophies of distance education. Their research has provided the framework for

much academic discussion on a global level. Rumble (2001), for example, identifies

five key changes that have taken place over the period 1971-2001. He starts with

the opening of the multi-media based UK Open University (which helped to provide

the idea for this research). He then looks at how technological change causes a

pedagogical shift within distance education—from a transition model towards a

constructivist model. This shift is followed by an expansion and growing acceptance of distance education. This expansion and acceptance then causes distance education to move from being perceived as low status to acceptance as its methods are adopted more universally. Finally, he sees distance education evolving from a "modernist (bureaucratic or Fordist) form of education into a post-modernist phenomenon with a focus on the student as a consumer, on flexibility and global reach" (Rumble, 2001, Abstract). Peters (1999), on the other hand, criticises the "digital learning" environment when he looks at the psychological, sociological, and organisational implications. The perspectives of Rumble and Peters provide the greater context within which this initiative developed. They also help to explain some of the perceived tensions as the history of adult distance education has evolved.

The literature specific to the thesis topic located on the C2T2 website has provided information related to the ABE *e-merge* project and the greater *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative. It has been used to confirm findings from the primary data and to establish the historical framework of the research.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to answer the question *What is the ABE/e-merge initiative, and how did it evolve?* As this question was answered, an historical context in which to frame this question was developed. Selman (1977) provides the early history and the context from which to begin this historical-comparative analysis. Moran (1991) provides further context for historical comparisons to be made between the two British Columbian distance education enterprises. Gaber (2003),

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Farrell (2001), Selman et al. (1999), and Moran (1991) identify the need for further research and help to show how the construct of social capital and trust as presented by Daniel, Schwier, and McCalla (2003) could form the framework for such research. Using Rumble (2001) and Peters (1999), one can place this research in a global context and identify the paradigm shifts that have been taking place in distance education since the convergence of the broadcasting and telecommunications sectors.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Identification of Research Design

The Historical-Comparative method analyses social change within the Qualitative Research Paradigm. Therefore, research based on historical-comparative analysis has been conducted to answer the question: *What is the ABE e-merge project, and how did it evolve?* A case study is being used to present this analysis.

To complete the research and to answer this question, the following data-collection methods were used: interviews, online research, running records, and textual analysis. Permission to carry out this research was obtained as required, and all research was carried out ethically.

Identification of Key Informants

Much information for this research was uncovered through personal interviews and supported by documents and sites located on the Internet and/or provided by interviewees and others in the public post-secondary system in BC. Interviews were carried out with key informants comprised of Ministry representatives, C2T2 personnel, Steering Committee and Working Group members, instructors, and others in the BC Public Post-Secondary system. The sampling of interviewees has been involved in some way with the design, development, and implementation of the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative.

Selection of a Setting

Data collection was done in personal interviews, with the researcher travelling to Victoria and Vancouver to conduct them. Most of the secondary research was conducted online; however, since the *e-merge* initiative involves the Ministry, C2T2, and colleges throughout the Province of British Columbia, the setting is effectively, the whole of British Columbia's public post-secondary system.

Presentation of Ethical Considerations

This research involved human subjects; therefore, the researcher provided the necessary documentation and gained the approval of the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. Prior to doing so, the researcher drafted and presented a proposal to the C2T2 and received its approval to conduct the research according to its criteria. Interviewees were asked to sign consent forms to allow the researcher to use their testimony. Since the researcher is also an insider in this initiative, the researcher supported, with either primary or secondary data, any recollections or perceptions she may have held so that this research remains objective. The researcher has had her supervisor and editor read this analysis for political and ethical correlations to ensure that no obvious biases held by the researcher have inadvertently been carried into the research data and interpretations and to ensure that none of the informants have been revealed.

Collection and Analysis

After receiving approval from the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board, the researcher contacted each interviewee individually, requesting his or her

participation in this research. The researcher then set dates and times for the interviews that were primarily conducted in Victoria and Vancouver. Two responded over the telephone, and two sent their responses to the interview questions by e-mail. Prior to each interview, the researcher distributed the interview questions with letters of request and obtained a signed Consent form from each interviewee acknowledging his or her agreement to be interviewed and to allow the use of any documentation provided by the interviewee (See Appendices A, B.1, B.2, and C). With the interviewees' permission, all interviews were recorded and transcripts were compiled from the interviews.

Using Neuman's (2000) methodology as a guide, once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher used the contant comparison method to analyse the data. First of all, after grouping the responses from all interviewees to each question under each question heading respectively, the researcher conducted a preliminary analysis that identified several themes and, consequently, was able to make some low-level generalizations. The researcher then organized the evidence by highlighting, coding, and grouping the responses according to their similarities and differences. From these groupings, the researcher used theoretical insights to help organise the data according to context and process codes, which consequently led to the researcher having to broaden the scope of the research to include the history of adult distance education in BC. The evidence was then collated and synthesised staying true to the temporal order of events. The researcher then filled in gaps and/or reinforced the data with secondary sources.

Identification of Key Documents

From the transcripts, the history of the ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative could be traced, and documents that led to further research of the earlier history were identified. Several participants either provided documentation at the time of the interview or sent data via e-mail. Some also directed the interviewer to other documentation and individuals who would help to answer the research question. The primary sources were in the form of letters, memoranda, e-mails, reports, presentations, recollections, and interviews. The secondary sources were the writings of others about the BC *e-merge* initiative and the history and politics of adult education in BC. Other literature, such as Daniel et al. (2003) and Selman (1998) provided other contexts in which to place the evolution of the initiative. Running records of the evolution of this initiative exist in the data and statistical documents maintained by C2T2 and other agencies involved in the initiative. Also the recollections and reports of individuals involved are presented in the writings and testimonies located on the C2T2 website.

The data gathered was coded, categorised, and filed electronically and manually. MS Word was used to organise, analyse, display, and document the research. As the data was synthesised according to the temporal order of events, a general explanatory model evolved, as old themes and concepts could be discussed with concrete events. Upon analysis, the transcripts and other evidence revealed several themes that affected the history of adult distance education and the evolution of the ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative in particular. The researcher then

looked for patterns across time, looking at similarities and differences, and organized divergent events into sequences to create a larger picture.

The academic literature reviewed helped to put this research in the theoretical context of existing research and also assisted in the identification of some of the themes that came from the analysis of the primary research. It also helped to provide the temporal order of events and the historical context that helped to discover the intiative's genesis.

The researcher used the interviews, the documents, and the literature as points of reference to find plausible explanations and to organise the evidence as a whole. Consequently, after a review of the data, a timeline was made that presented the results of the research in the most appropriate manner to respond to the research question. From that timeline, the thesis was drafted in the form of an historical-comparative analysis, using MS Word and and the guidelines established by Athabasca University and APA style. The document has been saved in both hard- and soft-copy form and will be distributed to key informants once it has been approved by the committee.

Communication of Findings

Once this thesis has been defended and published, copies will be distributed to key informants and also circulated as the part of the collections in the libraries at Athabasca University and the College of the Rockies. This research will also be shared with other professionals and academics within the public post-secondary system in the form of written reports and articles published in scholarly journals.

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Since there has been limited research published on the history of adult distance education in BC, particularly on the ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative, this research will bring more current data to the field. Also, as Daniel et al. (2003) state, there has been very little research conducted on trust and collaboration and their impact on the theory of social capital when it is extended to virtual and distributed learning communities. Therefore presentations and publications based on this research may add further data to the research under the umbrella of the social capital theoretical framework.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Review of the Statement of Purpose

As stated earlier, this research provides an historical-comparative analysis of the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative. As such, it documents the history of adult education and distance education in BC to provide the background and the setting for this analysis. It also documents the progress of the programs and courses in the initiative and, in particular, those in the ABE program. As well, it discusses and compares the resources needed for the design, development, and implementation of online courses and programs that includes the roles of the people involved and their perspectives. Consequently, the scope of this research will be broadened to include a timeline with the history of adult distance education providing the background and framework from which the ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative evolved.

Since starting this research, it has become obvious that the genesis of the ABE/*e-merge*/BCcampus initiative occurred as part of the natural evolution of adult education in BC. The ever-increasing need for access and choice for learners and the constantly changing technologies have continually driven the evolution of adult education, particularly adult distance education. Therefore, to put this research in context, a large portion of the Results section will focus on the history of adult distance education in BC so that an historical-comparative analysis can be made with regard to the initiative's evolution within the system as a whole. Consequently, the scope of this research is much broader than the initial question, since it now

focuses on the question: What is the ABE *e-merge* project, and how did it evolve within the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative and the post-secondary education system in BC as a whole?

Background

Adult education and, in particular, adult distance education have a long history in British Columbia. However, since this topic is much larger than this research can cover in great depth, this research includes only selected references to the educational events that may have impacted to some degree on distance Adult Basic Education and the evolution of the ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative in BC. The secondary sources used to put this research in context mostly focus on key events that shaped adult distance education in BC. They provide the framework in which to place the evolution of distance adult education in BC to explain the phases that led to the evolution of the ABE/*e-merge*/BCcampus initiative. This context allows the initiative to be compared and analysed within the history of the BC post-secondary system as a whole.

1920s: Correspondence Education

The first chronology of the early history of Adult Education in BC has been recorded by Selman (1977). He starts his chronology with the Columbia Library, a subscription circulating library, that was founded by Wm. F. Tomie for the Hudson's Bay Company's officers in the Pacific region in 1833. However, the first references to any form of distance education do not specifically come until 1871, after

Confederation. Before making any formal references to correspondence education, Selman lists the following events that had already taken place:

- In 1899, the first Provincial Teachers' Institutes had been organized, and evening classes in adult education had started; the Provincial travelling library service had been inaugurated, and some private companies had started training programs for their employees.
- In 1910, the Provincial Archives had been established; and
- In 1911, the first "Adult School" organization had been founded in Victoria (pp. 5 -14).

These events formalised the need for increased access to adult education in BC.

According to Selman (1977), correspondence educational programs in BC began when the Department of Education launched the first correspondence courses in 1919. "Courses in coal mining were among the first courses offered" (p. 14). By 1929, a complete high school course was available by correspondence for the first time. This program was the first formal offering of distance education in BC, which was in the form of correspondence education, or print-based distance education.

In 1934, the Department of Education created an Advisory Committee on Adult Education to assist with the development of programs to offset depression conditions and to co-ordinate the work of volunteer groups. This initiative was followed by the formation of the Canadian Association for Adult Education in Toronto, in 1935, with several British Columbians playing a part. This new

organization conducted a national survey of adult education, with E.A. Corbett of Alberta surveying BC (Selman, 1977, p. 18). In 1936, the Extension Department of the University of British Columbia was established, and the Public Library Commission published a report on adult education in 1941 (Selman, 1977, p. 18). From this point, adult education in the Province of British Columbia began to expand rapidly.

1940s: Film media supports education

The University of British Columbia (UBC) Extension began an active role in developing rural film circuits in co-operation with the National Film Board in 1942. It was the leading institution in Canada in this work (Selman, 1977, p. 20). Then, in 1946, after World War II, there was a rapid expansion of enrolments in high school correspondence courses, with forty-one percent of students being over twenty-one years of age. In 1947, the National Film Board and UBC Extension launched the film council movement in British Columbia. At this point, British Columbia led the way nationally in developing this work. The project continued until 1957. In 1949, the UBC began correspondence courses for degree credit, supplanting directed reading courses. In 1957, UBC Extension launched "Living Room Learning," a liberal arts discussion group program, which, at its peak in 1962-63, was active in sixty-six communities in BC. This program continued until 1964 (Selman, 1977, pp. 21-23). Adults in British Columbia could now complete their degrees through distance education in the form of correspondence courses, and they could access film circuits to support their learning.

1960s: Educational Television (TV)

In 1961, the first educational TV series with student registration began in Vancouver, with the course materials being mailed to the students. The Department of Education established the "interrupted program," whereby adults could return and complete high school graduation by taking only selected subjects. According to Selman (1977), the census of this year brought attention to the large illiteracy problem in Canada, and the "Macdonald Report" called for the creation of community colleges in BC, strongly supporting a continuing education function. Consequently, in 1963, the Public Schools Act was revised to provide for the creation of community colleges. As well, the Universities Act in BC created Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria; it also stipulated continuing education as a university function. The British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) then opened in 1964. In 1966, the Department of Education introduced a new provision that allowed adults to complete Grades 11 and 12 in 8 months. UBC was then the first to offer the Diploma Program in Adult Education. Consequently, 1967 saw provisions made for Adult Basic Education to be greatly accelerated (pp.24-27).

When the Federal Government passed the Adult Occupational Training Act (Ottawa) in 1967, it greatly altered the Federal government's role in manpower planning and training. Ottawa then began to take financial responsibility for training as well as for the selection of students, with more emphasis on adults. The Manpower Department began English training for newcomers, and the Bilingual and Bicultural Commission report was published in 1967. This report led to increased

English as a Second Language (ESL) training. In 1968, the Division of Continuing Education in the Health Sciences was created at UBC. UBC Extension inaugurated a major expansion of programs for women, and other institutions did likewise in subsequent years (Selman, 1977, pp.24-27).

Selman (1977) makes no mention of telephone communications being used to support distance/correspondence education. The mention of film appears to be the first introduction of technology to education, and the advent of TV as an educational medium entrenched it. However, telephone communications have played a major role in distance/correspondence learning and still do to this day.

1970s: Technology and Education

In the 1970s, Selman (1977) documents the introduction of computers. However before computers, the following key events occurred in the Adult Education arena:

- In 1971, the Department of Education launched the Instructor's Diploma program, which was administered by UBC for vocational instructors;

- In 1973, the General Education Development (GED), an international testing program for adults who have been unable to complete high school, was adopted in BC; and

- In 1974, the British Columbia Institute of Technology launched its directed study program.

- Also, at this time, the Department of Education Task Force on the Community issued a report that put considerable stress on the adult education function of colleges.

Consequently, several adult education organisations in the province submitted recommendations to the Minister of Education concerning the future development of this work. The British Columbia Association of Continuing Education Administrators, the Pacific Association for Continuing Education, and UBC Extension submitted briefs. However, according to Selman (1977), the Minister's White Paper on Education completely ignored adult education. Faris (1992) also acknowledges the government's lack of response to these briefs. However, great advances in technology were taking place, and local learning network projects, with computer assistance, began to appear in Vancouver around this time (pp. 27-28). Therefore, the events that follow show how policy decisions have affected the development of a collaborative, co-ordinated approach to adult education; when technology was introduced; and when its influence on education began to accelerate.

Faris (1992) states that two consecutive efforts were made to develop a provincial adult/continuing education policy framework. Although both involved extensive public consultation by provincial committees, both received limited governmental response. The first process, initiated in 1974, culminated in "Towards the Learning Community," the Report of the Task Force on the Community College in British Columbia, which primarily led to the creation of five new rural community colleges. The second, in 1976, provided a blueprint for almost ten years of gradual

adult/continuing education growth. It also planted the seed for the creation of the
Open Learning Institute and the Knowledge Network, which subsequently
amalgamated into the Open Learning Agency (Faris, 1992, pp.25-26).

In November 1975, the Honourable Eileen Dailly announced support for
implementation of the first report's recommendations. This support included:

- Creation of a Provincial Continuing Education Advisory Committee

- Establishment of a Provincial Interdepartmental Continuing Education
  Committee

- School board and college provision

- Regional co-ordination councils

- Tuition-free adult basic education.

Dailly also made a commitment to the development of a recurrent education system
for British Columbia. However, this did not happen. The election of a new
government initiated a public process in 1976 to define the future role of
adult/continuing education in British Columbia (Faris, 1992, p. 25). As a result, in
1976, the new government conducted a study of adult education policy in the
province by means of three commissions/committees: one on university level
programs in non-metropolitan areas; one on technical and vocational education; and
one on "continuing and community education" (Selman, 1977, p. 28). The outcome
of this study culminated in a report on continuing and community education, which
called for

- A provincial government commitment to lifelong learning as the basis for planning the total public education system

- Legislation to affirm learner-centred adult education programs and services

- Creation of a locus of responsibility for continuing education

- Development of community level co-ordination/program councils (Faris, 1992, p. 25).

Key to the developmental process of the 1976 report was the creation of a

- Policy framework and related data reporting system

- Locus of responsibility for school board/college adult/continuing education

- Ministry advisory committee on adult/continuing education

- List of program priorities such as adult basic education (including literacy), English as a second language, adult special education and community education (Faris, 1992, pp. 25-6).

However, despite the inclusion of continuing education as an objective within college legislation, according to Faris (1992), "no government commitment or local co-ordinative mechanism was developed—omissions which would prove costly to the field in later years" (p. 26). Selman (1977) attributes this to a government austerity program that excluded certain local school board programs from receiving supporting grants, reduced the level of supporting grants for some other programs

and services, and brought about reduction in some college adult education activity (p. 28). According to Faris (1992),

[i]n the two years following the 1976 report a series of studies of the state of the field in adult basic education, adult special education, and English as a second language was conducted. These studies proved to be the basis for both future policy and program development (p. 26).

He then uses as an example the 1979 adult basic education report of the school district and college personnel that recommended the following:

- A single locus of responsibility within the post-secondary department
- A tuition-free Grade 12 equivalency
- Increased programs for equity groups
- Articulation of high school equivalency programs (Faris, 1992, p. 26).

These recommendations were gradually implemented during the next period.

Late 1970s to mid 1990s: Increased Use of Technology, Local Learning Networks, and Distance Education

In 1977, the report of the Distance Education Planning Group on a "Delivery System for Distance Education in British Columbia" was submitted to the Minister of Education. The following recommendations from that report foreshadow the expansion of distance education in BC:

- That a new educational institute or agency be designated as the provincial agency responsible for the development of distance education and delivery systems.

- That planning proceed toward the acquisition of educational channels on provincial cable systems, and that the exploration of other delivery modes, such as telephone networks, be continued.

- That planning proceed toward the province's participation in the proposed ANIK B satellite experiments. This participation will provide opportunities for satellite-delivered instructional programming lasting for periods of up to two years. This will provide the opportunity to thoroughly evaluate this mode of program delivery.

- That adequate funding be provided to carry out further planning in the distance education field, and to initiate pilot programs in order to evaluate alternative delivery modes.

- That educational delivery services be co-ordinated and operated where appropriate (Carney, 1977, p. 3).

This report opened the door to an increased focus on distance education and the educational opportunities technology could provide.

Following this report and other studies commissioned in 1976 by the then Deputy Minister of Education on adult education policy in BC, the Open Learning Institute (OLI) was established in 1978. This institute was BC's first system-wide attempt at distance education. The OLI's mandate was to provide programs leading to a first degree in arts and science, programs in career, technical and vocation areas, and adult basic education. As well, the OLI was to manage needed support services; develop and acquire courses, programmes of study and learning material;

and distribute this learning by distance education methods. It was also to enter into relationships with other organisations in BC and elsewhere to do so (Moran, 1991, p. 3). However, the OLI does not appear to have been well received by some in the system. According to Moran (1991),

> [t]he OLI was a hybrid from the outset. . . .Opinions differed inside and outside the OLI over whether its primary role was that of a provincial education broker for the province, producing distance education materials and coordinating distance education activities of the colleges and universities; or whether it was one among many distance education providers (albeit the largest) (p. 3).

As a result, the OLI was perceived by some institutions as a competitor. This was noted by Moran (1991) as follows:

> This ambiguity, coupled with thinly-veiled suspicions and antagonism from other universities and colleges, may have influenced the OLI Board's early decision that its programs should harmonise with those already in existence, but still be distinctive and meet clearly identified needs (p. 3).

The OLI's credit transfer assumed importance in educational policymaking from the beginning, and collaborative course development and/or delivery became a norm in all the OLI's programs. However, its relationships with all the other higher education institutions in BC, with various professional associations, government bodies and education authorities, and with individual faculty, educators, politicians, public servants, and prominent industry and public figures, were complex and extensive.

Some of the suspicion surrounding the OLI's role in the BC post-secondary system was generated because its structure did not resemble any other higher education institution in BC or Canada. Its structure was similar to the National Extension College in the UK. Since it employed no full-time academic staff, the OLI was viewed with puzzlement and suspicion by many of the traditionally organised universities and colleges. Its courses were prepared on contract by academics and other professionals from other institutions in BC, or they were purchased and adapted as necessary. Part-time tutors (mainly academics from BC universities and colleges) were contracted to teach courses as numbers and location demanded. The Institute's full-time staff was comprised of professional educators, administrators, technical specialists and support staff (Moran, 1991, pp. 3-4). As a result, the OLI was not well received by some and viewed with suspicion as a competitor, rather than a partner.

Moran (1991) states that "OLI's credibility remained problematic in BC throughout the decade, but the nature and strength of the problem changes as the Institute established its presence and identity, produced results, changed attitudes, and acquired legitimacy in the educational community" (p. 4). She notes that by "1988, annual course registrations were over 20,000, in degree, diploma, certificate and other programs, employing a mixture of media and teaching strategies" (p.3). The OLI then amalgamated with the Knowledge Network to become the Open Learning Agency (OLA) in April 1988 (Moran, 1991, p. 3). At the same time, other

institutions in BC continued to deliver their own distance education courses and explored the possibilities provided by new technologies as they became available.

Faris (1992), saw OLA as a significant building block that could lead to the development of a "provincial lifelong learning system." He states,

> [t]he creation of the Open Learning institute [sic] and the Knowledge Network and their subsequent amalgamation into the Open Learning Agency have been significant developments, some of the seeds of which were sown in the 1976 Report. The growth of this unique open learning organization, with its mission of promoting lifelong learning opportunities, could prove to be a significant building block in the creation of a provincial lifelong learning system (p. 26).

With this statement, Faris unwittingly appears to have foreshadowed events to come in the history of adult distance education in BC.

The establishment of the OLA had now entrenched adult distance education in BC; as a result, the focus on lifelong learning and increased access and choice began to govern educational policy making in adult education in BC.

1980s and 90s: Lifelong Learning and Advancing Technologies

Lifelong learning and increased access became the focus of these two decades. In the Executive Summary of Faris' (1992) report, he states that the "objective of this study is to make recommendations regarding the policy framework and delivery of adult/continuing education in British Columbia" (p.1). He states that reforms of educational training systems that had taken place in leading O.E.C.D.

(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) nations emphasised the need for clear educational objectives, including the development of a lifelong learning system. Canada, and particularly BC, had not systematically provided the commitment, leadership, planning or co-ordination at the Government level to ensure the necessary inter-ministerial collaboration, especially with regard to the treatment of adult/continuing education programs and services generally or adult high school completion programs specifically. He states that "[u]nclear legislation, lack of a policy framework, an inadequate data base/reporting system, and inequitable funding systems have created strains in a program area where co-operation and co-ordination among providers is necessary if the learner is to be well served" (p. 1). Some of the concerns that Faris expresses in his report appear to have been addressed with the following system-wide changes.

In the fall of 1993, the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour was established. Its mandate was

> to build on the many strengths of B.C.'s current public post-secondary education and training system . . . and to refocus the system within a broader context of education and training for life and work—to shape and implement fundamental reforms to B.C.'s post-secondary education and training system that [would] ensure a well-prepared workforce in the 21st century (*Charting . . .: Part I: The Context,* 1996, p. 2).

To meet this mandate, the Ministry, in 1993, conducted an environmental scan that provided the global context that affected its policymaking. Its findings are documented as follows:

> Change has been taking place at a global level in recent decades, resulting in a different economic structure than ten or twenty years ago. Changing trade and political relations, easier flow of money and people across boundaries, changing demographics and technological advances have resulted in an economic and social environment that is fundamentally altering the labour market structure of today (Ministry of Advanced Education, 1993).

This report also states that major socio-economic change had challenged traditional ways of doing things, particularly, in the world of work and education. It states that successive federal and British Columbia government reports in the past five years had attempted to chart the course for reform of education and training. However, it notes that "[w]hile Canadians have studied the issues, many countries have engaged in major reform of the education and training systems" (Ministry of Advanced Education, 1993). This statement appears to suggest that Canada was not keeping pace with global change at that time. This scan appears to be the pre-cursor to a major system-wide change, which would subsequently take place in BC.

A major strategic shift in post-secondary education in BC occurred after the *1994 B.C. Colleges and Institutes Student Outcomes Provincial Report* provided an overview of the opinions held by the "completers" of the colleges and institutes with regard to accountability, decision support, and consumer awareness. This overview

was the seventh annual edition of this analysis (Strategic Information Research Institute, 1995, p. 1). The data from this report was subsequently used in *Charting A New Course: A Strategic Plan for the Future of British Columbia's College, Institute and Agency System* published on March 6, 1996, by the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training. This strategic plan was "developed to respond to some of the redefined societal expectations of post-secondary education" (p. 2). The plan

> points the public college, institute and agency system in significant new directions. One of its stated purposes is to support and extend changes which will, over time, eliminate the historic gap between education and training, and give birth to a new learning system which combines the two. Indeed, the Strategic Plan points out that the future of public post-secondary education depends on closer working partnerships among traditional participants—the community colleges, university colleges, provincial institutes and the Open Learning Agency—and with the growing array of private providers, ranging from large training schools to small community-based agencies and trainers (Report of the Working Committee . . ., 1997, p. 27).

Working partnerships appear to be the key words as system-wide change evolved. This is also reflected in the *Report of the Working Committee on Public-Private Articulation Agreements* (1997) that quotes the Strategic Plan as follows:

> The Ministry strongly favours an approach of revitalized partnerships. . . .
> New alliances [must] be developed with business, labour and other education

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providers to develop a seamless learning system, providing the flexible,

inclusive outcomes-based learning required by modern society (p. 27).

The publication of the Strategic Plan coincided with the huge expansion in the

technologies that was taking place globally, particularly with the increased access to

computers and the Internet.

Early 90s: Computer Technologies

Many faculty and institutions were experimenting with the technologies as

they became available, and many were incorporating them into their classroom

delivery. "As the technology improved and prices came down, the rate of introduction

increased" (Thomas & Buck, 1994, "3. Literature Review"). Microcomputers and

computer-assisted instruction entered classrooms across the province, particularly in

ABE. As a result, an advisory committee was struck to provide an independent

descriptive analysis of six systems that were currently being used in the province.

Thomas and Buck (1994) presented an analysis of these systems in their report.

At the same time, microcomputers were increasingly being used for word

processing and for data management and analysis. Consequently, education and

training on microcomputers increased significantly during this period. Electric

typewriters and stand-alone word processors were replaced with microcomputers

that supported software programs, such as WordStar, Multimate, Dbase, and Lotus.

The Internet became more available, initially in a text-based interface and later with

a graphical interface. At this point, usage increased significantly, and the potential of

computer technology in education became apparent. Individuals and groups began

communicating and collaborating electronically.

Mid 1990s: Convergence, Distributed vs. Distance Learning

The intermingling of technology with education increased dramatically in the

mid 1990s. Consequently,

British Columbia's Standing Committee on Educational Technology (SCOET)

was founded in 1990 to monitor and assess changes in educational

technology and to propose policy directions for the college and institute

system. Jim Bizzocchi was a member of the original committee and became

its chair in 1994. He was seconded to the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and

Technology (C2T2) at its inception in 1995 to help integrate educational

technology and distributed learning within the post-secondary system (J. V.

Bizzocchi, personal communication, February 29, 2004).

In 1994, a summary of findings of Consultations on British Columbia's Information

Infrastructure was presented to The Ministry of Employment and Investment on

November 9, 1994. It acknowledged the need for the establishment of a central

agency with authority to manage the development of a sectoral accord with

telecommunications' service providers and to oversee the co-ordination and

planning of government-wide information technology and telecommunications

services (Smith & Barnard, 1994, p. 2). These findings led to the development of the

Provincial Learning Network (PLNet). This network provides the hardware

infrastructure that allows the post-secondary system to connect so that the people within the system can talk to each other and share information.

Implementation of PLNet began in April 1998 and took place in stages, based on geographic location, technical considerations, and client readiness. Its implementation was completed in August 2000. PLNet is described as a "program that gives all BC public schools, colleges and other institutions full access to the Internet. PLNet means that learners, teachers and administrators in BC schools - regardless of location or school size - will have access to the Internet" (Government . . ., 2001). PLNet gave the strategic shift taking place the momentum it needed.

The potential that the proposed provincial learning network would offer educators was recognised at the end of 1995, when the SCOET (1995) produced a report that provided the context for the development of educational technology, which stated:

> Learners in British Columbia will have open access to post-secondary education and training. A complete range of educational services will be available throughout the province, overcoming the old barriers of distance and time. Learners will choose the services they need for their own educational and training needs. They will also decide when they learn and where they learn. This learner-centered educational environment will provide more access and flexibility while maintaining the high quality of our learning services. . . . This vision will become reality through innovations such as the

Provincial Learning Network, which will also have a major impact on the K-12

system in this province (SCOET, 1995, p.1).

Once the infrastructure was in place, the vision was starting to become a reality.

Innovators in the system were starting to experiment with "online" education.

On September 18 and 19, 1995, The B.C. Post-Secondary Policy Forum on

Distributed Learning Environments took place at Dunsmuir Lodge in Victoria, BC.

The purpose of the forum was "to identify and discuss emerging policy issues

associated with the introduction of new educational technologies and to reach

consensus on recommendations for change which could be implemented across the

system" (SCOET ,1995b). An outcome of this Forum was the *Report on the Post-*

Secondary Policy Forum on Distributed Learning Environments. According to this

report, two institutions had been funded to experiment in a collaborative effort to

deliver online education. Consequently, the Forum grew out of issues identified by

the participants who participated in the University of Victoria/University-College of

the Fraser Valley 1994 Innovations Project, which linked their two Child and Youth

Care programs for joint course deliveries, and by the B.C. Interactive Educational

Video Conferencing Users Group, who had been formed by the Standing Committee

on Educational Technology (SCOET,1995b). From this Forum, the Distributed

Learning Task Force was created. The college and institutes presidents, the

university presidents, and the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training created this

task force to review the recommendations of the Forum and to develop an action

plan for the implementation of those recommendations.

As stated in Report on the Post-Secondary Policy Forum on Distributed Learning Environments(1995), as

the first collaborative projects supported by the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour Innovation Fund in 1994 were implemented, partners began to identify the need for policy revision as a priority if collaboration was to be sustained. For example, no formulae existed for sharing FTE's [sic] [Full Time Equivalents] for students, delivery capacity varied widely in different regions of the province, and connectivity rates were at best marginally affordable.

These policy issues addressed in the Report had "emerged as the provincial post-secondary system evolve[d] from a group of geographically-based institutions into a networked delivery system, or 'Distributed Learning Environment'" (SCOET, 1995b). Therefore, the task force was to look at ways to address these issues so that the system could work collaboratively. The system-wide approach envisioned in the 1970s was about to come to fruition; but, at this point, it was only somewhat collaborative at some levels because it did not include all factions of the system in the discussions. The collaboration appears to have been mostly happening at an administrative level in the system.

The key outcomes and themes from the Forum that would further enable system-wide change were identified by SCOET in the follow-up report as follows:

- Establishment of a Distributed Learning Implementation Group
- Building distributed learning support into institutions' strategic plans
- Reassessing partnership models and priorities

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- Creating a government policy and resource allocation framework which supports distributed learning initiatives (SCOET, 1995b).

However, SCOET (1995b) also cautioned that the success of the venture could not be dependent upon the technologies alone. It hoped that the proposed networked approach, if developed on the foundations of sound pedagogical principles, would allow regions and institutions to more effectively share education resources and deliver quality courses and programs systemically. However, the context in which these networked approaches to delivering education would be applied would be a key determinant in their success or failure. SCOET recognised that the creation of distributed learning environments and the increased use of education technologies alone would not offer a panacea for system change. These new tools and approaches would have to be considered and adopted on the basis of their pedagogical merit and their capacity to support integrated learning (SCOET, 1995b).

The collaborative, system-wide approach to learning that had been spawned over two decades was beginning to evolve as a system-wide model of Distributed/Distance Learning. However, it did not happen without some oversights and glitches along the way.

Mid 1990s to Present: A System-Wide Approach to Distance Learning

At this time, many colleges and universities were experimenting with some form of online learning. According to one interviewee,

Many other things were happening in other parts of the world . . . ETUG [Educational Technology Users Group], WebCT, and an informal network of

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instructors from all around the world were connecting and interacting—a

"synergy thing" [was] happening.

Consequently, the BC Educational Technology User Group was established in 1994.

As stated on the C2T2's website (2003), this group

is an informal grassroots group of approximately 390 educators (instructors,

administrators, and staff) who are interested in examining educational

technology practice and theory.

The User Group provides a forum for asking questions, exchanging

information, sharing ideas and collaborating on educational technology issues

and projects. The topics cover a wide range of interest areas from the

benefits of teaching online to copyright and intellectual property to technical

support for video conferencing (C2T2: Educational Technology User Group,

2003).

At the same time, many instructors were experimenting with online educational

conferencing software products. A comparative analysis of online educational

software was conducted, which ultimately led to WebCT being adopted as the

primary web course management tool used in British Columbia. WebCT, an

integrated platform for online courses, was initially conceived of Murray Goldberg, of

the University of British Columbia, in 1995. WebCT, with the other platforms

available at the time, facilitated system-wide change.

The education system in the mid 1990s was also struggling with the

semantics of "distance" and "distributed" learning. The Post-Secondary Forum on

Distributed Learning Environments (1995) defined distributed learning as "an approach to education and training that is intended to be learner centred, enabling both synchronous and asynchronous interaction through the integration of pedagogically-appropriate technologies" (Distributed Learning Task Force, 1997, II Definitions of Key Terms). The debate of distributed versus distance learning had already begun during the time of these developments, and there were varying opinions about the term to be used—distance or distributed learning. One interviewee's comment captures this argument as follows:

Some did not want to see distance education as the term that was used, so their publications and their output were directed towards the term distributed education. If we end up looking at e-merge as a significant distance education concept, then we would have to temper any credit [that] we would give SCOET because of the fact that it didn't want it to be seen as distance education. Yet it would appear to me that today, in the year 2002, distance education is definitely the term of use.

As convergence took place, some felt that this new medium needed to be distinguished from distance education (DE), which was primarily seen as print-based delivery. Hence the debate on distributed (meaning the use of a variety of media to deliver education) versus distance (traditionally using print materials and sometimes the telephone to deliver education) began.

Many colleges established committees to determine a name for distance education and the parameters that it would operate within in order to provide

feedback to the Provincial Distributed Learning Task Force. Also, colleges and universities were developing "technology plans" to help guide their strategic planning processes that now included budgeting for and using the constantly changing technologies. Convergence was now enabling the evolution of a collaborative, system-wide approach to distance learning in BC, regardless of its name.

In 1997, the Senior Instructional Officer's Working Group on Distributed Learning was formed to oversee the implementation of distributed learning in the system. The first meeting was held on November 25, 1997, and its members comprised "representatives from all three senior officers' groups as well as representatives from SCOET, C2T2, and the Distributed Learning Task Force" (Won, 2000, p.1). The notes taken at the inaugural meeting state that the system was well placed to move ahead with a co-ordinated approach to Distributed Learning (Won, 2000, p.1). However, the notes also caution that the system would need to move at a moderate pace as faculty learn how to use distributed learning to the best advantage for learners and as the institutions learn how to co-operate in the implementation of such an approach. He describes the evolution as follows:

> We are building a rational evolutionary process. The outcome of this evolution will be an increased effectiveness at the faculty level, and an increased level of collaboration and efficiency at the cross-institutional system level. Over a number of years, the cumulative effect of these evolutionary changes may well be revolutionary in impact. That, however, will be determined by the effectiveness of the teaching/learning processes that our faculty build, and by

our ongoing judgments about how to proceed as institutions and as a system

(Won, 2000, p. 1).

As the vision evolved, technology became the revolutionary force that would

ultimately change education in British Columbia forever.

As more and more institutions in the post-secondary system gained increased

access and more knowledge about the Internet and other technologies, the Ministry

of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) convened the

Educational Technology Policy Working Group. This Group worked under the

auspices of the Provincial Standing Committee on *Charting A New Course* in

November, 1998, to develop an Educational Technology Policy Framework for the

College, University College, Institute, and Agency system. This Framework was an

outcome of the strategic plan *Charting A New Course,* which would advise the

system on how to incorporate educational technology in a manner that would

support the goals and strategies of the Strategic Plan. Consequently, this

Framework provided the direction and the base from which change gained

momentum.

Convergence and innovative initiatives coming forth from several colleges

and individuals across the Province were what laid the groundwork for the general

idea of a system-wide model to be spawned. This had been first envisaged in the

1970s when the system-wide model of distance education started with the concept

of OLI and then continued to evolve with technological change and with the

innovations of faculty through the 1980s and 1990s. When the SCOET was formed

in 1990 (MAE, 1999, p. 1), it looked at various forms of educational technology. It recognised that a collaborative effort was required for a system-wide initiative to go forward. However, this did not happen at first.

System-wide change was facilitated by the new Strategic Plan, *Charting a New Course (1996)*. It was

> developed to ensure that all British Columbians [would be] prepared to participate in today's changing society; find productive employment in a competitive labour market; have opportunities for continuous learning; and receive value for the investment made in public post-secondary education and training. (p.1).

The plan acknowledges that the fundamental values and strengths of the existing college, institute and agency system are central to the strategic plan, and it recommends implementing system-wide approaches to complement the strengths and diversity of individual institutions and to promote responsive, flexible and high quality program delivery. The plan discusses new ways of learning and new ways of delivering instruction that include using technologies to increase access and choice for students in British Columbia. As a result of the Strategic Plan, a working group was formed to work on an Educational Technology Policy Framework that would be published in June 1999.

At a parallel time, in 1997, the Distributed Learning Task Force published the report *Access and Choice: The future of distributed learning in British Columbia*. This document was a cross-sectoral piece of work that included the Universities, the

College, Institute, and Agency system, and the K-12 system. The Executive

Summary of this report provides the context and focus of the report that can be seen

as one of the pre-cursors to online education in BC. It states:

> Universities, colleges, institutes and university colleges are confronted by an
>
> increasingly dynamic environment. They must respond to such phenomena
>
> as globalization, increased competition from the private sector, reduced
>
> government funding, increased demand for employability skills, demands for
>
> increased accountability, structural changes in the economy, and the impact
>
> of converging communications and computer technologies. Notwithstanding
>
> these challenges, the broad goals of post-secondary education institutions will
>
> remain the same as we proceed into the next millennium: the expansion of
>
> knowledge, the building of citizenship skills, the development of a skilled and
>
> capable workforce, support for culture and our cultural industries, and the
>
> provision of opportunities for personal and intellectual creativity and
>
> fulfillment. Distributed learning systems provide institutions of higher learning
>
> with the means of opening up these opportunities to a much broader
>
> audience than in the past (Distributed Learning Task Force, 1997, p. 1).

The Executive Summary then describes the context in which to place distributed

learning. The document acknowledges the need for distributed learning

environments to "provide new and promising approaches to the teaching/learning

process" (p. 1) that had until now only been offered by the traditional means of

delivery. It sees distributed learning as a means "to overcome barriers that have

traditionally denied those who because of family responsibilities, employment needs, geographic location or physical ability factors" (p. 1) to avail themselves of the opportunities for personal and economic advancement. In this document, the Distributed Learning Task Force developed a range of recommendations that provide short, medium and long-term initiatives as next steps in the development of a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to distributed learning in the Province (Distributed Learning Task Force, 1997, p. 1).

Although this document shows how the system was rapidly moving toward a system-wide initiative that would increase access to and choice of educational opportunities to previously disadvantaged individuals, some partners in the system did not buy in to it. According to one interviewee,

> [a]t that time, the universities felt that educational technology or distributed learning was not that high on their priority list, so they didn't want to be part of an instrument that had a broad system implementation body. The K-12 [system] was [also] doing [its] own thing with Open School. As a result, at that time, they did not continue to be part of the initial provincial online initiatives.

Consequently, it was the college, institute and agency system that continued to pursue a system-wide approach to distance/distributed learning.

The other key document at that time, the *Educational Technology Policy Framework* (1999), was the outcome of the collaborative partnership formed by the Educational Technology Working Group. This group comprised all factions in the College, Institute, and Agency system as follows:

The Educational Technology Working Group was co-chaired by a

representative of the college, university college, institute and agency system,

and a representative of MAETT [The Ministry of Advanced Education,

Training, and Technology], and included representatives from:

- BC Government and Service Employees' Union

- Canadian Federation of Students

- Canadian Union of Public Employees

- Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology

- College-Institute Educators' Association

- Council of Chief Executive Officers

- Council of Education Councils

- Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology

- Secretariat services to the Working Group were provided by MAETT

  staff. (MAE, 1999, Education Technology . . .)

The Provincial Standing Committee for *Charting A New Course* served as the

steering committee for this Working Group. The Standing Committee had been

established in February 1998, and it consisted of representatives from education

partners in the college, university college, institute and agency system. This

committee had responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan

(MAE, Educational Technology Policy Framework, 1999, p. 5).

As a collaborative venture, *Charting a New Course* and the resultant

Educational Technology Policy Framework appear to have formed the infrastructure

for the Ministry to start moving forward in this area. Most of the work up to this point had been on a project basis by a few, such as the Standing Committee on Educational Technology Policy (SCOET), the Distributed Learning Task Force, and the Educational Technology Working Group. However, according to one interviewee (2002), because these initiatives were completed on a project basis, they did not have any longevity to them because they did not have the operational status to fund and support them adequately. Consequently, the interviewee commented, "[I]f you don't have operational status, it is always delegated to 'Oh, well, we'll get money next year for it.'" Therefore, at this point, it was imperative that the Ministry adopt the concept of giving operational status to educational technology.

Mid to Late 1990s: Collaborative Online Delivery (COD)

The first attempt at a system-wide online initiative was the COD project, which was the outcome of the work of several committees. The Working Group on Distributed Learning was comprised of members from the three senior administrative officers' groups in the system. These three groups were the Senior Instructional Officers Committee (SIOC); the Senior Education Services Officers Committee (SESOC); and the Senior Financial and Administration Officers group (SFAO). SIOC was comprised of BC academics from each of the institutions; SESOC was comprised of BC education services or support services; and SFAO was comprised of bursars or BC administrators. This Working Group was formed to provide direction to the Council of Chief Executive Officers (CCEO) on the direction that educational

technology and distributed learning should take, and it started the movement in the Ministry to look at developing a plan for a system-wide approach to online education.

The Working Group on Distributed Learning and the Distributed Learning Taskforce were formed with a number of people who sat on many of those committees. Their collaboration caused the first system-wide initiative to be proposed, which was a project conceptualised as COD (Collaborative Online Delivery). That project looked at a co-operative effort to deliver first and second year University Transfer courses, using the technologies to allow students to gain a credential online. COD originated from an innovation fund grant allocation to the University College of the Fraser Valley. The Ministry accepted the plan, and the Ministry earmarked money for it; it was set to go. Faculty representatives, however, did not endorse the plan.

Faculty at this time was trying to keep up with technological change and its impact on the workplace. Many were experimenting with the technologies and many were the innovators of these proposed new initiatives. Consequently, they were in the midst of negotiating language into their Collective Agreements to accommodate the changes occurring in their workplace. Even though many faculty were the innovators of change, many were concerned that some of these proposed changes were happening without consultation and regard for their collective agreements or the implications of such change. Also, ongoing funding cuts to education had caused scepticism and concern within the system. Consequently, the faculty unions had signed a Letter of Understanding on Distributed Learning and Technology in

Education as part of the 1998 Common Agreement. That letter established the Joint Education Technology Committee (JET), comprising both employer and union representatives (CIEA, Post-Secondary Educators Bargaining Backgrounder, 2001), to work together to develop language for technological change. The outcome of that committee was the *Joint Education Technology Report* (2000), which established the need for a systemic approach to the development of educational technology and distributed learning. It determined that the systemic approach required two important components, "cooperation and collaboration, and standardized labour relations support in the terms and conditions of employment, in order to foster the conditions necessary for its success." This did not happen with the COD project.

Faculty had not been part of the consultations in the COD conception. Consequently, their perspective was that the COD project had been conceived and developed independently without a system "buy-in." CIEA's and BCGEU's perception was that it had been developed without the co-operation of the rest of the system and without provision to govern its implementation according to their Collective Agreements. This caused concern about workload, transfer, and jurisdictional issues that were being negotiated at the time. According to one faculty representative, "The Fraser Valley [COD] project was going on independent of all of the other provincial initiatives, and it was partly putting on an Associate of Arts degree online." Apparently,

> it was being done independently without co-operation with the rest of the
> system, and that would have been I think in 1999 . . and it was not being done

with much co-operation from what I could see with C2T2 and the rest of the

system. It also seemed that the faculty working conditions were not going to

be captured by any collective agreement . . .Online initiatives were springing

up throughout the Province through the initiatives of faculty. At the same time,

faculty were bargaining on some language provincially on the section on

Technology, Working Conditions, and so on. That went to the JET (Joint

Education Technology Committee) report.

Although many faculty were often the innovators of many of the initiatives that were

being proposed and developed, they were, at the time, feeling the pressure of

funding cuts and the expectation of doing more for less. They quickly realised the

time-consuming nature of online development and the complications that arise from

it. They realised that all of the support systems necessary for its success were not in

place and that the language in their collective agreements did not adequately cover

the changes taking place in their workplace. The interviewee continued to say that

"the first language was [negotiated] in '95, and then it was built on in '98. [Faculty]

tried to work on it again in the last common round."

Other concerns that faculty had at that time concerned co-operation and

collaboration or the lack of it. The interviewee also reflected that at the same time,

there were *Charting A New Course* initiatives. The *Charting A New Course* strategic

plan discusses educational technology and how to bring around co-operation and

collaboration, knowing that educational technology required these components for it

to work effectively and efficiently. As a result, C2T2 was brought about partly to assist in that. The interviewee states that

> as faculty-centred and faculty-developed projects started to come about through articulation committees, C2T2 started to work with them to assist in making them work. At the same time, CIEA and BCGEU were mindful of this kind of work going on, and [they] were trying to make sure that there was protection for faculty, that their compensation was fair, that their working conditions were [fair], and that there was an understanding of jurisdictional issues, etc.

This situation and other issues caused many faculty to consequently view the COD project with some suspicion.

Although there is some variance as to the precise date that the COD project was initiated, others reiterated a similar history and the perception that it perhaps spawned the idea for *e-merge*. According to one interviewee,

> the COD idea, which sparked off as an idea in probably '97/'98 was an idea to online collaborative development around the Province. It came from above. It came from administrators, and it died in front of the presidents of the Faculty Association table. It was a good idea, but it came the wrong way around; it didn't come from the grassroots . . . It wasn't well developed; it should never have got that far without more buy in and talking and thinking; but in a way it was a good idea. So I think that was sort of the kernel, the beginning of e-merge.

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When specifically asked who spawned the idea of *e-merge*, another interviewee responded as follows:

> I wouldn't say that there is one individual or person who spawned the idea of it. It was just that it was an idea whose time had just come and the key element was the fact that we had the infrastructure in place through the Provincial Learning Network for all of us to connect to each other. . . . A proposal report [for COD was taken] around to all of the presidents of the colleges, so this thing was basically the e-merge idea. The College presidents all bought into it big time. They thought it was a great idea, but then they went to show it to the CIEA presidents. They put thumbs down on it . . . And that was the piece, of course, that was missing; . . . they hadn't gone to the grass roots. I see that in recent years that the C2T2 folks, the e-merge folks, have really had a grass roots focus.

These comments indicate that the PLN and collaboration between all factions in the system have been key to the evolution of the system-wide initiative now known as e-merge/BCcampus. Without them, initiatives, such as the COD initiative, cannot move forward and work effectively. Prior to the PLN, individual institutions gained access to the Internet through many different providers. That was how the first projects started cropping up independently throughout the province.

Even though many faculty felt strongly about the need to move to online learning, because the Faculty Associations had not been contacted officially about

the COD project, they raised concerns that perhaps it should not be carried on because at the time the JET Committee was addressing

> a wide range of issues including: identifying pedagogically appropriate standards for implementing distributed learning and using education technology; assessing the potential impact on student access and learning; and assessing the potential impact on terms and conditions of educators' work (CIEA, 2001).

As a result, the Ministry then withdrew the funding for the COD project. One interviewee recalled that the COD project planned that six institutions would pilot the first year, twelve the second, and twenty-two the third; so the plan was to have, within three years, all twenty-two colleges, university colleges, and institutes delivering and co-delivering courses. However, this plan fell to the background for about a year and a half. Then it was later resurrected as Collaborative Online Programs for E-learners (COPE).

2000: COPE/ABTCore

The political landscape shifted around 1997-1998, and it encouraged much more constituency-based development. That was also how *Charting A New Course* was developed, and it caused a variety of committees to be struck. Since the Education Technology Policy Framework was a working group that was chaired by the then Deputy Minister, it was very high profile and was driving policy decisions in the system. According to one interviewee, that committee consequently determined that the conclusions and recommendations from *Access and Choice* may not be

valid because that document was not created through a constituency-based approach. However, the system continued to evolve.

Consequently, after the COD project, individuals within the college and institute system across the Province continued to explore and experiment with online delivery in several disciplines. However, no formal system-wide projects were undertaken again until the Applied Business Technology (ABT) (Office Administration) program initiated the COPE project. Won (2000), in his Report for SESOC Senior Officers' Working Group on Distributed learning, states "the wheels for the development of accessible, affordable and quality education continued to grind, . . . largely through the initiative of Randy Bruce, the project re-emerged under a different acronym. COPE (Collaborative Online Program for E-Learners) was born" (p. 2)

The COPE initiative began in the Fall of 1999, when Terrie McAloney, an ABT co-ordinator and instructor, and Jane Munro, who was seconded to C2T2 at the time, were working together on the C2T2 publication *Learning Quarterly.* McAloney approached Munro to see if C2T2 would be willing to help ABT put its CORE curriculum online. Munro then discussed this with Randy Bruce, who was working in the Educational Technology sector of C2T2. Upon further discussion, they agreed that this initiative was viable; however, it would also need to include support services for the distance learners. They then applied for PIC grants to fund the initiative. They also applied for a PLA grant because they saw PLA (Prior Learning Assessment)

online as being part of the ABT program. In the proposal that was submitted, dated November 16, 1999, this project was named COPE-ABTCore.

The Proposal (1999) describes COPE/ABTCore as a grassroots initiative. It won the unanimous support from the Business Educator Coordinator's Committee of BC, and it also had the agreement of ten colleges (faculty and administrators) in every corner of the province to participate in the pilot and the partnership with the C2T2. The project also received the support of the provincial labour-management Joint Educational Technology committee and the largest provincial faculty union – the College-Institute Educators' Association (CIEA) (p. 2). Unlike the COD project, the COPE project was initiated from the grassroots and was a collaborative venture that involved all partners in the system.

The COPE project was intended to be "a pilot prototype delivery model that [would] address many of the issues associated with collaborative distributed learning" (Proposal: COPE-ABTCore, 1999, p. 1). The COPE-ABTCore was

founded on the vision of a public post-secondary system that offers learners in the province a broad range of distributed learning course opportunities that may be augmented with locally provided instructional and educational support services. These courses [would] be available on the Internet and accessible from home, workplace or college-institute campuses. This [would] provide increased access and choice for learners in remote locations and in other situations where access to campus-based classes may be limited or inconvenient for learners (Proposal: COPE-ABTCore, 1999, p. 1).

Unlike the COD project, the COPE project was a co-ordinated, collaborative venture that was well organised and developed. The participating institutions developed the curriculum and course offerings collaboratively with the following goals and principles:

- Improve practice and increase expertise in the collaborative development and delivery of distributed learning within the college-institute-agency system

- Develop working models for:

- Shared learner support

- Collaborative curriculum adaptation/development

- Common approaches to curriculum presentation and delivery

- Widespread sharing of information about distributed learning implementation throughout the system (McAloney, 2000a, p. 1).

From the beginning, the ABT was a collaborative grassroots initiative with a "buy in" from faculty in a majority of the institutions.

To get the project underway, fourteen faculty from ABT/OA (Office Administration) from around the province went on a retreat to Bowen Island, BC, from March 5-8, 2000, to collaborate and develop course outlines for the core courses. Their three days at Bowen Island were viewed as being "very productive." The project was divided into the following two phases:

March 2000 – June 2000: Phase 1

The first phase, funded by a Provincially Initiated Curriculum grant, proposed "to adapt, develop, deliver and promote seven courses to the students of the province in the Applied Business Technology/Office Administration Core Program" (McAloney, 2000b, p. 3).

September 2000 – January 2001: Phase 2

The second phase involved several course offerings of all courses that would be delivered from various colleges across the province. All participants in the ABT Online project were to deliver 200 hours of instruction. The schedule was planned as follows:

May 2000	Keyboarding 1; Business Math and Calculators
September 2000	Successful E-learner; Computers and the Internet
November 2000	Business English; Word Processing 1
January 2001	Interpersonal Relations (McAloney, 2000b, p. 3).

The focus of the ABTCore initiative was to provide the Core courses so that students could complete a full credential online—the ABT Core Certificate.

The Minstry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) allocated four FTEs to each participating institution to provide delivery and support services for ABTCore online learners in each college region. A steering committee was formed to study and seek workable solutions to the issues around models, funding, and communications strategies that arose. The first meeting took place on

June 9, 2000, and a model was proposed for the pilot that took place in the 2000-2001 Academic Year.

COPE was the first project that the Ministry fully supported in an operational sense, and the ABT program was the first program to take advantage of that and to develop it collaboratively. Sixty FTEs were allocated in the year 2000-2001, and institutions were asked if they wanted to participate. Fifteen institutions participated, and that meant that four FTEs were provided to each institution. Basically the COPE project grew from that. It enabled the collaboration between institutions that extended to the delivery of the courses, which allowed students from one institution to receive instruction from faculty at another institution—It was a system-wide approach to distance learning.

2001 – 2003: e-merge

About a year and a half after work started on the COPE project, the name was changed *to e-merge* to avoid the name COPE being confused with a political action group in Vancouver. At this point in time, the Educational Technology Users Group at C2T2, and a representative of the Ministry, were collaborating with both ABT and the Associate of Arts (AA) as the initiative continued to *emerge* and expand. As a result, the next year, 2001, the Associate of Arts (AA) degree program went online.

2001 – 2003: Associate of Arts (AA)

There was a big difference between the ABT and the AA. The AA used portions of what was already developed for the COD project. These institutions

would offer unique courses on their own. The ABT program was developed collaboratively on a Provincial basis with Provincial curriculum, and every institution offered the same course. The AA program, on the other hand, did not develop as a collaborative model but rather as individuals delivering online instruction through the same portal. Consequently, there was a big difference between the two models. Hammond-Kaarremaa (2002), in her thesis, noted the difference as follows:

> The University College of the Fraser Valley (UCFV) had received a grant to develop online courses several years ago [as the COD project]. Because of this, faculty from UCFV were able to be quick to participate in the e-merge project with their already developed curriculum. The e-merge group formed in August of 2001 but the group itself dealt more with administrative issues related to curriculum content . . .

> Individual faculty had developed their courses with the outside assistance of a private web development company and then taught their own courses. There was not any group collaboration in the curriculum development (p. 70).

The AA co-ordinator's role, like the ABT co-ordinator's, was to manage the project and bring cohesiveness to the AA faculty. The co-ordinator also acted as an intermediary between faculty and institutions, between institutions and C2T2, or between faculty members on a particular discussion. According to Hammond-Kaarremaa, the co-ordinator was the main point of contact for the faculty to turn to with questions and problems and for the co-ordination of professional development

activities (p. 70). The ABT co-ordinator, on the other hand, acted more as a change agent.

The AA faculty saw itself more as a group of individuals who taught online, rather than as a group of AA faculty, and their technology skills were varied. While the faculty in the ABT project had highly developed technology skills, the AA faculty's technology skills ranged from some being very experienced teaching with WebCT and some brand new to the online environment (p. 70). Consequently, the initial collaborative, common curriculum concept implemented by the ABT program did not continue with the AA program.

Under the *e-merge* umbrella, other program delivery models then developed. Although the Tourism Management program may have been intended as the next program to be added, the ABE program was already, to some degree, developing independently, and it developed as somewhat of a hybrid between the first two, ABT and AA.

2000 – 2004: Adult Basic Education (ABE)

The ABE *e-merge* project is a provincial project developed in BC to provide access and choice to adult learners who want to upgrade their education, gain prerequisites to higher education courses, and/or complete the British Columbia Adult Graduation Diploma (BCAGD).

Genesis

Adult Education has a long history of collaborative development and delivery that began in BC in 1983. This history is documented in the "History of ABE

Articulation" in the ABE *An Articulation Handbook* (2002). The process began with an ABE Articulation Development Committee being struck to develop a provincial framework and common terminology. This framework, produced in 1985, led to the formation of the ABE Articulation Steering Committee in May 1985, whose mandate was to oversee the implementation and the on-going process of articulation for ABE across the post-secondary system. Working committees comprised of members from all fifteen colleges and the Open Learning Agency (OLA) articulated the courses for provincial delivery. The creation of the ABE Provincial Diploma in 1986 by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training validated this process. From this point forward, any student completing the requirements for secondary school graduation, as laid out by the ABE framework, would be awarded the Diploma (Province of British Columbia . . ., 2002, p. 6). After the framework was presented to the provincial universities and the BCIT in 1987, it became the official credential required for entry into university studies and BCIT.

In 1991, however, the whole ABE Articulation process underwent a review that culminated in a revised statement on the purpose of articulation in the 1993 *An Articulation Handbook*. The outcome of this revision is the current common credential for adults, the British Columbia Adult Graduation Diploma (BCAGD), which replaced the Adult Dogwood and the ABE Provincial Diploma in 1998. This common credential is an outcome of recommendations by a Ministry of Education/Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour Joint Committee on Adult Basic Education and the ABE Transitions project. It was announced in May 1999, and it

followed the college ABE tuition-free announcement of May 1998 (Province of . . . , 2002, p.6). ABE in BC would now have a more integrated, learner-centred approach to ABE programming that presumably established it to be, as one interviewee stated "on the Ministry's radar screen" as a good candidate for *e-merge*.

ABE's involvement in the *e-merge* initiative, which began in Spring 2000, came about, according to one interviewee, "simply as a result of circumstances." Unlike the ABT program, which was the first big wave of *e-merge* that was a planned, co-ordinated, strategic choice, ABE "really was the result of the ABE community saying, 'Online is something we want to explore', and the then Ministry saying, 'Oh, but this is what C2T2 has already done for ABT. Maybe ABE could be the next piece.'" C2T2 had already established some success with the ABT program. It was then a Ministry decision to make ABE a priority.

2000 - Phase 1: Planning Process

The Provincially Initiated Curriculum (PIC) process funds courses and curriculum in ABE. When PIC projects are approved, they go to C2T2, which manages them according to the specifications the Ministry has provided. Various committees monitor the development and make sure it is on track. Consequently, ABE PIC projects go through the following phases before they are implemented: the development phase, the pilot phase, the delivery phase, and then full implementation with the assignment of FTEs. This was the pattern of development for both the ABT and ABE Online/*e-merge* projects.

Although several ABE faculty in the Province had been experimenting with or using the technologies for education since the early 1990s, there had not been a co-ordinated effort to put ABE courses online until the Spring of 2000. The Ministry first realised that there was a group of people interested in putting ABE online when a number of institutions seemed to be asking for resources to develop the same ABE courses for online. This group of people in ABE were, according to one interviewee,

> not linked into the sort of central pile; they were viewed, for example, as very traditional ABEers who were out on the fringes, working co-operatively and receiving funds from the Ministry in PICs to develop and build some expertise in the delivery of ABE using the technology.

That predated *e-merge*, or it was happening as an almost parallel development.

The Ministry co-ordinator for ABE at the time, Audrey Thomas, in consultation with the C2T2 co-ordinator, Wendy Magahay, decided that the proposals might stand a better chance at PIC review committees if they were merged into a single proposal. As a result, a PIC proposal to fund a consultation among the ABE community was submitted in the Spring 2000. The purpose of this consultation was to find out what already existed in online, and if there were problems in what the perceived needs were. There was also a small amount of money for curriculum development. Since there had already been three separate ABE proposals submitted for PICs from different factions of ABE faculty at the same time that the *e-merge* initiative was being developed, the Ministry decided that it wanted to support both the ABE and COPE/*e-merge* developments. When the ABE proposal for a

consultation arrived, some success had already been established with the ABT *e-merge* initiative. Eventually, it started to look as if it would make sense to bring those two groups together. The first PIC funded the consultation among the ABE community to determine what online courses already existed, what the perceived needs were, what curriculum development would need to be done, and what revision of existing courses would need to be done for them to be part of the proposed project. The first consultation took place in Vancouver on November 28, 2000.

Although the ABE field sees itself as being very consultative, there really had not been any consultation at that point. The Ministry co-ordinator felt that, as part of the project, ABE really needed to do a consultation to see what appetite there was in the field because the field may have been against taking ABE online. The possible lack of appetite stemmed from the implementation of computer-assisted learning technologies in ABE a few years earlier when the big learning systems came, such as Pathfinder and Plato. As stated by one interviewee, "there had been a lot of resentment vis-à-vis electronic methods of learning because the system had spent a lot of money on the technology but not enough on learner support." Therefore, the co-ordinators thought that they really needed to have a consultation. They thought that if the field was not on side, the venture would be less than successful.

As a result, the ABE co-ordinator at C2T2, first did some background work to make sure that ABE representatives from each post-secondary institution were invited to attend. People who had had experience in developing online courses or who were interested in working in that area were invited, as well as the chairs of the

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ABE articulation committees, representatives from the K-12 system, and ABE representatives from MAETT. The C2T2 ABE Co-ordinator, facilitated the first meeting, which took place on November 28, 2000. Randy Bruce and Jane Munro (both from the C2T2 ABT *e-merge* initiative) presented the overall concept. Representatives from ABE faculty at the 16 public post-secondary institutions in the Province, representatives from articulation committees, representatives from C2T2, and ABE representatives from MAETT attended.

The goals of the day were broad and included:

- Gaining a sense of what [was] already happening across the province with an eye to developing an inventory of courses,
- Working through the assumptions, cautions and benefits of on-line in ABE,
- Learning about the purposes and workings of the E-merge initiative,
- Deciding which ABE course(s) and or level(s) could be explored through pilot development for WebCT delivery,
- Discussion of possible training needs related to ABE WebCT delivery,
- Identifying next steps to continue work in this area (C2T2, 2001a).

This consultation went well, and a plan to pursue ABE online was developed.

According to the C2T2 website *Adult Basic Education Online: A system initiative* (2001) and the interview data, the ABE online project developed in the following sequence: First, a matrix of existing courses in the Province was made. As

of November 2000, fourteen of the sixteen institutions used some form of online delivery for their ABE courses. Of those fourteen institutions, eight used WebCT as the platform for online delivery. The co-ordinators were amazed at how many ABE courses were available online, although they were not necessarily in WebCT, which is now an integral part of *e-merge*. However, most of those turned out to be hybrid courses, where there was some face-to-face work and also some online components. Very few institutions had anything fully online. The group was then asked to decide if this was something the ABE community wanted to go forward with, and it did.

The Adult Basic Education Original Planning Committee then completed a SWOT analysis to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of delivering ABE online. The outcome of that analysis with the presentation of the *e-merge* model led to a unanimous endorsement that ABE would become the next program area. The majority agreed that WebCT would be the preferred platform. At that same meeting, the group was asked to identify, based on what was available, the first three courses that would be developed for shared use across the system.

The group looked at the areas of greatest learner need to determine which courses would be developed as pilot courses. It also looked at the appropriateness of the course level for online delivery; the levels of online expertise among the development groups; the courses where foundation work had already been completed; and courses where curriculum had recently been developed. As a result,

it was decided that three core courses would be developed: English, Math, and Computer Studies.

People then grouped themselves into these three areas to determine what courses in each of these disciplines would be developed. After looking at that matrix and talking to people, the group felt that it needed to develop the Provincial Level Technical and Professional English, since it was a fairly new area in the Province and some print materials had already been developed. Also, the College of the Rockies' (CoTR's) Provincial Level Technical and Professional English had, at that point, already been offered online. Some people felt that Intermediate Math was the math to develop because it is the key course that leads to the Advanced Math credit that is required for the BCAGD and because the Intermediate Level also had print materials from which to develop the online course. Also, North Island College (NIC) had already decided to develop this course for online delivery. There was a real push for computer studies. The group wanted to develop an Advanced Level and a Provincial Level computer studies course. Vancouver Community College (VCC) had already developed some form of Advanced Level Computer Studies online that could be developed further. This was the rationale for determining which three ABE courses would be the first to be developed online.

Separate PIC proposals had been submitted the previous summer. They were for the development of Technical and Professional English from Camosun College (CCC) and for Advanced Computer studies from Vancouver Community College (VCC). However, according to one interviewee, "they had not gone through

the regular ABE PIC process; they had come in on their own." Therefore, since those two had been flagged and because the Technical and Professional English had also been put in by the ESL educators with limited resources, it was decided that Provincial Level Technical and Professional English may be written to satisfy both ABE and ESL groups. Developing Advanced Computers took care of the separate proposal that had come in, but it meant developing the course further, collaboratively. The group then formed working committees for each course to review existing courses, to develop criteria for evaluating them, and to decide how to improve them for piloting, making sure that they adhered to the existing articulation guidelines (C2T2, 2001a). Each course was to have a team of developers.

At the end of that meeting, there was a strong endorsement from the group that these three courses should be developed and that they should be developed collaboratively. The group also agreed that their development should be reassessed at the time of the next funding opportunity, which would have been in Spring 2001.They then proposed the next steps that needed to take place for the project to move forward. These were as follows:

- MAETT and C2T2 need to continue to develop a communication strategy to foster the network and good work initiated at this meeting,
- Steering Committees of the three identified courses will continue their course redevelopment work,

- In response to faculty request, C2T2 will provide for the development and delivery of a shared *Introduction to WebCT* course for interested ABE faculty,

- C2T2 will distribute an executive summary of the November 28 meeting via the E-merge developing website and the listservs of all ABE Deans and Directors and articulation workgroups

- For the moment, the complete group that attended the meeting will steer this work as a "Committee of the Whole." The possibility of creating a smaller Steering or Advisory Committee for the ABE initiative will be explored as the project develops.

- News about this project will continue to be distributed as it develops. The group is working under the assumption that this is the first year of what will be a longer-term project (C2T2, 2001a).

Further collaboration and training took place in the spring of 2001 at the ABE Articulation Committee meetings and at the ABEBC Conference that took place in Victoria. This was the second stage of the consultation process that led into Phase Two of the ABE Online PIC.

2001 - Phase 2: Development

At the next meeting at Camosun College, in Victoria, in April 2001, subcommittees were struck in those three areas. It was agreed within each group who was going to do what to contribute to the development. The ABEBC conference

also provided the opportunity for the Adult Basic Education Planning Committee that included the pilot course developers to convene at Camosun College in Victoria.

At this meeting, Martin Buck, of Camosun College, who had developed an Online Learner Success course for the ABT *e-merge* initiative, delivered a training session in WebCT to the group. After that presentation, the members again grouped themselves according their discipline—Technical and Professional English, Computer Studies, and Math—to plan the curriculum and development of the three pilot courses and to develop a PIC proposal for each. A joint PIC proposal was developed from these proposals and submitted by the ABE Articulation Steering Committee to develop these three core courses. The PIC was then reviewed at the following PIC meeting. Funding was approved in June 2001 and development took place in the Fall of 2001. Contracts were written to design and develop the Intermediate Level Math, the Advanced Level Computer Studies, and the Provincial Level Technical and Professional English. Each developer would receive varying degrees of support from their small advisory committees. At this point, it still was ABE driving the ABE project. However, the collaboration that was envisaged did not occur to the degree anticipated.

A meeting took place in Fall 2001 with the designers and developers to discuss design features that resulted in a course template being agreed upon (C2T2, 2001d). It was agreed that the template would form a metaphoric "front door" to the ABE house; however, once students stepped inside the front door, each interior would display its own unique design according to the needs of the course. The group

had started with the ABT template, but they decided that ABE students would respond more positively to something more graphic. An evaluation tool was also developed as a result of that meeting to get feedback from learners on the methodology. This feedback would lead to independent evaluations of the courses being conducted, consistent with what was being done with the ABT *e-merge* courses (C2T2, 2001d).

2001 - 2004 Phase 3: Delivery

The piloting of the first three courses took place in Winter 2001, and the students registered in the pilots were from CoTR, NIC, NWCC, and VCC. The first FTEs were assigned to these courses in the 2002-2003 fiscal year. In the *ABE Report on the E-merge Meeting that took place on April 24-25, 2002*, Audrey Thomas, the ABE Co-ordinator for the Ministry, noted that thirty-one FTEs of new funding had been assigned to various colleges for ABE *e-merge* delivery (C2T2, 2002a). Input from students and from the system's own experience indicated that the system had to work towards putting entire programs online. Some students would want to take all the courses they needed to get a credential or to reach their goal without having to go to a campus, even though for most students it would be a blend. For example, some students would take some courses on campus and also take some online; however, others who were unable to attend regularly scheduled courses and needed to complete their credentials would take all of their courses completely online. That meant that there were a lot of courses in ABE that needed to be developed for online delivery.

The creation of the ABE Steering Committee was approved at the ABE Deans and Directors Meeting in November 2001. This group's mandate was to develop criteria to identify the next ABE courses to be developed/adapted for inclusion in the ABE *e-merge* initiative. They were also to explore how to best provide relevant professional development in WebCT course facilitation for interested ABE faculty (C2T2, 2001d *)*.

In July 2002, the PIC Review Committee approved the proposal for Year 3 of the ABE online initiative. This PIC would fund the following course development:

Adaptation of existing courses that will be new to e-merge:

- Advanced Biology

- Provincial Biology

- Advanced Physics

- Provincial Physics

- Advanced Chemistry

Revision of existing e-merge courses:

- Advanced Computer Studies (piloted January 2002)

- Provincial English: Technical and Professional (piloted January 2002)

- Intermediate Math (piloted January 2002)

- Provincial Computer Studies (in development: to be offered January 2003)

Development of original course material for a new e-merge course:

- Advanced (Business/Technical) Mathematics (C2T2, 2002c).

Completion of this work, including pilot testing, was anticipated to take approximately 15 months. According to the 2002/03 Provincially Initiated Curriculum (PIC) Project Proposal, the work on these additional courses would begin in September 2002 and was to continue until December 2003.

The Proposal Review Criteria established that the courses being proposed would meet the provincial priorities as follows: The 2002-2003 PIC funding would support wholly online, collaborative, system-wide curriculum projects relating to the e-merge initiative. ABE was one of the three Provincial Program Priority Areas identified for 2002-2003. The development of ABE Advanced and Provincial Level Science courses would meet this criteria, since they are prerequisites to any kind of health-provider training, or technology training that had been identified as provincial program priority areas for education in British Columbia. They would also provide the elective options for BCAGD. As well as meeting the provincial priorities, the proposed courses would also meet the expectation of collaboration and credentialing.

The development process would use existing materials as well as those courses developed in other platforms. A course designer, in consultation with advisory groups established for each of the subject areas, would adapt them to WebCT. Each of the advisory groups would also identify, co-ordinate and, in some cases, create additional resources that could be linked into the shared core of each course. It was acknowledged that past ABE projects had been extremely successful

when one writer worked in consultation with a small advisory committee of ABE instructors. Such a model of collaboration would be encouraged.

According to the proposal, the ABE online courses would expand learner options and increase program flexibility. They would be consistent with the goals of the Provincial Educational Technology Framework for online courses and would help to meet some of the demands of ABE students who may be waitlisted for courses; who may live in isolated areas; or who, for reasons of family, work, or disability, may not attend traditional classes. The proposal also notes that ABE students from around the province would have access to these courses through a single portal, which is now officially known as BCcampus (C2T2, 2002c).

The curriculum development/adaptation and design was done through PIC money, just as the first three courses had been funded. The Ministry liked this approach and really supported collaborative development, since it was being done on a Provincial basis rather than the same, or similar, courses being developed in its twenty-two institutions. Consequently, this approach would reduce duplication in the system.

As courses were added and piloted, the course selection for students to complete the BCAGD continued to increase. Since many of the courses that were added were existing courses and were not developed on the collaborative model established by ABT, ABE has developed as a hybrid of ABT and AA as there was some collaboration involved. When comparing the collaboration between the first three *e-merge* programs, ABT, AA, and ABE, Hammond-Kaarremaa (2002) noted

that the ABE faculty have a long history of working as a provincial group to develop print, self-paced curriculum. This history has helped them to develop a strong team when developing face-to-face initiated collaboration. In 2000, when the group decided to offer some of the curriculum as online courses as part of the provincial e-merge, Hammond-Kaarremaa (2003) found that its decision to adapt these courses from print to online was made as a natural step rather than as a planned event that had developed out of a needs assessment as ABT had. One of Hammond-Kaarremaa's interviewees saw this adaptation "[a]s a bit of a pedagogical leap, but one which they learned from" (p. 65). Hammond-Kaarremaa's research also found that while the faculty group worked in very close consultation with curriculum teams for the print version, their regular pattern of teamwork and collaboration did not follow through for the three online courses that were adapted.

Since these online courses were not developed from scratch, but instead adapted from existing curriculum, they were developed primarily by individual faculty without a lot of collaboration although each course had an advisory committee with which to work. Hammond-Kaarremaa speculates that this could have been the result of the curriculum content already having been decided on by the team, and the challenge was more of adapting it to the online environment rather than having a discipline debate, which was, therefore, of less interest to the committee members. She speculates the reason could also have been that while many had experience with self-paced curriculum, none had taught in the online environment and might have felt at a disadvantage, which consequently caused a lack of interaction.

Hammond-Kaarremaa makes the suggestion that this may be worthy of further research (pp. 65-66).

The ABE faculty who developed the first three courses felt comfortable with the technology. The difficulties they faced were from the point of view of a developer/instructional designer using WebCT as a platform. Although they worked individually for the most part, they did collaborate on issues that pertained to all three disciplines. Most of their communication took place through e-mail and telephone and through face-to-face meetings that were convened periodically. The ABE group were more concerned with student issues that began to surface during development and once the piloting began.

Hammond-Kaarremaa (2003) saw the role of the ABE coordinator, who was a C2T2 Curriculum Development Coordinator, as a project manager whose role was to ensure that the curriculum was being developed to achieve the objectives. The co-ordinator also facilitated and acted as the key person connecting those with questions to those who had the answers (for example, registration processes and technical questions). As many of the questions, such as "Why are we going to charge different student activity fees associated with the different institutions?" did not necessarily have answers at that point, the co-ordinator tried to make sure that those who were responsible for those issues knew the questions that were being asked (p. 66).

While Hammond-Kaarremaa was conducting her research, the ABE group was piloting the first three courses, and the issues were just beginning to surface. To

discuss these issues and share information, the ABE faculty's communications, at that point, were primarily on an "as needed" basis via telephone or e-mail. However, since then the online ABE Faculty Lounge located on the BCcampus portal has become the forum where meetings and discussions take place to share good practices, to offer support, to share resources, to address issues, to find solutions, and to make proposals or to plan future developments.

The "2002/03 Provincially Initiated Curriculum (PIC) Project Proposal" (2002) notes that the past ABE projects had been extremely successful when one writer had worked in consultation with a small advisory committee of ABE instructors; therefore, ABE co-ordinators now encouraged this model of collaboration for the additional courses. Consequently, it appears the hybrid model has been working for ABE, although there are still many issues to be resolved.

<center>*2002 - BCcampus*</center>

The Ministry of Advanced Education made the public announcement for BCcampus on October 30, 2002. Although BCcampus was already in place and the *e-merge* courses were already listed and being delivered from that portal, its future and funding was not guaranteed because of the change in government. Initially, students could look and see what courses were available at different institutions and register for them by registering at that institution. The Distance Learning Course Directory (DLCD) provided an online listing of distance education courses, not just online courses but all distance education courses offered in BC. BCcourses.com was then developed to list all the distance courses that were offered as part of the *e-*

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merge initiative; it later became BCcampus.ca, the portal through which all distance courses and services in British Columbia's post-secondary system could be accessed. The announcement of BCcampus was long anticipated and, consequently, received positively by the stakeholders in the *e-merge* initiative.

The BCcampus portal is described as "a collaboration of post-secondary institutions in British Columbia providing an online central access point to post-secondary online and distance learning courses, programs and resources" (BCcampus, 2003c).The mandate of BCcampus is envisioned as follows:

> BCcampus will facilitate a seamless path from application to graduation for distance learners in British Columbia. In addition to providing access to online and distance education courses and programs available throughout the British Columbia public post-secondary system, BCcampus will provide support services and other learning resources for learners, faculty and course developers, staff and administrators (BCcampus, 2003c).

The hard work and perseverance of all factions in the system has now come to fruition. The system-wide model envisaged in the 1970s has evolved. However, there is now some concern that it is, once again, at risk.

Linked to the BCcampus website (2003) is a list of members on the BCcampus Implementation Steering Committee. As one scans the list, it becomes very obvious that there is no representation of faculty, the ones who develop and deliver these courses, on this appointed committee. Therefore, it does not appear to represent all the stakeholders of the system as the *e-merge* initiative has to date.

This concern is addressed in the *CIEA News Release: Big gaps in government's online learning strategy say faculty* (2002b), when the President of CIEA, Cindy Oliver, states "You can't have a collaborative education model if you won't work with faculty." In the article, Oliver expresses her anger because "faculty and staff were specifically excluded from both the transition committee that will oversee the closure of the Open Learning Agency and a provincial Implementation Steering Committee to expand an alternative on-line education strategy." Oliver is

> increasingly alarmed at the Advanced Education Minister's understanding of what collaboration means in an educational context. "Minister Bond claims that BCcampus will bring together the expertise and resources of all BC's public post-secondary institutions – but without faculty and staff what she is bringing together is a top-down group of managers who rarely interact with students" (CIEA, 2002b).

These comments appear to echo similar concerns expressed earlier about the COD initiative.

Other faculty concerns addressed by Oliver in the article concern the cost-cutting measures taken by the government that have affected post-secondary education in BC. CIEA is concerned that the government's under funding of the system will force institutions to make choices that will ultimately affect students. Consequently, Oliver questions whether such cost-cutting measures will deny students access to learning in the format of their choice. In regard to the BCcampus model, she states:

We know that some students may do very well in an on-line format and we support this format if there are clear quality and good practice guidelines. We also know that many students will continue to do best with a more personal and interactive approach that brings them face-to-face with faculty and staff and we wonder if they will be denied access to learning in the format of their choice (CIEA, 2002b).

This concern stems from government cuts to funding that may cause one delivery mode to be given a higher priority than the other, which would consequently compromise the learning needs and limit the choice of some learners. The article states that "CIEA is concerned about the cost to students, institutions and government given the very high costs associated with purchasing and upgrading the technology and programs and providing the training and support required for all involved" (CIEA, 2002b). These concerns also appear to be reminiscent of those expressed frequently throughout the history of public post-secondary education in BC—the under funding of post-secondary education.

There has been ongoing concern about budget cuts and the under funding of the system. CIEA's concern about the announcement to disband OLA is very real and has since been compounded by the government's subsequent announcements that it will sell the Knowledge Network and disband C2T2 and the Centre for Education Information Standards and Services (CEISS) as of March 31, 2004. C2T2 has been instrumental in the development of a collaborative, system-wide approach to post-secondary education, not only in the development of *e-merge/BCcampus* but

in the co-ordinated development of curriculum for the post-secondary system as a whole. CEISS has been the research arm of the post-secondary system. Its mandate has been to "manage and coordinate the post-secondary student outcomes research, analysis and reporting program within BC" (Calado, Ducharme, & Gaylord, 1997). These announcements and funding cuts have caused great concern and scepticism within the system, which could possibly thwart the collaboration and innovation necessary for BC to remain competitive in post-secondary education and for BCcampus to continue to evolve as a system-wide, collaborative model.

2004 - Current Status of BCcampus

As of January 1, 2004, since the first three programs were developed under the *e-merge* umbrella, there are six programs available through BCcampus: Adult Basic Education, Applied Business Technology, Associate of Arts, Bachelor of General Studies, Bachelor of Tourism Management, and Library Technology. According to the BCcampus website (2003), the

> web-based directory includes over 1783 distance education credit courses
>
> offered by 26 BC public post-secondary institutions. Over 824 of these
>
> courses are available online. Some are print-based correspondence courses.
>
> Others may be delivered by more than one technology. (BCcampus . . .,
>
> 2003b).

The system-wide model is in reach. However, a telling comment by one interviewee noted that *e-merge*/BCcampus is "a big project, and it will take some time to get there." In order to get "there," however, the system needs adequate funding, and it

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needs the continued collaboration and consultation, on which it has been built, maintained. It needs, as Selman et al. (1998) have pointed out, both social and monetary capital invested if it is to earn dividends.

<center>*April 2004—Recent Events*</center>

During the process of this research, many changes have taken place in the public post-secondary system. There has been a provincial election with a new Ministry of Advanced Education appointed to oversee public post-secondary education in BC. This newly appointed ministry has made the announcement for BCcampus and has allocated FTEs to support it. It has moved the system to a block funding formula, which no longer has targeted funding for particular programs. Insitutions now receive a lump sum according to the number of FTEs they generate.

Further cuts and changes to public post-secondary education have also occurred. On October 30, 2002, the Minister of Advanced Education, tabled Bill 69 – 2002, the Open Learning Agency Repeal Act that granted the Minister the power to order that the Open Learning Agency "wind up" and "dissolve" (CIEA *Profile*, 2002). On December 31, OLA's skills centres located in the Lower Mainland closed their doors. On March 19, 2004, the Ministry of Advanced Education announced that the BC Open University arm of OLA will form a partnership with the University College of the Cariboo (UCC) (BCOU, 2004), and the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) will now assume responsibility for The International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES) part of OLA.The Ministry of Advanced Education has also taken expressions of interest in the Knowledge Network and intends to sell this public

asset that has been part of OLA since its inception in 1988 (OLA, 2003). Also, the

Centre for Curriculum, Transfer & Technology (C2T2) was advised by the Ministry of

Advanced Education (AVED) that it would stop funding C2T2 as of March 31, 2004

(*C2T2*, 2002b). Consequenlty, it has been disbanded. This latest event has made it

very difficult to complete the final revisions of this research, as the researcher can no

longer access the C2T2 website to review much of the secondary data that conveys

the history of the ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative.

Summary

An attempt to answer the question, "What is the ABE *e-merge* initiative, and

how did it evolve within the greater *e-merge* initiative?" has taken this research back

to the beginning of adult distance education in BC. Although the *e-merge*/BCcampus

initiative appeared to evolve from the collaborative efforts of the ABT faculty, it

became apparent that there was something greater causing its evolution.

Consequently, the research question had to be broadened to include this initiative's

evolution within the BC public post-secondary system as a whole. When tracing this

history through key events that affected the decision- and policy-making in adult

education in BC, some significant conclusions can be drawn that are discussed in

the next chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The History of Adult Basic Education and Distance Delivery in BC

Historical-Comparative Analysis

From the history presented in the Results chapter, one can see a pattern of development in distance education in BC that falls into five phases as follows:

Phase	Time Period	Distance Education Delivery Modes
1	1920s—1940s	Correspondence: print-based
2	1940s—1950s	Correspondence with film
3	1950s—1970s	Correspondence with film, television, and emerging technologies
4	1970s—1990s	*Convergence and Lifelong Learning*: the integration of personal computers, telecommunication, and television to increase access and choice to educational opportunities for learners
5	1990s—Present	Online (Virtual) Learning

Among these five phases, many of the same issues appear in the development of adult basic education offered at a distance as those that appeared for adult education generally. However, since the purpose of this historical-comparative analysis is to focus on the ABE e-merge initiative and how it evolved within the greater e-merge initiative, the discussion of the history prior to Phase 5 is intended only to provide the context in which to place its development. This context will

provide the background to show how system-wide initiatives, such as e-merge, evolve over time in the greater post-secondary system in BC. Therefore, the evolution of the e-merge/BCcampus initiative will provide the framework in which the ABE initiative will be compared.

When studying the history of adult distance education in BC to frame this research, the researcher drew from the following literature. Selman (1977) provides the chronology of the early history of adult education in BC. Moran (1993), identifies the following three phases in distance education:

1. 1890s to the late 1960s--"Correspondence study";

2. late 1960s to 1980s—"distance education"; and,

3. the early 1990s--"virtual classroom" (pp. 2-3), and

Taylor (2002) frames the history of distance education in five generations as follows:

1. "The Correspondence Model"—print;

2. "The Multi-media Model"—print, audiotape, videotape, computer-based learning, and interactive video;

3. "The Telelearning Model"—audioteleconferencing, videoconferencing, audiographic communication, and broadcast TV/radio;

4. "The Flexible Learning Model"—interactive multimedia online, Internet-based access to WWW resources, computer mediated communication;

5. "The Intelligent Flexible Learning Model"—interactive multimedia online, Internet-based access to WWW resources, computer mediated

communication using automated response systems, and campus portal access to institutional processes and resources.

Although these taxonomies have provided a context in which to place this study, this research has looked specifically at adult distance education in BC. This research provides a taxonomy, supported by primary and secondary data, in which to place the phases of adult distance education in BC and from which to document the evolution of the e-merge/BCcampus initative as a whole. Therefore the five phases of distance education in BC can be described more fully as follows:

Phase 1 1920s – 1940s: Correspondence

The first form of distance education in British Columbia was correspondence, which was formally started by the Department of Education in 1919. By 1929, students could receive a full high school course. This form of distance education was primarily print-based, which one could construe to be Phase 1 of distance education in BC: primarily print-based, correspondence education.

Phase 2 1940s – 1950s: Correspondence with film

The introduction of the rural film circuits by UBC Extension, in co-operation with the National Film Board, in 1942, is the first introduction of technology as a means to increase access and educational opportunities to people in rural BC communities. It was possibly an attempt to expand on or enhance correspondence, although this intention was not specifically stated. As the forces returned from World War II, the need for increased access to education caused the rapid expansion of enrolments in high school (ABE) correspondence courses in 1946. Selman (1977)

notes that 41 percent of students were over twenty-one years of age. As these students were able to complete their high school courses by correspondence, they drove the need for university courses to be offered in the form of distance learning. The result of this was UBC beginning to offer correspondence courses for degree credit, which supplanted directed reading courses, in 1949. The introduction of film in the 1940s and the expansion of correspondence to the university level could be considered Phase 2 of distance education in BC: correspondence that began to include, or be supported by, film, starting in the 1940s with the rural film circuits.

Phase 3 1950s – 1970s: Correspondence with film, television, and emerging technologies

The advent of television in the 1950s had a significant impact on the delivery of education during this period. As well, the profile of Adult Basic Education increased significantly in 1966 with a new provision by the Department of Education that allowed adults to complete Grades Eleven and Twelve in eight months. The ensuing Diploma Program in Adult Education, first offered by the UBC in 1966, saw Adult Basic Education greatly accelerated in 1967. The increased need for Adult Basic Education was also reinforced by the Canada Census findings that acknowledged the literacy problem in Canada; consequently, increased access to continuing education was provided by provincial colleges, institutes, and universities. The appearance of local learning network projects, first using television and then computer assistance, in Vancouver in 1974 opened the door to *Phase 3 of distance education in BC: correspondence education supported by film, television, and e-merging technologies.*

Phase 4 1970s – 1990s: Convergence, lifelong learning with technology

The 1970s reveals a shift in focus towards technology and the system-wide possibilities it could provide. Carney's (1977) report *The Report of the Distance Education Planning Group on a Delivery System for Distance Education in British Columbia* documents this shift. The title of, and the recommendations in, the report identify the need for a provincial "educational institute or agency" that would be "responsible for the development of distance education and delivery systems" in BC. The need for the planning for the "acquisition of educational channels on provincial cable systems" and for the exploration of other delivery modes, such as telephone networks was identified. The report also identified the need for planning so that the Province could start to participate in "the proposed ANIK B satellite experiments" so that it could provide satellite-delivered instructional programming. The need for adequate funding was also identified to provide for further planning to initiate pilot programs and to evaluate alternative delivery modes in distance education. Finally, the report acknowledged the need for educational services to be co-ordinated and operated where appropriate (p. 3). The outcome of this report was the establishment of OLI/OLA, the Knowledge Network, and increased use of technologies in education that also began to include telephone communications, audio-visual media, and computer-assisted learning.

Convergence, the integration of personal computers, telecommunication, and television, was beginning to give momentum to province-wide change. As well, the Faris (1992) *report Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century: A Report on the Future*

Development of Adult/Continuing Education in British Columbia identifies the need

for a lifelong learning system in BC as well as the need for a provincial

adult/continuing education policy framework. His report reiterated, to some degree,

earlier reports from the mid 1970s that also called for tuition-free Grade Twelve

Equivalency/Adult Basic Education. Faris' report and others appear to have

foreshadowed the articulated, tuition-free, Adult Basic Education system that

currently exists in BC. Convergence and these shifts in focus during this phase can

be seen as *Phase 4 of distance education in BC: Convergence and lifelong learning*

using technology to support and deliver distance education.

Phase 5: 1990s to the Present—Online (Virtual) Learning

After the formation of OLA, apparently there was a period of a little

disappointment. According to some, OLA was too traditional, so there were attempts

to explore or to build expertise using electronic media. OLA was not moving fast

enough or as far as the government was hoping. The government consequently

funded little projects by groups of innovators to introduce change. At the time, there

were groups of people who were interested in using the media and who were funded

to provide leadership and pilot projects. To keep attracting the government of the

day's attention, sometimes these projects had to be reinvented with a new name so

that new ministers could make new announcements about some of these old ideas.

Consequently, it appears that the name of the project becomes almost totally

irrelevant as the project continues, often with the same people involved but with a

new title. Such has been the case with the COD, COPE, *e-merge*, and now

BCcampus initiatives as they have evolved during *Phase 5 of distance education in BC: online learning.*

From this historical-comparative analysis of the history of adult distance education in BC, one can see that it has been a gradual, system-wide shift that has been generated by the need for increased access and by scientific innovation and exploration with technology, as it has become available. Consequently, one can see the systematic development of five phases of distance education throughout the history of adult education in BC.

The ABE e-merge Initiative, and How It Evolved within the Greater e-merge/BCcampus Initiative

Since it was not just technology that influenced the evolution of adult distance education, particularly with regard to the *e-merge/*BCcampus initiative, a more contemporary historical-comparative analysis will be used to compare the evolution of the ABE Online/*e-merge* program within the greater *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative. Stories from key participants and the conditions that influenced the development and implementation of these initiatives provide insights and questions to encourage further research and potential action to promote the initiative's longevity in BC's public post-secondary system.

Who was involved?

The Ministry

During the evolution of distance education in BC, there have been many groups present. Although it first appears that there have been many different ministries involved, these are basically the same ministry, but with slightly changed

portfolios, as new governments are elected. The name of the Ministry has been changed to reflect the name of choice for that particular government. Therefore, the following history of the Ministry of Education from 1871 to 2002 explains the changes of its name in relation to the evolution of adult distance education in BC.

The history of adult education in BC begins with the Ministry of Education, which governed all sectors of education in the Province from 1871 until 1978 (Selman's (1977) chronology). At that point, the Ministry was renamed Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. In 1979, a new ministry was established—the Ministry of Universities, Science and Communications. The previous Ministry of Education, Science and Technology was then renamed Ministry of Education. In 1993, the Ministry of Education was renamed Ministry of Education, Skills, and Training. This ministry was disestablished in 1998, and two separate ministries were established—the Ministry of Education (responsible for the K-12 sector) and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (responsible for post-secondary education). In 2001, The Ministry of Advanced Education Training and Technology was renamed Ministry of Advanced Education, which is the current name of the ministry responsible for post-secondary education (*The Homeroom: British Columbia's Ministers of Education, 2004)*.

These name changes were revealed in the interviews. One interviewee commented that not only does the name change with each new government, but so does the staff in those ministries. This comment indicates that the system may not have continuity from one government to the next, which may create an expensive,

"trial by error" method of governance. Such a method of governance could increase the chance of history continually repeating itself, and consequently increase the chance of government repeating mistakes, instead of learning from them. It could also result in the ministry then having to waste money in fiscally challenged times correcting them.

Representatives from the Public Post-secondary Education System

As well as Ministry representatives in this initiative, there have been representatives from the various factions within the public post-secondary institutions: administrators, faculty, and staff. These have been the traditional players. In Phase 5, representatives from the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2) have played a significant role in the development and delivery of the *e-merge/*BCcampus initiative. Now, with the disbanding of C2T2, the locus of contol has been given to the government-appointed Implementation Steering Committee that oversees BCcampus. However, the current committee structure does not appear to provide equal representation. Preference appears to have been given to representatives from higher post-secondary institutions with fewer representatives from the colleges, who were the early system-wide developers and adopters of online education and provincially-articulated curricula. As stated by one interviewee in this research, initially the universities did not "buy-in" to this system-wide delivery of online education. The *e-merge* initiative and its consequent evolution into BCcampus occurred in spite of the lack of involvement from the universities, and its success was the result of the collaboration and communication

between the colleges, institutes, and agencies. The universities were involved in such projects, but, for the most part, were working individually.

The BCcampus Implementation Steering Committee, as listed on the BCcampus website, does not include faculty representatives from each of the program areas that form BCcampus. This raises the question of whether the steering committee can effectively govern delivery of these programs without input from faculty in the programs that it steers. This research indicates that it is the grassroots that understands the inner-workings and needs of their programs and learners. Without representation from each program, decisions may be made that will compromise the delivery or needs of learners that are taking or intend to take courses in those programs.

Finally, another disparity in the representation on this committee is the over-representation of urban institutions at the expense of the smaller, more diverse rural colleges. The challenges faced by rural colleges and their learners, who are disadvantaged by small populations and geographic barriers, could be overlooked due to large representation from urban areas. Therefore, it may be perceived that all learners and institutions in BC are not being given fair and equal representation on the current committee.

The collaboration amongst those involved in this initiative's design, development, and delivery appears to be at risk. At this time, the Implementation Steering Committee does not appear to be an all-inclusive public post-secondary steering committee overseeing the delivery of public post-secondary education

through the BCcampus portal. When looking at the history of adult education in BC and the success of earlier initiatives, collaboration and communication with all system partners have been key factors in determining the longevity of them. For example, this history found that the COD project failed because faculty were not consulted and the concerns that they had raised were not addressed. Whereas, *e-merge* succeeded because it was designed, developed, and implemented within a system that provided for system-wide communication, collaboration, and fair representation of all parties involved on all of its decision-making bodies.

This history has provided decision makers with a model that may be critical to the success of BCcampus. It has shown that post-secondary education cannot be delivered cohesively and collaboratively if each party does not perceive they are being fairly represented. Such perceptions have caused the fear and mistrust between parties within the public post-secondary system that it has experienced over the past thirty years. Consequently, such collaboration and communication will be critical as this portal expands and develops partnerships with other public institutions nationally, as trends indicate it will, to reduce waste and duplication.

C2T2

C2T2 has been a critical coordinative mechanism throughout the development of the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative. Since its inception in 1995, C2T2 has been the provincial facilitator and record keeper of curriculum and innovative projects generated by BC's post-secondary system. It has co-ordinated and collaborated with all sectors of the system to enable BC's post-secondary system to

"support educators' efforts to provide students with access to quality, relevant, and flexible learning opportunities" (C2T2, 2002d). The dismantling of C2T2 raises concerns about the accessibility of the curriculum and databases of teaching aids and information developed for the public post-secondary system by its faculty. As well, it raises concerns about the co-ordination of the system in its place. The Centre has been a storehouse of educational resources for educators, which have been developed and archived by public post-secondary educators. These resources are the investment of their labour and faith in the system. The COPE, *e-merge*/BCcampus initiatives are the latest examples. Therefore, these resources need to be easily accessible at all times to public post-secondary educators and kept within BC's public post-secondary system.

The history of adult education has shown that collaboration appears to be key to the acceptance of and innovation necessary for a program's or institution's longevity. It was C2T2's collaboration with all parties involved that appears to have enabled the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative to gain the acceptance of the whole system. When we look at history, Faris' (1992) prognostication now appears to be fulfilled to some degree. He foresaw the need a provincial lifelong learning system/framework that would "[a]dopt the concept of lifelong learning as an organizing principle and social goal for education and training programs . . ., and the promotion of learning opportunties in the non-formal sector" (p. 3). At that time he saw OLA as the agent that "could prove to be a significant building block in the creation of a provincial lifelong learning system" (p. 26). OLA now appears to have

been the building block, and BCcampus' evolution within the BC public post-secondary system as a whole appears to have the opportunity to address this need and build on what has already been accomplished.

Also, Faris' observation that the lack of a government commitment or local coordinative mechanism would prove costly gives credibility to concerns about the dismantling of OLA and C2T2. Faris states, "Despite inclusion of continuing education as an objective within the college legislation, no government commitment or local co-ordinative mechanism was developed—omissions which would prove costly to the field in later years" (p. 26). This statement could be construed as a warning that without such a co-ordinative mechanism as C2T2, the system may become fragmented and unsustainable. C2T2's collaborative efforts seem to have been key to the development and delivery of the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative, which includes all public post-secondary institutions, and many other system-wide projects. Therefore the dismantling of C2T2 is a concern.

The challenge faced by OLA was predicted in Moran (1993), when she cites Rumble (1992) and states that "single-mode distance teaching institutions are increasingly vulnerable to competition from dual-mode institutions because they lack the capacity to converge distance and face-to-face education into some new form . . . it is important to deal with these issues–or face negotiating from weak positions" (p. 16). This prognostication appears to have come to fruition with regard to OLA, with the Minister of Advanced Education tabling Bill 69 – 2002, the Open Learning

Agency Repeal Act, on October 30, 2002. This bill granted the Minister the power to order that the Open Learning Agency "wind up" and "dissolve" (CIEA *Profile*, 2002).

OLA's history suggests that the lack of collaboration and acceptance at the institutional level and its single-mode distance delivery may have contributed to its demise. As stated by Moran (1991), OLI was viewed with suspicion because of its undefined role in relation to the other post-secondary institutions and the part-time, contract basis on which it hired its faculty (p. 13). This may be why it did not become the coordinative mechanism as it was intended. OLI/OLA's subsequent demise appears to support the notion that the lack of collaboration with other institutions and amongst faculty can thwart the innovation and communication necessary to ensure the vibrancy required for an institution's longevity. Moran's (1993) statement that

> [b]y the 1990s, government intrusion into institutional autonomy has become a worrying commonplace in most countries. The aura of excitement and 'hype' around technology has not escaped politicians or government officials, but relatively few understand fully its capabilities and implications. Distance education institutions may well be able to take advantage of the financial and other support generated by the political popularity of information and communications technologies. Conventional institutions are beginning to do so (p. 15).

Perhaps this competition for funding and OLA's mandate as a single-delivery mode institution led to increased competition rather than the collaboration required for its survival.

BCcampus' mandate, on the other hand, is solely to provide "an online central access point to post-secondary online and distance learning courses, programs and resources" (BCcampus, 2003a). It does not involve itself with other programming in the public post-secondary sector. Therefore, it cannot fulfil the coordinative, store-housing, and archiving role that C2T2 has fulfilled. As stated by Faris (1992), the system needs a central co-ordinative mechanism for its success or it will fragment.

Conditions Affecting the Development of the ABE/e-merge/BC Campus Development

This history makes clear that adult distance education in BC evolved over time. Each program in the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative was not an idea spawned by one person or group, and it did not just start at the point in time that the Ministry announced the initiative. The politics of its evolution quickly become obvious with the number of name changes the Ministry has had throughout its history and the number of name changes the initiative itself has had. However, despite the different names of both the Ministry and the initiative, the project has evolved over the duration of several governments, and its evolution has been influenced by many factors. Therefore, when we consider the development of the ABE Online project, it is important to consider the conditions under which it developed. By considering these conditions, one can start to determine the uniqueness of the ABE *emerge* project in relation to the greater *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative.

ABE--The Third Program to be Developed in The Initiative

ABE was the third in the string of programs that was added, and there are many conditions that have affected its development and delivery. ABE Online started

independently, and it came into something that was already going on as e-merge. There is a perception by some that it did not come in a fully integrated way. This may be partly because the ABE co-ordinator was not initially part of the core e-merge team that was comprised of the Educational Technology Users Group at C2T2, who were working with the ABT e-merge group at the time. Consequently, the ABE co-ordinator led the project, but it was not totally integrated with e-merge . Hammond-Kaarremaa's (2003) research supports the view that ABE developed as a hybrid of ABT and AA.

ABE Developed Independently

ABE did not have the same involvement from the Educational Technology arm of C2T2 that the ABT program had. Since the ABE project was funded as a PIC grant project, the ABE co-ordinator at C2T2 was managing that PIC grant known initially as ABE Online. It still was ABE driving the ABE project. It had developed from the grass roots and from articulation meetings, not as a concerted effort to deliver ABE online, as the ABT-Core/COPE/e-merge and initially COD/AA had been. The initial ABE PIC grant was not specifically to include ABE at the time in the COPE project, but it was to explore the concept with the ABE group. Therefore, the ABE project did not really take off until that first meeting of the Steering Group for that project on November 28, 2000, when the ABE group unanimously said that it wanted to be part of the COPE/e-merge initiative. The group then formed different groups that set the priorities for which three courses it would develop as ABE Online.

Program Differences

According to one interviewee, the culture in ABE and the history of the way that ABE's curriculum development was done made collaboration with regard to the inclusion of ABE into *e-merge* difficult within C2T2. The interviewee felt that there was not initially a "buy-in" at the leadership level of ABE. This may have been because of philosophical differences, as the needs of ABE learners are somewhat different than those of the learners in the other programs. When the Ministry seconded a representative into a role that was part-time for the Ministry and part-time for C2T2, the *e-merge* group members re-organised their workloads. Each picked one of the program areas that he or she could help to facilitate. This representative was assigned to ABE. Some felt that more could have been done with ABE in terms of getting some of the policy kinds of decisions made from the grass roots to get them through that group. ABE Online started from different factions of competing proposals, which may have caused some tension in the early stages; whereas the ABT group was already unified and had a vision of the provincial curriculum they would develop. The ABT group members already had a good history of working together on a number of other PIC, PLA, and other related projects, as did the ABE group; however, the transition to online appears to have been more difficult for ABE.

Philosophical Differences

As with many collaborative projects, there were conflicting approaches. The responsibilities and roles of co-ordinators appear to have affected the development

of the programs. Some interviewees thought that the ABE co-ordinator was not really sold on the idea of *e-merge* at all. This perception may have been caused by the fact that the ABE group did not know initially if it wanted to be part of the greater initiative. Consequently, the Ministry co-ordinator for ABE was seen by some as very hands-on because she wanted to remain very involved with the whole project to represent ABE according to its articulated needs. One interviewee felt that the ABE co-ordinator's close involvement was what changed the management or the power structure of it, since the other program co-ordinators were not involved. However, from the perspective of some of the more technically minded, ABE has been allowed to "percolate" along, and it still needs work. This same group has also realised that ABE students have some unique needs that are not obvious initially when compared with students in the other programs. Perhaps that is why ABE developed with more "hands-on" involvement, since the ABE co-ordinator was also very closely connected to the ABE Articulation Steering Committee and its Working Groups that govern the direction of ABE.

Also, some of the faculty involved in the *e-merge/*BCcampus initiative thought that these were "mixed load" courses and that there would be a blend of learning resources that a student might access from the classroom online. According to one interviewee, "there was a bit of a disconnect between what the ultimate goal was from the Ministry perspective and what the reality was from the faculty position." Consequently, some courses are totally online, and some are delivered as hybrids. These comments bring to light philosophical differences between the groups with

regard to the role of technology and curriculum development in the learning environment.

Learner Needs

There is a difference in the needs of ABE students when compared to other post-secondary learners. ABT has traditionally been focused on, and driven by, technology. Its focus has been to teach its students how to use the technology in order to stay current with and meet the needs of the work place. The students in ABT have already met the pre-requisites from the ABE or the K-12 systems. ABE, on the other hand, is providing students with the academic foundation required for its students to enrol in the other *e-merge* programs, such as ABT, University Studies, Tourism, Library Tech, etc. Consequently, ABE is not driven by technology but sometimes may choose to use it to support learning. Therefore, students accessing ABE online need many support systems made available to them to ensure they are comfortable with the technologies and that they are at a literacy level that fosters the independence necessary to learn online. That is why the ABE group determined that learners in the Advanced Level and Provincial Level courses would be the most likely to independently use current technology to learn online. The group also realised that it is how technology is used, rather than what is used, that will determine their learners' success.

Consequently, some of the Education Technology group at C2T2 did not really think that ABE would fit the criteria with which they had been working. This thinking had nothing to do with the quality of the program. It was more to do with the

fact that this was still a very new initiative, and ABE learners would bring all kinds of challenges and complications to their studies that the other groups like ABT and AA, would not necessarily share. One interviewee's description of ABE being a teaching subject where apprenticeship is really important acknowledges the difference. The interviewee noted that although the content is important, it is the content as it is embodied in the person of the teacher that is more important. Therefore, one of the conditions of ABE Online was the concern amongst faculty, and others responsible for ABE, that the educator-learner relationship that is possible in an online environment would not provide the richness that the ABE student-faculty relationship has when it is in a learning centre or a classroom. Educators associated with ABE were, and still are in some cases, worried that the online environment cannot convey enough of the complex relationship that characterises the ABE student-faculty relationship. As stated by one interviewee, in an apprenticeship relationship, the faculty member is modelling professional behaviour and educated behaviour, as well as teaching a particular content that can be abstracted from the person who knows it. Therefore, the question is of whether the electronic media can communicate a rich enough gestalt of all that the teacher brings to the student.

That difference is a special condition with ABE, more than with some of the academic subjects or even some of the ABT more technical subjects where skill at typing, for instance, is something that one can master without necessarily having to have the teaching skills of the educators. According to one interviewee, that was the reason the Educational Technology side of C2T2 did not initially support the ABE

Online project. They were not sure how successful ABE students would be in completing those courses online. Therefore, they did not necessarily think it would be a good fit and that it could be a real challenge, which it apparently has been.

Credentialing

The Educational Technology side brought forward to the Ministry, when the Ministry made the decision to fund ABE, that there had to be a long-term commitment from ABE because of the whole COPE initiative. Input from students and prior experience meant that ABE also had to work towards putting the entire program online. Some students wanted to know that they could take all the courses to get a credential or to reach their goal without having to go to a campus even though, for most students, their education would be a blend. They would take some courses on campus and do some online. That meant that there were many courses in ABE that needed to be put online.

Collaboration and Trust

ABE became a prong of the *e-merge* initiative simply as a result of circumstances, which was a big difference from ABT, which was the first big wave of *e-merge* that was a planned co-ordinated, strategic choice. However, the needs of many adult learners who are working and who need to upgrade their basic education to change careers or to move forward in their careers are now being recognised, since they are the ones who need access to ABE outside of the traditional classroom. Despite these differences, ABE agreed to move forward as a group of instructors and institutions working together. It received PIC funding to begin

converting its courses for online delivery. For ABE, it was more of a conversion of already articulated face-to-face courses that had been developed, or partially developed, for delivery in an online environment. Therefore, the condition ABE worked under to do this would have been one of trust amongst institutions because ABE is mostly a very collaborative endeavour.

In ABT, it was faculty from across institutions involved in developing the product, which was not always the case in the development of ABE Online. The traditional approach at C2T2 has been to have the one or two instructors who are the experts in the field hired to do the work, and then they do the work for the system, working under an advisory committee structure. For ABE, existing materials, as well as those courses developed in other platforms, were put into WebCT by the course designer in consultation with advisory groups established for each of the subject areas. Each of the advisory groups identified, co-ordinated and, in some cases, created additional resources that could be linked into the shared core of each course. This method has been perceived as "extremely successful" by ABE (C2T2, 2002c). As a result, the ABE online project developed as a hybrid of both the ABT and AA models.

Access to Technology

This initiative was also developed in an era in which access to technology had been growing so that people no longer thought it strange to have e-mail and Internet accounts. Therefore, there has been a softening of resistance, in the community of educators, to the use of media in the form of electronic technology in their teaching.

However, there were, and are still, a relatively small number of educators who are extremely comfortable using it. Computer-managed learning systems, such as Pathfinder, had actually jaundiced the view of anything that was computer-based education for many ABE faculty. However, there was a need to provide more flexible access to learners and to the Internet, as it became more pervasive, providing the average person greater choice and access to learning.

Political Change

The ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative has been developed in an era of political change, and politics have played an enormous role in its development. The history of distance adult education in BC has shown that the need for a system-wide approach was recognised early—in the 1960s with the introduction of the community colleges and in the 1970s in various reports and with the establishment of OLI. However, as stated by Moran (1991), OLI and OLA did not meet that need for various political reasons. The *Charting A New Course* strategic plan opened the door to system-wide change with great emphasis on providing more access and choice for learners in BC. Many institutions were embracing the new technologies to do so. As a result, the COD initiative was proposed; however, its success appears to have been thwarted due to political undercurrents that undermined the collaboration required for the initiative to succeed. The COPE/*e-merge*/BCcampus initiative consequently developed from the grassroots with what has been to date perceived as a gradual system "buy-in." Initially, the initiative was not officially funded, as the previous government was waiting for the outcome of the last election. Then, with the

change of government, the initiative was in limbo, to some degree, until the new government announced BCcampus formally on October 30, 2002. Since then the government has funded the initiative with increasing FTE counts.

Funding Cuts and Their Effects

The *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative itself has been developed in an era of cutbacks to education. Cuts to education have been the case for approximately thirty years in BC. The first cuts were initially noted in Selman's (1977) history and then in other literature used in this research. In fact, the researcher recalls that cuts have been made to post-secondary education at least once each decade since the 1970s and more than once in the 1990s. Consequently, these funding cuts have become more acute and may have created an environment of insecurity, leading to scepticism and the fostering of competition rather than co-operation. The resultant lack of collaboration can then inhibit and hamper innovation. The philosophy of "more for less" appears to have placed a great deal of stress on the system. The OLI/OLA and COD projects appear to be examples of where funding cuts, lack of collaboration, and competition impaired the development of innovative ideas, which consequently caused their demise. Therefore politics and funding, to a great degree, have impacted the development of the *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative.

System-wide Change

Other conditions that have affected the development of this initiative were collaboration and timing. The Forum on distributed learning that was held with all the post-secondary institutions at Dunsmir Lodge in 1995, the resultant *Access and*

Choice document, and the COD project appear to have laid the groundwork, to some degree, for the *e-merge* initiative. However, although it was the innovations of faculty that started the COD project, it may have failed at least in part, because it did not include all constituents in the system who would be affected by it. The Ministry withdrew funding for it.

The Educational Technology Working Group, which was a sub-committee that reported to the *Charting A New Course* Steering Committee, chaired by the Deputy Minister, developed the *Education Technology Policy Framework* (1999) at a parallel time. This was an all-inclusive post-secondary committee with representatives who were union members, students, academic administrators, and C2T2 personnel. At this table, discussions took place about how the Province would move forward in distance/distributed learning. Although the genesis of this initiative, to some degree, came out of the Forum, the *Access and Choice* document, and the COD initiative, the COPE/*e-merge* project was percolating at the grassroots and paralleled them. The COPE/*e-merge* initiative consequently evolved from the *Educational Technology Policy Framework* agreement because all constituents endorsed it.

Innovation

Another condition, as one interviewee stated, was that the Ministry would sometimes deliberately fund almost competing groups. Such has been the case, to some degree, with the development of all of these initiatives: COD, COPE/*e-merge*/BCcampus. ABE, however, appears to have been the anomaly, since it

initially percolated up from innovators at the grass roots rather than initially developing as a funded, collaborative effort.

Funding

The Ministry made all the funding decisions for the PIC proposals. Therefore, in 2000, the process for allocating PIC money was such that it was a general call to the system, and people could submit whatever proposals they wanted. Since there were three proposals that initially went in for PIC grants that were from different factions of ABE faculty in the system, the Ministry decided that it wanted to support both the ABE and the COPE/*e-merge* developments and wanted to link them. As stated by one interviewee, the Ministry preferred this collaborative development approach because it would be done on a provincial basis, rather than each of its twenty-two institutions developing its own version. It was anticipated that this collaborative approach would reduce duplication, which would ultimately save money. Since ABE is one of the largest programs in the province, it was anticipated that if 10% could be delivered online it would save a significant amount of money by reducing duplication.

These conditions under which ABE Online evolved reveal this project developed under very complex and wide-ranging conditions that distinguished it, in many ways, from the other programs.

Who was it intended to serve?

As with the earlier distance education modes of delivery, the implementation of ABE Online/*e-merge/*BCcampus is to provide people access and choice to

educational opportunities. However, as well as serving learners, it also meets the needs of the institutions and government.

Learners

The *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative is intended to serve learners—who cannot attend regularly scheduled classes for reasons of work, conflicting schedules, disabilities, isolation, waiting lists, other barriers, or choice—an alternate way of accessing courses. This initiative was a deliberate attempt to provide learners in the province increased access and choice. For ABE students, it was initially intended to serve those at the higher levels who were capable of independent, distance study with the help of an instructor to get their upgrading. The *e-merge* vision, according to one interviewee, based on US statistics and other data at the time, was that

> e-learning is an appropriate strategy for maybe 10-15% of learners, and that's it. All of us involved in Victoria would say that the optimum current thinking is a mixed load, where there is some face-to-face and some online. It's probably the most beneficial in getting the best of both.

Therefore, the *e-merge* initiative is intended to serve a relatively small population of adult learners and not replace face-to-face instruction. Also, it is intended to serve ABE learners who, because of the online component, are fully literate and who have fairly sophisticated computer skills. According to one interviewee, it was certainly never intended to serve the majority of the ABE population. That is why the upper levels of ABE were targeted because, at the lower levels, students have scarce resources. At the lower levels, the students would likely need much more one-on-

one support as their literacy levels would not be sufficient to meet the reading, writing, and problem-solving skills demanded by most online courses. Therefore, according to one interviewee, the Ministry did not initially want to go into the lower Intermediate and Fundamental levels. Consequently, ABE *e-merge* is intended to serve citizens who want either their Adult Graduation Diploma or just want to upgrade in certain areas. The other *e-merge/*BCcampus programs are intended to serve students who face the same barriers; however, these students are entering the system presumably with Grade Twelve or higher literacy levels to complete the requirements for an academic, technical, or vocational credential before entering higher learning or the workplace.

When looking at who is successful at online learning, one interviewee commented that it is the learners who are in their thirties or younger. The interviewer used the example of university students who are in third and fourth year psychology and who are also doing fundamental math in ABE. Online learning is giving them flexibility of access. The interviewer states that

> although it was intended to serve the whole range of the population, in the ABE population, the younger folks do better with it. If you take someone who doesn't have computer skills, in Adult Education that's quite a challenge. To a person thirty-five and younger the Internet is just like breathing, but for older students it's more of a challenge. Community Learning Centres can provide that face-to-face support that is needed.

Such success may be so in some courses; however, it has been the experience of the researcher that other factors, not just age, also determine a learner's success. Both maturity and computer skills are needed for success. Maturity gives the learner the resolve, independence, and critical thinking skills necessary to be successful as an online learner.

When taking all of these needs into consideration, this research shows that the ABC/*e-merge* iniative is serving learners with a variety of needs in BC.

Institutions

ABE Online/*e-merge* also is intended to serve institutions. Since ABE is a significant preparatory program for post-secondary education, it is intended to make efficient use of Provincial resources allocated to the institutions themselves. That way, a variety of programs could develop suites of courses that could be shared provincially. The initiative might also be able to serve high schools. According to one interviewee, there has been some exploration around high school graduation as there is a need to put Grades Eleven and Twelve online so that those students who face barriers to traditional classrooms can graduate.

Government

Institutions are constantly faced with budget constraints that are forcing them to look at innovative options to meet both their learners' and the government's needs. There is a perception that with this government, there is also a push for revenue generation, so many of the post-secondary institutions have developed lucrative revenue streams with international students. Therefore, the ABE Online/*e-*

merge/BCcampus project can serve international students as well. However, at this point, international student fees make it prohibitive for international students to take just one or two courses. Therefore fee structures would need to be reviewed to increase access and choice to this student population if this need were to be seriously addressed.

The ABE Online and the *e-merge/*BCcampus initiative as a whole can be seen as serving a number of groups. The development phase serves the institutions because it is helping them get resources to develop a common product for delivery in an online environment. Then, once the project is into the delivery phase, it serves the students because it gives them access and choice to programming in another delivery mode across the Province. It also serves the Government to some degree because it is a direction the government wants to go to minimise duplication while increasing access and choice to BC's learners. It serves all groups if FTE student enrolments can be shared collaboratively across the system.

Collaboration

Historically, adult education has been built on collaboration. In 1899, the first teachers' institution was organised. In 1911, the first "Adult School" organisation was founded, and in 1934, an Advisory Committee on Adult Education was created. The formation of the Canadian Association for Adult Education then followed in 1935. The creation of the community colleges began in 1963 and focused on expanding educational opportunities for adults. The framework for adult education, developed in the 1970s, then led to the articulation framework being developed for ABE in 1985.

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Since then, ABE has been built on collaboration and consultation. As the local and Provincial Learning Networks developed, collaboration within the system substantially increased. One of the strongest characteristics of *e-merge*/BCampus is the emphasis on collaboration and consultation. That emphasis can be seen in the titles assigned to the online projects: COD (Collaborative Online Delivery) and COPE (Collaborative Online Programs for E-Learners). The *e-merge* initiative is all about collaborative online development and delivery.

In the Fall of 2000, when PIC funds were made available for ABE, the ABE group held a consultation with representatives at the table from all of the sixteen public post-secondary institutions involved in ABE. There was a great response. ABE Online was not just a technical product; it was more of a curriculum project. It was something that had policy implications that had to be considered. It was faculty generated, and it was the faculty's enthusiasm that made it a collaborative initiative across the Province.

ABE practitioners are reported to have been a consultative group. For example, when any PIC proposal goes through ABE, it usually trickles up from the individual, articulation working committees to the Steering Committee. Therefore, it has to get a system "buy-in." ABE Online, at the point of this research, has in effect a steering committee that is an amalgam of people from the ABE Steering Committee, the developers, and the deans and directors. However, the makeup of that committee is changing and will continue to change without C2T2's involvement.

ABE is currently looking at ways to share some of its courses. However, according to one interviewee, with regard to the *e-merge* initiative,

> I don't think we're there yet—I think we're in a situation where it would be nice to be able to have all institutions sharing and adopting the same types of courses because we do have common articulated standards. For some reason, because of territorial feelings, institutions feel that their own course is better than somebody else's course.

At its inception, ABE *e-merge* was intended to be a collaborative online delivery model. If the system keeps working together, it will happen in a cohesive integrated way.

Course Development

Some interviewees saw ABE course development not being as collaborative as the ABT. ABE course development online, like ABT, began in all cases with curriculum that had been developed provincially on paper so that there was provincial curriculum for each of the courses. However, the individual ABE courses online tended to be the work of individuals at institutions, rather than the work of a collective group. This difference could be due to the lack of time, as faculty are increasingly being expected to do more with less, because of the lack of funds to release "a team," and because many ABE educators initially lacked the computer expertise to develop online courses.

ABE is slightly different from ABT. ABT had a co-ordinator who did a lot of the work in the development; whereas the ABE faculty developed the courses and

worked collaboratively with the ABE co-ordinators because the co-ordinators received their directives from the ABE Articulation Committees. ABE also developed differently from the AA degree initiative where individual institutions and independent faculty developed and delivered their own courses independently. ABE is working towards a model similar to the ABT model where one course with multiple sections is delivered and taught with multiple instructors teaching them across the province. Each course is listed on the BCcampus portal as being available, and there may be multiple sections of it that may be taught by different institutions at different times according to demand. However, this will require much more collaboration and consultation with all parties affected for it to work effectively for ABE and AA.

In ABE, the focus has been on the Advanced and Provincial level courses because those are the ones that are required for the British Columbia Adult Graduation Diploma (BCAGD). The system over the past year has been basically concentrating on the sciences, since English, Computer Studies, and Math were the first priorities. In the 2002/03 Proposal, Advanced and Provincial Levels of Biology and Physics as well as Advanced Chemistry were proposed to be adapted for delivery in WebCT. Advanced (Business/Technical) Mathematics was also proposed for development as a new course. These courses were to have been piloted and ready for full implementation by December 2003. The Advanced and Provincial Level Sciences have been added because of the demand for health and sciences. These courses are keys or the prerequisites for post-secondary education courses, which ABE students need to gain entry to post-secondary programs.

Another factor in the development of ABE Online is that ABE is not a program in the same way that ABT is. There is the BCAGD, but there is not an attempt yet to have every course that a student might need to complete the BCAGD online. The AA program started by saying that students need to be able to complete an Associate of Arts online, totally online; then it found the courses that already existed and that would fit into the degree template. Students then, although without as wide a selection of courses as might be available in a traditional face-to-face environment, could meet the requirements for the degree entirely with online courses. ABT did the same. It set out to develop its Core Certificate courses so that its students could complete the Certificate online. For ABE, it has been more experimental, to see how students view and how faculty and institutions feel about teaching ABE online. That is why just three courses were developed initially. However, the number of ABE courses is growing. In January 2003, seven new courses were added. Now, there is an array of seventeen ABE courses offered through BCcampus.

Delivery

There appears to have been no market studies done specifically for the ABE project. One interviewee stated that that there was no funding provided for market studies to determine the demand for these courses, to see if people understand it or not, and to see if the right mix of people are getting into those courses. There are many students in developmental programs. However, the Educational Technology branch at C2T2 estimated that it would serve only 10-15% of ABE students in order to provide access and choice to otherwise disadvantaged students. Consequently,

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15% is still significant, as many of those feed into other post-secondary programs and continue as lifelong learners.

Most, if not all, colleges offer ABE. ABE is worked through articulation, so the assumption is there that mobility and transfer amongst students can be accomplished with minimal disruption. The colleges offering the same programs need to be able to talk to one another and work collaboratively without consequences to faculty or students. Provincial articulation and curriculum development need to continue as it has for twenty years to support and promote collaborative development and delivery partnerships. The cuts to public post-secondary education and its referring agencies have caused the perception of some that ABE is not well understood or well funded. However, as Selman et al. (1998) state that ABE provides the social capital that promotes "good citizenship" in BC; therefore ABE needs to have its profile raised so that it can fulfil that mandate.

At the time this research started, the ABE project was just beginning, and the other two programs were further along. ABT had been in place for three years, and AA was in its second year. Practice has shown that the conditions for development have to be flexible, with the program taking the lead on what it means to be flexible with the backing and support of its administration. As of October 24, 2002, the perception was that there was not a high level senior group helping with policy issues and administrative barriers, such as agreeing on how to deal with things, such as Letters of Permission, one tuition fee, students not having to apply twice if they are going to attend two different places at once, and other issues that would

make life much easier for the students. Tuition fees, registration, financial aid, student support and advising, marketing, and all of those services are still evolving. The whole structure is new. Therefore, the conditions have to be flexible to accommodate different styles within the *e-merge* parameters and FTE funding. The Ministry has provided FTE funding for these programs, and that is a really big condition. Collaboration and fair play within the system will now be key to its success.

Characteristics: Serving A Social Need

The general perception is that the ABE project grew much more from a committed faculty grouping of practising ABE educators around a fairly neat cluster of activities. Their commitment can be traced throughout the history of adult education in BC. Therefore, there is probably more of a social commitment from the faculty involved in the ABE initiative, since it grew in response to a perceived institutional/faculty driven need. One interviewee stated that

> some might say that the folk that were involved in it on the other side tended to be "techies" looking for programs. They were more enamoured with platforms and with the potential. Whereas, the folk on the ABE side needed to update the curriculum that was already articulated, print based curriculum; and, if they were going to update that, then they might as well put it online. This would then make it cheaper to distribute, easier to upgrade, and more readily accessible.

Therefore, ABE's intent was to provide an enriched array of offerings in an increasingly fiscally challenged environment so that regional centres and disadvantaged students could benefit. People in smaller communities could benefit from these projects. There appeared to be no way, with the smaller class sizes, the numbers of communities, the small size of the communities, and the difficulties driving between them, that these regions could be adequately served in a traditional model without a great increase in budget. Therefore in this regard, ABE serves a social need as well an educational one.

ABE is a little different than the other programs, mainly because it is a core level of education required for social mobility. As stated by Selman (1977), in the past Grade Eight or GradeTen would have been sufficient; however, students can no longer go out and get jobs with Grade Eight and Grade Ten, and now there is some doubt that they can get a job with high school graduation. People without their high school or Adult Graduation Diploma will not be able to provide for subsistence, move up socially (or will have difficulty moving up), as they lack the basic skills necessary to meet the demands of the workplace, all of which make ABE a critical program in the system.

Significance

Although there are many similarities in the way the ABE program developed within the greater *e-merge* initiative, there are significant differences that have made ABE unique. Historically, ABE has developed as a collaborative system-wide model within a provincially articulated framework, dating back to 1983. This framework

allowed ABE to move from print-based, to computer-assisted, and finally to online learning, meeting provincially articulated learning outcomes in each discipline. This collaborative model has allowed innovators to develop courses using the technologies without compromising provincial standards. However, it was not necessarily a logical next step for some ABE faculty. Technology had yet to prove its value as a learning tool in a sensitive, learner-centred environment. The need for technology was to provide more access to learning and to provide a medium to enhance learning. Consequently, when compared to ABT and AA faculty and students, many ABE constituents were more suspicious of and less comfortable with the technologies.

ABT, on the other hand, maximises its use of technology to meet the needs of industry. It has evolved from manual typewriters, stencils, and adding machines, to electronic memory typewriters, photocopiers, and electronic calculators, to standalone word processors, computers with a variety of software programs and the Internet. Consequently, it has historically been more technology driven to prepare students for office work. The focus for ABT has been to teach students how to use technology; consequently, the shift to online learning was a logical next step.

AA has been a mix according to the academic discipline. A generalisation would be that the science and technology disciplines would be more technology driven than the humanities; however, computers and the Internet have provided a means to all researchers in all disciplines to gather, collate, and publish data more

efficiently. Therefore, like ABE, some in AA embraced the technologies and some were more reluctant users.

Therefore, the significance of ABE to other *e-merge* programs relates to the abilities of its students to handle technology and the independence they require for online learning. A big difference between ABT and ABE is that ABT was the first big wave of *e-merge* that was a planned, co-ordinated, strategic choice. ABE, on the other hand, was the result of the ABE community saying it was something it wanted to do. Therefore, one might expect ABT students to be somewhat more proficient in basic computer activities, such as having adequate keyboarding, word processing, and spreadsheet skills as they are the focus of the ABT program. Whereas ABE students may not be expected to have those proficiencies at all prior to entering an ABE program, and those technologies are viewed only as supports to their learning rather than as the focus. For example, as noted by one interviewee, when looking at the characteristics of ABE students, such as First Nations students, and their basic approach in the past to face-to-face methodology, there must be concern about their ability to adapt quickly to a technology-based distance delivery methodology. Most students in *e-merge* are encouraged or required to take an Online Learner Success course to prepare them for the WebCT environment; however, that is only one piece. Students also need to possess reasonable critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as the keyboarding and computer skills that enable them to comfortably use common software programs, such as file management, word processing, communication, and Internet programs. Consequently, the readiness

and the suitability of the students to adopt distance education as the methodology with which they can learn needs to be assessed prior to registration. For acceptance and longevity, all faculty and students need to be provided with adequate training, hardware, software, and funding to eliminate fear, scepticism, and barriers that inhibit collaboration and innovation.

Recommendations

Learning from History

When looking at the five phases that have framed the history of adult distance education in BC, patterns of development emerge that have impacted planning and decision making by various parties responsible for its development and delivery. Therefore, it is recommended that these five phases be used as a retrospective view from which to conduct further research of adult distance education in BC and Canada. By using the data provided to define each phase, interested parties and decision-makers can analyse each phase so that they can more successfully prepare for the future. Moran (1993), upon completion of her analysis of the history and politics that affected OLI and its subsequent amalgamation with Knowledge Network to become OLA, made the following statement that confirms her belief in the value of such research:

> In our daily lives we are surrounded by internal and external political pressures and views which, consciously or not, we take into account in our policy-making and educational practice. Yet distance education research and

publications have so far been very slim in this area. Learning how to analyze

the past provides skills for present practice (p. 16).

Although Moran's analysis identifies the issues that surrounded the development of

OLI and OLA, similar themes have been reiterated throughout the evolution of

BCcampus. Therefore, this history can be used to pre-empt some of the same

issues from occurring to ensure that resources will be used effectively and decisions

will be made that will strengthen BC's public post-secondary system so that it works

collaboratively to meet the needs of all of its learners.

Coordinative Mechanism

Faris (1992) also appears to have foreshadowed BC's public post-secondary

education's future to some degree. His concern that without a coordinative

mechanism, the system is bound to fragment, fall behind, and fail its learners has

once again become a concern with C2T2 being dismantled. Since BCcampus is

responsible only for adult distance learning in BC, who will fulfil the co-ordinating role

that C2T2 has provided to support innovation and curriculum and program

development? It is recommended that such a coordinative mechanism be reinstated

to support faculty in meeting their learners' needs without the suspicion and doubt

expressed by some interviewees. Efficiencies will be gained if curriculum resources

are kept in one central location and are easily accessible to faculty in the public post-

secondary system.

Access and Choice

The philosophy to reduce duplication and increase access and choice through collaboration makes sense. However, since the percentage of online learners is small, BCcampus accommodates the needs of the minority, at this point, in the public post-secondary system. If institutions are feeling the pressure to meet their targeted FTE counts for BC campus, concerns will arise about what choices will be available to other learners. The Educational Technology Policy Framework (1999) and the JET Report (2000) state that the *e-merge/*BCcampus initiative is not intended to replace face-to-face instruction but to increase access and choice according to learners' needs. Therefore, it is recommended that because of the unique needs of ABE students, the ABE *e-merge* initiative should not, at this point in history, replace traditionally delivered face-to-face courses, as the needs of all students should be met in keeping with the philosophy of "access and choice."

ABE Infrastructure

It is further recommended that the support systems needed to accommodate ABE Online learners' needs be fully and quickly developed and implemented. ABE Student Feedback surveys will help to identify the areas of greatest need; however, they only capture the perspectives of ABE students already taking BCcampus courses. Many ABE students find the transition to learning in this environment a difficult adjustment. Assessing ABE students' technical skills and their learning styles will help to determine their ability to apply the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary to learn independently in an online environment. Leaning centres

need to be staffed, as was intended at the initiative's inception, so that students have access to the support they need to learn in this environment. In so doing, some of the ABE support issues that were identified in the research may be pre-empted.

Institutional Collaboration

As stated in the interviews, there are efficiencies to be gained by working collaboratively as a system rather than having every institution compete for funding for the same students and having them duplicate the development of online courses. Gaber (2003) noted in his research on voluntary collaboration within the system that the level of co-ordination, integration, and voluntary collaboration occurs on system-wide initiatives at many levels between autonomous institutions. However, he noted that there has been ongoing tension caused by the need to work as a coherent system and the desire to maintain institutional autonomy. Therefore, it is recommended that as this mode of delivery becomes less threatening, the disparities that have existed between autonomous institutions be overcome with government support for consultative decision making, that involves all parties, to reduce the need for competition. Such collaboration will enable the initiative to expand and improve using best practices while introducing new innovations that will improve delivery and learner success.

Technology

Another factor that has affected collaboration in the development of *e-merge*/BCcampus has been the level of expertise and comfort with the technologies. Since the inception of this initiative, much has been done to help faculty and

students enhance their knowledge of and skills to use educational technologies. It is recommended that adequate funding to institutions continue to be provided so that faculty and their students can keep pace with the ever-changing technologies, allay fears, and rid the system of scepticism.

Course Development and System Maintenance

Developing online courses is time consuming, and there are certain technical skills that are involved. As stated by one interviewee, at a certain point, funding priorities will have to align with the reality of the situation. Should it be to make effective ABE instructors effective online instructors and developers? If that is the intent, then it must be recognised that it is extraordinarily time-consuming and adequate resources must appear to support such development. Also, it has to be decided whether effective ABE instructors should be working with professional online course developers to develop ABE courses, since the model that has been used to date has paid for people to learn, which is an expensive way to do it. The AA program, on the other hand, has used courses developed by interested faculty and institutions, not according to the template as developed by ABT and ABE. ABT has continued to focus on teaching and learning the technologies. Therefore ABE has to decide which method is best for its program, faculty and learners. However, as courses continue to be added, course development will become less of a priority. Consequently, more energy will need to be put into the system itself and the supports that need to be established and maintained.

WebCT

Concern was also raised about the cost of WebCT. Initially, some of the courses had been developed for other platforms. However, to enable a system-wide approach, WebCT became the platform of choice by the majority for the delivery of *e-merge*/BCcampus. It enabled faculty across institutions to work together collaboratively with SFU providing the server and BCIT providing the technical support. However, since its initial adoption, the cost of WebCT is a significant burden on the system. Currently, BCcampus is looking at other platforms to ensure the system is getting the best value for its investment. It is recommended that it continue to do so to keep the public post-secondary system affordable in its provision of high-quality learning.

Reduced Competition

There are programs that are part of the *e-merge* initiative that are not part of the ABT *e-merge* model. Consequently, the model that was intended according to the best practices established by ABT has not happened. The perception by some is that there has really not been a mechanism in place for that to happen. A new framework for doing the course development was developed—a methodology that could be used in all the courses. However, there are still courses being developed for BCcampus that do not fit that model. Some institutions have developed their own brand. Therefore, adequate funding, reduced competition for FTEs, and collaboration and co-operation with all parties in the system will be required to overcome the desire for autonomy that currently exists in the system.

Choice of Delivery Mode

The *e-merge* courses to date have been offered in a variety of ways. All students taking courses in the *e-merge* project have to be admitted to an institution in BC and can be served in many ways. One of the factors that is important with the online courses offered through *e-merge*/BCcampus is that within the ABT, AA, and ABE programs, there are courses being delivered in a variety of ways. Students can take courses that are totally online and that are taught by faculty who are totally online. They can also take courses that are partly online and partly supported in a learning centre, supported by tutors or faculty in the learning centre who have less expertise in the ABE subjects than the instructors who are teaching the online courses. As well, students can take courses whose faculty teach their online courses to support their face-to-face instruction. All of these delivery methods make good use of these materials in different ways, and it is recommended that they be continued so that students have access and choice to the mode of learning that works best for their learning style so that they can meet with success.

Research to Eliminate Barriers to Collaboration

Comparing ABE's characteristics with those programs that are further along in their development, ABE wants to serve students who need to take their courses online. Therefore, there is a genuine need to help students. However there are two threads happening at once. There are courses that have been funded and developed provincially. Those were the three courses that were originally developed and that are now "provincial courses." There are also other courses that colleges

have volunteered for the program to round off the program so that more students can be helped. Concern was expressed as to how the system can be sustained or expanded over time with two threads like that. The following questions asked by one interviewee raise this concern: How do you take the three courses? Are they always offered by the same institutions with the same instructor forever, or are other instructors going to be allowed to teach those courses because they are Provincially owned? What does that do to the integrity of the course? Who checks it, and how does it get evaluated? What about the independent courses volunteered by their institutions that are not provincially owned and have not been looked at, scrutinised, or evaluated? Do they meet the articulated outcomes across the board? These questions need to be resolved; otherwise, the program may fracture. The interviewee's viewpoint is that

> [y]ou can't build a cohesive community that way because there's those who are working for the common good, and then there's those institutions that have volunteered their courses and have instructors teach them in another part of that community . . . [T]hey're going to start to divide and go off in different directions just because of processes and systems and ways of doing things and managing them . . . [I]t doesn't seem to have the same opportunity for community building . . . I worry about it.

An increased level of articulation and collaboration appears to be necessary for the vision to be fulfilled. This need is also reflected in the following comments made by another interviewee, who stated:

I'd say ABE curriculum development is one of the most collaborative

operations I've seen in 20 years of working in education. Advisory

committees take on huge loads for no pay; they travel and come to face-to-

face meetings and they edit documents. They do all of that, and the only

thanks they get is one line in the front of a print module where their name is.

For some reason, . . . so far, we have not yet been able to engender that

same kind of support in online Provincial Advisory Committees, and I don't

know why.

Perhaps this lack of collaboration can be attributed to time factors as the system

became more stretched with further cut backs, and there was not sufficient funds or

time release available for more participation. The time-consuming nature of adapting

existing materials for online delivery consumed most of the funds allocated for

development. Perhaps it also can be attributed to the lack of expertise with the

technologies by some ABE faculty. Or, perhaps it was because some ABE

practitioners were not convinced that online education would meet the needs of ABE

learners and that it may be offered at the expense of traditional, face-to-face delivery

modes. Whatever it was, it is recommended that research be conducted to

determine the cause so that it can then be used to address the issues to eliminate

the barriers that prevent system-wide collaboration.

Reduce Barriers to ABE Online

Advertising for ABE has been delayed until some of these support and

administrative issues have been sorted out, which consequently has affected its

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development and delivery system-wide. ABE has, therefore, to some degree, had a shaky start, as its students' needs are perceived, by some interviewees, as much greater than those in other programs. However, that does not mean that the ABE students are less valuable. ABE students often become the future FTEs of the other programs if they are satisfied, successful ABE learners. Therefore, it is recommended that administrators and faculty work together to resolve the support and administrative issues that currently create barriers for ABE students and faculty so that ABE can be promoted to capture the attention of the students for whom it is intended.

Increase ABE's Profile

ABE provides a critical core in public post-secondary education, and, as such, is seen by some interviewees as more important than some of the other post-secondary programs because society nowadays is demanding much more in terms of basic education. According to one interviewee, it is not seen as "glitzy" and as exciting as some of the other programs, and it does not have the potential to generate funds to financially strapped institutions; consequenlty, ABE is often overlooked and undermined. Therefore, as recommended by Selman et al. (1998), ABE should be viewed as the social capital invested in the system. If that capital is invested and nurtured wisely, it will generate greater dividends: well-educated citizens who contribute to their communities and their country, many of whom will pursue higher education. Therefore, it is recommended that ABE, and its referring agencies, be given a higher profile and increased support so that ABE can fulfil its

mandate as a major stepping stone for adult students to increase their learning

opportunities and to improve the functionality and literacy rates of adults in BC.

Increase Support for ABE

The lifting of the tuition in 1998 and the development of the common

credential were twin drivers that led to a huge demand for ABE in the system overall,

causing increased enrolments and waitlists. At the same time, the Internet was

becoming more pervasive. Therefore, the perception was that if some of the courses

were developed online, they might help relieve some of the pressure being placed

on the system by this increased demand. Online courses would solve the waitlist

problem and would provide more flexible access. However, at the same time that the

initiative was being developed, the Ministry of Advanced Education's cuts to post-

secondary education were taking effect. As stated by one interviewee, "It [the

Ministry] was trying to marshal the resources that it had and to use them effectively;

therefore from the Ministry's point of view, why would they fund two different online

initiatives, both going through C2T2*?*" Consequently, the initial ABE online projects

proposed in the summer of 2000 would probably not have been funded outside of *e-*

merge. Therefore, the rationale for incorporating ABE as part of the greater *e-merge*

initiative was that the timing was right and the funds were already there. However,

now that ABE *e-merge* is here and operating through the BCcampus portal, the

referring agencies have suffered severe cuts to their funding. Consequently, the

number of ABE students and faculty have decreased. Therefore, the referring

agencies, the students, and the program need to be funded adequately so that

students who do not have their Adult Graduation Diploma, or the prerequisites they need for higher learning, can attain them in a supportive, non-threatening environment.

Allay Fears

The point was made in the interviews that a significant challenge to ABE *e-merge* was the shift in political focus in the Province that happened at the same time as ABE *e-merge*. The changes made by the current government to put ABE dollars back inside the funding envelope and the simultaneously reduced funded learning opportunities for ABE learners have meant a significant reduction in positions for faculty who teach ABE across the Province. Consequently, that set a fairly sceptical, negative climate. As one interviewee stated,

> When some people hear "online", they seem to interpret it as "Oh, that means I will be losing my job because we will just have one online teacher, and all these other students will deal with that [person]." So the real climate of abuse in ABE has made this initiative, but probably any other ABE initiative, a little more difficult than it [has been] for the others.

Therefore, it is recommended that all factions work co-operatively with each other to allay fears and to ensure the future success of all ABE programs.

Conclusion

This historical-comparative analysis has discovered that the history of the ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative has evolved from five phases of adult distance education in BC. All of these phases have been driven by the need to increase

access and choice and lifelong learning opportunities to learners in BC. As technology has been introduced and has become more sophisticated, it has been used to increase access and choice to learners. The fifth phase of adult distance education, Online Learning, which has been the focus of this research, can be summarised as follows when answering the question "What is the ABE *e-merge*/BCcampus initiative, and how has it evolved?": First there was the infrastructure and the strategic plan, then there was the COD project; then there was the ABT-Core/COPE project, which was subsequently renamed *e-merge*. During this time the ABE Online program was "percolating" at the grass roots and was subsequently developed under the *e-merge* umbrella. Since then, the greater *e-merge* initiative has now morphed into the BCcampus portal, with the Ministry of Advanced Education making the announcement for BCcampus on October 30, 2002. This announcement took place after the change of government in BC in 2001.

Since then, *e-merge* has continued to evolve. BCcampus currently lists six programs on its website and involves twenty-six post-secondary institutions in the delivery of online courses and programs. SFU and BCIT currently provide the technical infrastructure and Helpdesk support. From January 2000 to the fall of 2002, registrations increased from 210 to 2800. Funding for the project was, and continues to be, provided by the Ministry of Advanced Education with an initial input of 60 funded FTEs in 2000/01, rising to 390 FTEs in 2002/03. The Budget for 2003, proposes to expand online access to post-secondary education by further developing the BCcampus online initiative and increasing the number of FTEs to 520

150

total student spaces in 2003/04, to 650 in 2004/05, and to 780 in 2005/06

(Government of BC, 2003). Currently, the BCcampus' website states that its

web-based directory includes over 1783 distance education credit courses

offered by 26 BC public post-secondary institutions. Over 824 of these

courses are available online. Some are print-based correspondence courses.

Others may be delivered by more than one technology.

The success of this project has to date been due to the collaborative efforts of the

Ministries involved, post-secondary administrators, C2T2 personnel, faculty, and

staff.

As this research has analysed the evolution of the ABE/*e-merge*/BCcampus

iniative within in the public post-secondary system in BC, the significance of the ABE

component became very apparent. ABE is the social capital invested in our

education system. It provides the means for adults in BC to gain the Adult

Graduation Diploma and/or the pre-requisites to higher learning. However, this

research has also exposed some philosophical questions that need to be addressed

if ABE is to pay the dividend of a literate, innovative, high functioning society. Is

education to provide equal access to learning in order to produce such a society, or

is it a commodity that can be accessed by those who can afford it? How can the

value of ABE be truly measured, since its value is often intrinsic and cannot be

measured by market place values? Selman et al. (1998) have also raised these

questions under the umbrella of citizenship. If BC wants literate, innovative, highly

functioning citizens, then the government needs to adequately support ABE

programming and its learners by making ABE a high priority program area and support it accordingly. ABE has given many adults a second chance and has generated many highly functioning adults who are now making valuable contributions to society.

Since this research began ABE may be even more vulnerable since the government has shifted to a block funding formula. Institutions when struggling to balance their budgets are often forced to make choices about which programs to keep and which ones to let go. If funding to ABE is not specifically directed to ABE, the chance of ABE being compromised or cut at struggling or more competitive institutions will increase. Therefore, ABE needs to be made high profile and specifically targeted with adequate funding to support its learners, their supporting agencies, and faculty so that ABE learners can continue along the path of lifelong learning. ABE needs to be recognised and more highly regarded for its contribution to the post-secondary education system and society as a whole.

Summary

This historical-comparative analysis has attempted to answer the question: What is the ABE *e-merge* initiative, and how did it evolve? This initiative has evolved from five phases in distance adult education in BC that have added to the research of Moran (1993) and Taylor (2002). It has also added to the research conducted by Gaber (2003), who also looked at the history of the college, institute and agency system in BC and at voluntary collaboration within it. As well, it has opened the door for further research of this initiative from the perspective of social capital in virtual

learning communities as proposed by Daniel et al. (2003). Finally, this historical-comparative analysis will be of value as BC's social capital is managed to ensure its returns are measured against good citizenship and not only the marketplace values that appear to be currently determining the future of education. As stated by Moran (2003) "Learning how to analyze the past provides skills for present practice. The history and politics of distance education offer valuable insights into current and future policy directions and conflicts" (p. 16). Perhaps this research will help BCcampus avoid those conflicts so that it can move forward collaboratively, guided by sound educational philosophy, within BC's public post-secondary as a whole.

APPENDIX A

Interview questions for participants in the BC *e-merge* initiative

This interview is being conducted to gather data that will help to conduct an historical-comparative analysis of the ABE *e*-merge initiative and how it has evolved within the greater Provincial *e-merge* initiative. Your responses to the questions in this interview are confidential, and this interview will be conducted according to the guidelines established by the Athabasca University Ethics Research Board; therefore you can speak freely.

To prepare for this interview, please consider what you perceive is the BC Provincial *e-merge* initiative, and how the ABE *e-merge* program has evolved within it.

1. What agency or person do you think first spawned the idea of *e-merge*?

2. When was that?

3. Tell me about your involvement with this initiative?

4. How did you become involved?

5. When did you become involved with this initiative, particularly in relation to the ABE program?

6. Are you still involved with it?

7. What do you think was the rationale of this project?

8. Under what conditions did it develop?

9. Who was it initially intended to serve?

10. What characterises the ABE *e-merge* initiative?

11. Who is it intended to serve?

12. Who was involved at its inception?

13. What is significant to the ABE *e-merge* initiative compared to the other *e-merge* programs?

14. Can you direct me to other people who have been involved with or have information about the *e-merge* initiative?

15. Do you have or know of any documentation that will provide information about the *e-merge* initiative (e.g., e-mails, reports, articles, summaries, policies, directives, briefings, presentations, etc?)

16. Do you have any further comments that you would like to add before we end this interview?

APPENDIX B.1

Letter of Request

As a graduate student in the Master of Distance Education degree program at Athabasca University and the lead developer of the ABE Provincial Technical and Professional English Working Committee, I am conducting a study of the Provincial ABE *e-merge* initiative for my thesis. The purpose of this study is to determine what the ABE *e-merge* initiative is and how it has evolved since its inception. As you have knowledge of or have been connected to this initiative, your agreeing to contribute to this research would be very much appreciated.

If you have any documentation, such as reports, memos, letters, e-mails, presentations, articles, or other documentation that will help in the analysis of the ABE *e-merge* initiative and how it has evolved within the greater context of the Provincial *e-merge* initiative, I would appreciate your forwarding such data to me as instructed below. Data will be gathered between July and December, 2002. Once all available data is gathered and collated, an historical-comparative analysis will be conducted of the ABE *e-merge* initiative, which will be documented in my thesis.

All data provided will be treated in accordance with the guidelines established by the Athabasca Research Ethics Board. Permission will be sought and gained from both the writer and the recipient for use of data gathered in the form of private letters and correspondence. Your participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to participate in any way. You also have the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time. To agree to participate in this research by providing documentation, please sign where indicated on the attached Consent Form.

As a participant in this research, please be assured that your contributions will be kept confidential and your anonymity will be protected. Any data that I gather during the course of this research that is confidential will be shredded or kept securely once my thesis has been defended and approved by Athabasca University.

A sub-sample of participants will be contacted for interviews. Please indicate if you are willing to participate in an interview by signing in the appropriate place on the attached Consent Form. All data gathered will be stored securely to ensure confidentiality, and any data that may put individuals or groups at risk will be shredded upon completion of the study.

If you choose to contribute to this study, please send any documentation as e-mail attachments to the following e-mail address: jharkess@shaw.ca, or mail them to me at the College of the Rockies as noted below my signature at the end of this letter.

My thesis supervisor is Dr. Martha Cleveland-Innes of the Centre for Distance Education, Athabasca University, Athabasca, Alberta. She can be contacted by phone at (780) 675-6426 or by e-mail at martic@athabascau.ca.

The Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2) approves this research. Dr. Diane Morrison is the contact person at C2T2 for my research. She can be reached as follows:

Dr. Diane Morrison
The Centre for Curriculum, Transfer & Technology
6th fl. 1483 Douglas Street
Victoria BC V8W 3K4

Your assistance with this research will be very much appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the above e-mail address or call me at (250) 489-2751, local 463 (work), or 489-3804 (home). I will contact you in approximately five days to follow up this letter.

Sincerely

Jan Harkess
Instructor
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Ph: (250) 489-2751
E-mail: harkess@cotr.bc.ca

APPENDIX B.2

Letter Requesting Consent

As a graduate student in the Master of Distance Education degree program at Athabasca University and the lead developer of the ABE Provincial Technical and Professional English Working Committee, I am conducting a study of the Provincial ABE *e-merge* initiative for my thesis. The purpose of this study is to determine what the ABE *e-merge* initiative is and how it has evolved since its inception. As you have been part of or connected to this initiative, your agreeing to be a participant in this research would be very much appreciated.

As part of this research, you may be asked to provide data for the research and/or be interviewed by the researcher to provide information and your perspectives about this initiative. The research will take place between July and December 2002.

All information provided will be treated in accordance with the guidelines established by the Research Ethics Board at Athabasca University. Permission will be sought and gained from both the writer and the recipient for use of data gathered in the form of private letters and correspondence. Your participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to participate in any way. You also have the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time.

All data gathered will be stored under lock and key until I have defended my thesis, and any confidential material will be shredded upon completion of the defence.

If you agree to participate in this study, please indicate your willingness to do so by completing the Consent Form on the next page and return it to me as an e-mail attachment to the following e-mail address: jharkess@shaw.ca.

My thesis supervisor is Dr. Martha Cleveland-Innes of the Centre for Distance Education, Athabasca University, Athabasca, Alberta. She can be contacted by phone at (780) 675-6426 or by e-mail at martic@athabascau.ca.

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Sincerely

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APPENDIX C

ABE Online—A Part of British Columbia's *e-merge* Initiative

Consent Form

I have read the review of this study and understand that my participation is voluntary and that all information provided will be treated in accordance with the guidelines established by the Research Ethics Board at Athabasca University. Based on the above, I agree to participate in this study:

By providing documentation

_____	_____
Name	Signature
_____	_____
Address	Date
_____	
City, Province, Postal Code	
_____	
Phone No.	
_____	
E-mail Address	

By participating in an interview

_____	_____
Name	Signature
_____	_____
Address	Date
_____	
City, Province, Postal Code	
_____	
Phone No.	
_____	
E-mail Address	

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Since beginning this research, some of the links and sites used for this research have been updated, relocated or deleted. If there are inconsistencies in dates and site addresses, they have occurred due to the dismantling of some government agencies that is taking place in the post-secondary system in BC. Hopefully, these documents are being archived; otherwise the history of adult education will be somewhat distorted in the future.

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