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FACTORS INFLUENCING HIGHER DISTANCE EDUCATION
CONSORTIUM PERSISTENCE

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**“Factors Influencing Persistence in Higher Education
Distance Education Consortia”**

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Dedication

This work is gratefully dedicated to my family whose support has made this work possible. A special thank you to my mother for badgering me about the extended length time to complete this project, and to my wife for not. Thank you.

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Abstract

In recent years there has been increased interest in higher education consortia, especially within distance education; however, there has been limited research which would shed light on factors influencing persistence among these entities. Research has been especially limited in determining the extent to which the alignment of a consortium's operations with the cultural logics of the surrounding educational environment has been a persistence factor.

This study engaged in a comparative case study of higher distance education consortia. The investigation entailed selecting four consortia to be studied, ascertaining the cultural logics of the consortia and the respective external educational environment and ascertaining the factors contributing to, or detracting from consortia persistence. The methodology for ascertaining the logics included document review and open-ended questions of knowledgeable agents. The data collected was analyzed for emergent themes related to organizational persistence, including alignment with cultural logics. The analysis employed several theoretical frameworks which were triangulated to determine the prominent factors influencing consortia persistence in this context.

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Chapter I – INTRODUCTION

This research project is a study of higher distance education consortia in Canada. The primary project focus is the identification of factors influencing the *persistence* of a consortium. Persistence, for the purpose of this study means the ongoing operation and continuing fulfillment of meaningful purpose of an organization. This research fills a gap in inter-organizational relations literature. There has been little research in the area of higher distance education consortia, and almost none in a Canadian context. Nested within the scope of the primary project focus is a secondary focus; determining whether, and to what extent, persistence is influenced by a consortium aligning its operations with the values, norms, and myths (i.e., *logics*) of the surrounding, higher education sector's culture. This focus on consortium alignment with the external environment's cultural logics fills an important research gap because, while well-established organizational studies research has found single entity organization persistence to be strongly influenced by alignment with cultural logics, investigation of this alignment in the context of consortia has been absent. Determining if consortia alignment with cultural logics is a significant persistence factor, will help consortium managers improve persistence by alerting them to the need to scan for indicators of cultural logics, and to proactively align a consortium with these logics.

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To determine the persistence factors in Canadian higher education distance education consortia four consortia were studied using comparative case study methodology. The initial step in the research project was to identify the consortia to be studied. Subsequent steps included collecting data related to the consortia and the respective educational environments, and then analyzing the data to determine the factors influencing persistence in the four cases, including the influence of organizational alignment with cultural logics. Analysis included coding source documents, single case examination using three theoretical frameworks, and cross-case comparison.

The remainder of this chapter provides an in-depth introduction to the problem under study, related research on the topic, and the methodology employed in the study.

Introduction to the Problem

When an organization lacks specific resources or capabilities to capitalize on an opportunity or to address an emerging threat it might choose to collaborate with other organizations that have complementary capabilities and compatible aims. Higher education institutions are increasingly seeking, or being directed to seek, collaborative advantages through inter-organizational arrangements, such as consortia. This collaborative advantage is especially being sought due to tightening economic pressure, potentially overwhelming technological change, evidence of educational benefits, and changing student demand (Ferren &

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Stanton, 2004; Twigg, 2003). Inter-organizational collaboration is particularly advantageous in distance education due to high course development costs, the challenge to a single institution to stay current with emerging technology, a broad spectrum of required specialized skills, the attractive potential to distribute education to a broader market (Knust & Hagenhoff, 2005), and as a defensive strategy to protect against encroachment from early adopter, remote competitors (Johnson, 2005).

While the potential advantages of inter-organizational collaboration are attractive, consortia persistence has often been brief. Historically, up to 50% of inter-organizational ventures failed to launch or only persisted briefly; typically less than two years (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Park & Ungson, 2001). This low rate of successful persistence indicates that, despite its benefits, collaboration is challenging and complex, and decision-makers should be alert to the inherent risks of collaboration. Indeed, persistence of consortia is such a challenge that at least one inter-organizational relations (IOR) expert's advice on forming collaborative organizations is simply "don't do it unless you have to" (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 13).

This advice would have been well taken by some consortia, which were established at great expense, only to be dissolved after serving a relative handful of students. For example, UK eUniversity, a consortium of higher education institutions and private companies, cost £50m to launch, took three years to develop, but only served 900 students in the few months in which it operated

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(Bacsich, 2005; Conole, Carusi, & De Laat, 2005; Garrett, 2004; Keegan et al., 2007). Similar examples of dissolved consortia exist around the world (Keegan et al., 2007; Offerman, 1985). These examples of poor consortia persistence indicate that organizational risks and challenges are either not well understood, or not well mitigated, or both.

Nature of the Study

To help address this substantive problem of low consortia persistence, this study explored what factors contribute to, or detract from persistence, and suggests how to improve meaningful consortia persistence. Specifically, this study researched four Canadian consortia and identified the factors which enhanced and detracted from their persistence. The study examined factors which were internal to the consortia, such as leadership, organizational structure and processes, accountability measures, and others. This study makes a unique contribution to the field by also having examined the influence of the external environment on consortium persistence, particularly the alignment of consortium operations with the cultural logics of the higher education environment in which the consortium was embedded. This study also makes a unique contribution by having examined consortia persistence in the Canadian context. Despite these unique contributions, no research begins *carte blanche*, so a brief review of existing research and theory was conducted and is presented in the next section in order to bring context to this research study.

Introduction to the Literature and Theory

As noted above, launching a higher distance education consortium has been a risky undertaking, only to be pursued if the benefits are highly potent (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Given this high risk, one would expect that a great deal of research has been conducted on factors which influence consortia persistence. However, this has not been the case. Although a canon of literature in inter-organizational relations has begun to emerge (Ring, Huxham, Ebers, & Cropper, 2008), including descriptive research on factors that contribute to persistence (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Huxham, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Johnson, 2005; Selkirk, 2011), the literature has remained limited. Further, there has been even less research into factors which detract from consortia persistence. Lack of research into persistence detractors has been an identified gap in the general IOR literature (Park & Ungson, 2001). Further, Keegan et al. (2007) have lamented that this gap is especially prevalent in both higher education, and distance education literature. They have explained that research into education ventures that have not persisted “is notoriously difficult. Documentation is hard to access. Key figures disappear or refuse to be interviewed. Access to vital sources is denied. Where government use of taxpayers’ money is involved the secrecy is even more pronounced” (Keegan et al., 2007, p. 63). Given these barriers to research, the gap in research of failed consortia and the factors contributing to the failure is understandable.

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In addition to the gap in research into consortia persistence, limited perspectives have been taken in the research. The bulk of the literature that has existed on higher education distance education consortia has limited its scope of study to factors which have been internal to consortia, restricting research to the *organization* and *intra-organization* levels. Factors identified as positively influencing consortia persistence at the organization and intra-organization levels have included such things as leadership, appropriate financing, and member commitment (Offerman, 1985). Perhaps the richest description of collaborative organizations at the organization and intra-organization levels has been by Huxham and Vangen (2005), who conducted years of ethnographic IOR research. Among other findings this research identified that collaborative organizations are difficult to manage due to their complexity and the researchers organized the sources of complexity into *themes*. These themes included such things as power, trust, membership structure and common aims. Identifying and addressing these themes has been particularly helpful to practitioners. These themes form one framework used in this study to examine the internal processes of consortia and is referred to as the Huxham model. A graphic of the themes is included in Appendix 1.

Amey, Eddy, and Ozaki (2007) also developed an organization level IOR framework, which draws attention to important aspects of consortia management. This framework is a life cycle model specifically for higher education consortia, with a focus on early stage consortia development. This model is also a

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framework used to analyze the cases under study due to its applicability to higher education and the use of a life cycle model. It is referred to as the Amey model and a graphic of the model is provided in Appendix 2. The rationale for the use of multiple frameworks is described later in this chapter.

While the Huxham model and the Amey model are helpful analytical frameworks, the models primarily identify persistence factors at the organizational and intra-organizational levels. However, many, if not most, of the researchers and theorists of contemporary organizational studies have stressed not only the important role of internal factors, but also the importance of external factors in contributing to, or detracting from, organizational persistence (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Lecours, 2005; Mellahi & Wilkinson, 2004; Powell, 2008; Scott & Davis, 2007). These theorists asserted that most industrial sectors, or fields, have their own values, norms, and myths which are generally shared throughout the sector. These common values, norms, and myths are referred to as *logics*. These logics serve to align managerial perspectives and decision-making with the external environment, which consequently legitimates the organization in the environment and becomes a significant factor influencing organizational persistence (Baum & Rowley, 2002; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). The study of alignment with external environment cultural logics has typically been explored within a branch of organizational theory known as open systems theory, and more particularly its sub-branch, institutional theory.

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According to this sub-branch of open systems theory, legitimization through logics alignment explains why organizations in the same industry look alike and tend to be suspicious of entities varying from the field's dominant cultural logics. For example, universities tend to have similar organizational structures, policies and programming, and when institutions with differing structures, policies and programming offer degrees the institutions and degrees are regarded as suspect, i.e., they lack legitimacy (Hurley & Sá, 2013).

There has been little exploration of organizational alignment with external environment cultural logics in the general IOR literature. There has been even less exploration of this theoretical perspective within higher education consortia literature. To address this research gap open systems theory is used as a third framework to analyze the cases under study.

This section introduced the problem of low consortia persistence, and identified it as an under-researched area, especially the lack of investigation into the influence of consortium alignment with cultural logics. In the next section, the problem and the research purpose are concisely stated so as to frame the research project.

Statement of Problem and Purpose

While organizations in many sectors are increasingly collaborating, persistence of past collaborations has been low (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Park & Ungson, 2001). Similarly, many higher distance education consortia have

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experienced premature and costly dissolutions (Keegan et al., 2007; Offerman, 1985). This failure to persist has been a problem because it has wasted resources and denied society the potential benefits of higher education collaboration, including improved efficiency, access, and quality. Despite the acknowledged existence of the problem, there has been limited research on consortium persistence. The limited extant research has focused on the organization and intra-organization level. This focus has left a gap in the literature related to the influence of consortium alignment with cultural logics. To help address this gap, this research project examined four Canadian higher distance education consortia and identified what internal and external factors contributed to consortium persistence, with particular attention paid to consortium alignment with cultural logics. This examination and analysis has led to findings and recommendations regarding how consortia may improve meaningful persistence.

Conceptual Assumptions

This study made several assumptions. The first assumption was that consortia could have beneficial purposes, and some consortia do not persist to the point of achieving their purposes. The second was that factors contributing to, or detracting from, consortia persistence could be identified. The third was that there was sufficient commonality in the factors associated with persistence that the findings of this study could have application in contexts beyond those in

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which the studied consortia were situated.

Research Questions

The primary research question of this research project is, “What factors influenced persistence in four Canadian higher distance education consortia?”

To answer this question, particularly regarding the influence of the external environment on consortium persistence, several contributory questions were researched and answered, including:

1. What were the cultural logics of the educational environment in which the cases were embedded?
2. How well did consortium operations align with the cultural logics of the education environment in which they were embedded?
3. To what extent, if at all, did consortium operational alignment, or misalignment, with cultural logics influence its persistence?
4. To what extent, if at all, did other external factors, aside from consortium alignment with cultural logics, influence consortium persistence?
5. To what extent, if at all, were external factors which influenced consortium persistence common to multiple consortia?
6. To what extent, if at all, did internal factors influence consortium persistence?
7. To what extent, if at all, were internal factors which influenced consortium persistence common to multiple consortia?

Research Approach

In this section the rationale for the general research approach is discussed. Then, an overview of the actual methodology is introduced.

A multiple-case study methodology was selected for this study due to the complexity of consortia research. While most organizational research examines relatively well-bounded phenomena, consortia have weakly defined boundaries and greater interaction with their immediate environment (Huxham, 2003). Often, the consortium member institutions are both internal and external to the consortium. Member institutions are internal to a consortium when they engage in consortium governance, occupy board and management roles, and participate in operations through the development and delivery of courses and programs. However, consortium members are also external to a consortium when they are its customers, such as when they broker a course from the consortium, and when they are its competitors, such as when they offer a similar program as the consortium. Such a highly complex context lends itself to case study methodology (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005; Yin, 2009). This methodology provides a researcher the opportunity to develop a nuanced understanding of a complex phenomenon.

As noted above, case studies have the advantage of allowing a researcher a nuanced picture of a complex phenomenon. However, case study research has limitations in the generalizability of findings, particularly if it has been

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primarily a descriptive case study (Ellinger, Watkins, & Marsick, 2005). To improve this research project's generalizability the data has been analyzed using three theoretical frameworks to *metatriangulate* findings. Metatriangulation entails using multiple theories, frameworks, models, or constructs which both juxtapose and connect the insights offered by the respective perspectives (Lewis & Grimes, 1999). Metatriangulation improves case study generalizability because the added perspectives reduce narrow or polarized bias (Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Yin, 2009). The first framework used to analyze the cases is the Amey model, which addresses critical organizational processes in the various life cycle stages of consortia development. The second framework is the Huxham model which uses a thematic model. The third framework is the open systems theory which extends the bounds of the phenomenon under study to include the external environment. Open systems theory is quite broad with many theoretical frameworks falling within it. To narrow this study's focus a particular theoretical framework was used as an analytical lens for this study. That framework is the alignment of consortia logics with the external environment's logics; sometimes referred to as institutional theory or institutionalism (Selznick, 1996). Use of all the models described above provides a robust view of the selected cases, improves generalizability, and fills a gap in the existing higher education consortia research literature.

The above sections provide a rationale for the use of a case study research methodology, and describe how a methodological weakness is mitigated through

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analytical metatriangulation. The following section briefly expands on the research methodology used in this research project.

Following the multilevel, comparative case study protocol described by Caronna, Pollack, and Scott (2008), this study was designed to be conducted in two distinct phases. The first phase was to focus on the external environment and the second on the internal. However, as research progressed it was clear that the two-phase design was too artificial a construct because often information for both phases was coming from common sources. As a result, the study was conducted in a single phase which included the following activities. First, the consortia to be studied were identified. Selection was based on several criteria including being a distance education consortium within Canadian higher education, differences in persistence, and on the availability to the researcher. Second, information regarding each consortium and its environment was gathered through the use of document review and open-ended expert interview similar to that of Reay and Hinings (2005), in their study of the Alberta health care system, and Thornton (2001), in his study of the academic publishing industry. After case study data was gathered, narrative analysis was conducted to identify factors influencing persistence. This analysis was validated through participant consultation, researcher reflexivity, and use of a second coder.

Finally, analysis was conducted using the three theoretical frameworks to answer the research questions. Conclusions were drawn based on the metatriangulation of the three frameworks.

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This section has provided a rationale for using the case study approach, and briefly outlined the methodology used. A more detailed research project plan is documented in the methodology chapter. In the next section the scope and delimitations of this study are described.

Scope & Delimitation

This study examined four Canadian higher distance education consortia with differing persistence. These consortia were founded between 1994 and 2002, at a time when distance education was becoming more popular, due in large part to rapid advancement of communications and media advances. Cases were selected to gain insight into the relative importance of specific persistence influencers through a comparison of their similarities and differences (Caronna et al., 2008).

A further delimitation was the involvement of the researcher. Case study research involves participation of the researcher, so it was important to reflect on potential researcher bias (Yin, 2009). This researcher has diverse experience in higher education, but within a relatively localized context. He holds degrees in education, theology, and business management from three different Canadian universities. He has been involved in post-secondary education for over 25 years in both teaching and administrative positions, all within western Canada. He has consulted in the area of learning strategy and design within the higher education sector. This experience meant there were pre-existing assumptions

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regarding the topic under study which had the potential to bias analysis. This potential for bias meant there was a need to be vigilant in letting the data speak, rather than moving too quickly to conclusions. To control for these biases coding and coding structure were reviewed with a colleague and a supervisor, and representative samples of key document codings were second coded. As well, the researcher engaged in regular self-reflection and made efforts to remain as unbiased an observer and analyst as possible.

Dissertation Outline

The following two chapters of this dissertation will, first, review existing IOR and relevant organizational studies literature, and then, second, expand on the research methodology. Chapters Four through Six summarize the cases studied and analyze them individually for factors influencing persistence. Chapter Seven discusses the findings through a cross-case comparison, and offers reflections on the research project's implications. This chapter concludes with a glossary of terms.

Glossary of Terms

This research project is part of a doctoral program in distance education. However, the research topic is inter-disciplinary in nature and draws upon concepts from educational management, management studies, and, especially, organizational studies. Each of these disciplines has its own set of accepted

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terminology; often using different terms for very similar concepts. For example, in education an inter-organizational collaboration is typically referred to as a consortium; in management studies a broad range of terms are used, including joint venture, partnership, or alliance. In the sub-discipline of organizational studies, known as inter-organizational relations, a collaborative arrangement is known generically as an inter-organizational entity. In this proposal, terms have been selected which are expected to resonate with readers from an education discipline, because it is expected that most readers will be from that discipline. However, readers from an organizational studies background should readily recognize the concepts being represented. This glossary is intended to aid in the translation between disciplines. Hopefully, this glossary, and the research project as a whole, will contribute to an enriching cross-fertilization between the disciplines.

Educational environment – within organizational studies the “field” level of study is the inter-organizational environment of related organizations (Caronna et al., 2008). The field is considered external to a single organization, such as a hospital, or trucking company, but within the environment of related organizations, such as the “health care field,” or the “transportation sector.” In this proposal, reference is made to the “external educational environment” of the consortia under study. This reference is equivalent to the term “field” in organizational studies. The more precise, technical term “field” was not used because in education “field” is often used to differentiate between work done in a

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laboratory, and work in an active education setting such as a classroom (i.e., “The teaching technique has been tested successfully in ‘the field’.”).

Logics – understanding what is meant by logics is easiest if one imagines the sorts of value-based statements or actions to which one would reply, “But that doesn’t make sense.” For example, an individual from a tribal culture, when asked why they wouldn’t leave their family to get a well-paying job in a different region, would reply, “But my family isn’t there, that doesn’t make sense.” To a contemporary, Western, economically oriented mindset, this is an impractical, romantic orientation which is at odds with logical decision-making. However, it is actually reflective of deeply held priorities of family over economic values. In other words, the cultural logics form a sense-making construct for individuals and groups. Within organizational studies, these logics are referred to as institutional logics and are understood as “the socially constructed, historical pattern of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality” (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804). Institutional logics are both material and symbolic, generally implicit, and nested, with higher order logics influencing lower order logics. For purposes of this study the influence of field-level institutional logics upon consortia will be of special interest. When referring to the “cultural logics of the educational environment” in this study, organizational studies readers can assume reference is being made to institutional logics.

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Consortia – many terms are used for what those in IOR refer to as inter-organizational entities (IOEs). These terms include joint venture, partnership, network, consortium, strategic alliance, federation, and association. An IOE is an entity formed by two or more organizations for their mutual benefit, but generally excludes such entities as mergers and acquisitions in which one entity is subsumed into a new entity (Cropper, Ebers, Huxham, & Ring, 2008). Within higher education these collaborative entities are most commonly called consortia, and this term connotes a fellowship, and shared destiny (Cresswell, 2012). This term is important because it represents a difference (at least a historical difference) in tone from collaborative arrangements formed out of purely utilitarian self-interest. These education consortia vary on such axes as centralization versus decentralized program development and program delivery, formal versus informal governance, voluntary versus mandated participation, integrated versus autonomous policies, and technical infrastructure.

Inter-organizational relations (IOR) – an emerging field within organizational studies which “is concerned with understanding the character and pattern, origins, rationale, and consequences” (Cropper et al., 2008, p. 4) of entities formed by two or more autonomous and on-going organizations.

Metatriangulation – qualitative researchers are familiar with triangulating data sources, investigators, and research methods (Yin, 2009). In addition, a researcher can improve insights by cultivating “varied representations of a complex phenomenon” (Lewis & Grimes, 1999, p. 675) through triangulating

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multiple theoretical frameworks. Theory triangulation, also known as metatriangulation, facilitates the emergence of new insights from the juxtaposition and linkages of the different theoretical constructs. In this study, frameworks will be used from higher education management, inter-organizational relations, and organizational studies.

Persistence – organizational persistence is an entity's longevity, or duration of survival. In this study, it is used as a crude measure of satisfying the purposes for which an organization has been designed (Dess & Robinson Jr., 1984). Persistence can vary by scenario. In some cases, the design purposes are attainable and an entity is dissolved when the purposes are satisfied. In other cases, design purposes are on-going and an entity is satisfying the purposes, so it persists. In still other cases design purposes are not satisfied, or are not anticipated to be satisfied, so the entity is dissolved. In this study, the term persistence is used interchangeably with *meaningful persistence*. Meaningful persistence is understood as an entity continuing to fulfill the purposes for which it was designed.

Open Systems Theory – also known as Systems Theory, or the Systems Approach, this organizational theory dominates organizational studies. Borrowing concepts from the natural sciences, particularly from biologist Bertalanffy, who proposed the General Systems Theory (Scott & Davis, 2007), Open Systems Theory reverses the reductionist trend in studying organizations and examines the inter-relationship of an organization's components and its

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external context. Organizations are viewed as “systems of interdependent activities linking shifting coalitions of participants; the systems are embedded in – dependent on continuing exchanges with and constituted by – the environment in which they operate” (Baum & Rowley, 2002, p. 3). Open Systems Theory is important for this study as it provides the general understanding of an organization from which this research proceeds. This research tends to use a sub-branch of Open Systems Theory often referred to as institutionalism, neo-institutionalism, or new institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott & Davis, 2007).

Chapter II – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is a review of literature that relates to persistence in higher education distance education consortia. This review is broken into three general sections. The first section presents three broad characteristics, or meta-topics, of inter-organizational relations (IOR): the nature of IOR, history and trends of IOR, and the fragmentation of the discipline. These meta-topics relate to the context, rationale, methodology, and outcome of this study. The second section presents findings from IOR which are most directly relevant to this study. The section is a survey of the IOR research landscape and is structured according to the four dimensions of IOR outlined in Ring et al. (2008). The research which relates to consortia persistence from each of these dimensions is discussed. The final section of this chapter is a review of organizational studies literature in the areas of systems theory.

The sources for this review included literature from higher education administration, distance education, IOR, and organizational studies. The emerging field of IOR contains the greatest wealth of literature on consortia persistence and this chapter draws heavily from IOR concepts, theories, and models. However, where specific findings from higher education and distance education literature were available, these have been highlighted.

Meta-topics

Three meta-topics related to IOR were important to the formulation of this study because they, to some extent, shaped its methodology, its necessity, and an anticipated outcome. The three meta-topics were the nature of IOR, the history and trends of IOR, and the fragmentation of IOR. To begin, the first meta-topic is examined: the nature of IOR.

Nature of IOR. IOR is a complex phenomenon. The complexity arises from the tensions between the benefits of and barriers to collaboration. The complexity also influences consortia persistence. Therefore, understanding the complex nature of IOR provides a context for understanding consortia persistence. Further, the complexity of IOR provides a rationale for the selected methodology. The remainder of this section describes the complexity of IOR, and the rationale for the selection of a case study methodology.

Research into IOR entails the study of the strategies, structures, and processes associated with the formation, evolution, maintenance, and dissolution of consortia to achieve benefits that the member institutions could not achieve individually (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Kanter, 1994). This concise description of IOR study may be further condensed, at the risk of oversimplification, to two key topics: benefits and barriers. The benefits, or collaborative advantages, include such things as access to markets or resources to which organizations would not have access if working independently (Gray, 1989; Huxham, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Kanter, 1994). The barriers are often due to the challenge of how

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to manage complexity arising from competitive drives. Park and Ungson (2001)

note:

the basic concept of an alliance... juxtaposes two countervailing tendencies: cooperative activities leading to the attainment of goals that advance the interests of both partners and competitive behaviors by one or both partners in pursuing their self-interests (p. 37).

An excellent example of these countervailing tendencies between benefits and barriers is found in a study of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium. The seven colleges which participated in the consortium did not individually have the financial or technical capacity to satisfy the online education demands of its constituents. Instead, they pooled resources and satisfied their constituents' demands, but not without having to overcome serious competitive issues related to equitable revenue sharing (Johnson, 2005). Much of the extant IOR literature addresses these issues of benefits and barriers. A brief description of IOR benefits and barriers follows.

Barringer and Harrison (2000) provide perhaps the best summary of commonly sought benefits using six major IOR theoretical paradigms, and include, among others, profit, growth, and access to complementary resources and competencies. An excellent list of distance education collaboration benefits for students, faculty, institutions, and society was developed by the Institute for Academic Alliances at Kansas State University and includes improved educational access, lower costs, and educational achievement gains (Anderson, Moxley, Maes, & Reinert, 2008).

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IOR literature also identifies barriers encountered in forming and sustaining inter-organizational collaborations. Some barriers include: increased managerial complexity (Huxham & Vangen, 2009), loss of institutional autonomy (Affolter-Caine, 2008), and confusion without the traditional managerial controls of market and hierarchy (Barton, 2005; Park & Ungson, 2001). Often these barriers relate to the need to suppress competitive drives. For example, a business normally operates on the principle of profit maximization, and attempts to minimize resource expenditure and maximize income. In a consortium, this profit maximization principle must be somewhat attenuated by concerns of equity. It should be noted that competition can take many forms. One unique feature of competition in higher education is faculty suspicion of the academic rigor of consortium partner institutions (Stein & Short, 2001). Therefore, two higher education institutions working collaboratively in a consortium must constrain their suspicion of each other in order to reap the benefits of collaboration. In addition to general barriers to consortia collaboration, distance education consortia may face unique barriers of having to develop technical and pedagogical expertise because of the emerging nature of online learning (Beaudoin, 2009).

The tension between collaborative benefits and barriers is an important avenue of exploration in this study because the literature suggests that consortium persistence depends upon the benefits outweighing the barriers for member institutions (Inkpen & Ross, 2001; Offerman, 1985; Park & Zhou, 2005). If benefits are not realized then persistence is shortened. Similarly, if barriers are

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not overcome then persistence is shortened. This weighing of benefits and barriers is an important concept in this research project.

Further, literature suggests that collaborative benefits and barriers might change over time (Inkpen & Ross, 2001). For example, a benefit of joining a consortium might be to have access to skills and technologies needed for distance education, such as in the case of the Iowa consortium noted above. In the Iowa study, requisite skills and technologies did become more common and inexpensive, but the consortium continued on the weight of other benefits participating institutions received such as reduced programming costs through shared programming, and access to non-traditional markets (Johnson, 2005). This concept of shifting benefits and barriers was important in the design of this research project, contributing to the decision to make it a retrospective, longitudinal study.

A unique focus of this research project is the influence of cultural logics on consortium persistence. Since cultural logics shape, to a large degree, stakeholders' expected benefits (Reay & Hinings, 2005), particular attention is paid to consortium satisfaction of expected benefits and changes in expectations due to changes in cultural logics. These environmental changes and the consortium reactions to them are of particular interest to this research project, because they form key decision points at which consortium organizational strategic direction choices are made and, in turn, influence consortium persistence (Bond, 1980).

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A key aspect of IOR is the complexity of inter-organizational collaboration due to the added layers of organizational interests in play when multiple organizations collaborate. Studying a complex phenomenon required the use of a research methodology which could capture this complexity. Case study methodology was selected for this research project because it facilitates a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Yin, 2009).

In summary, consortia are complex organizations due to the tension between the benefits of collaboration and the barriers of managing competition. This meta-topic had two important implications for this research project. First, it alerted the researcher to be attentive to benefits and barriers during data gathering, and how those benefits and barriers might have changed over time. Second, it provided direction in the selection of a methodology suited to capturing complex phenomenon. That is why a case study approach was selected for this study, and included examination of the external environment.

History and trends. The previous section on the nature of IOR framed the general context for this study and the methodology choice. This section presents the history and trends in IOR study. This review of the history of IOR study further contributes to understanding the context for this research project. Reviewing the trends of IOR study suggests the need for this particular research project.

The study of IOR has a relatively short history. In an early article on IOR,

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Evan (1965) pointed out that the field had been ignored, in part because researchers were accustomed to working with established *intra*-organizational theory. These theories, however, could not always extend to *inter*-organizational phenomena due to such critical differences as murkier organizational boundaries, ill-defined hierarchies, and complex role sets. However, the field has seen research interest steadily increasing as demonstrated by three-fold increases in scholarly articles on the topic in each of the last two decades (Ring et al., 2008). This increase is not surprising given the increased interest among practitioners seeking the benefits of collaboration, including strategic, institutional, and operational advantages (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

The increased general interest in collaboration also extends to higher education institutions. In recent years institutions have sought, or been directed to seek, the advantages of collaboration, especially amidst tightening economic pressure, overwhelming technological change, evidence of educational gains, and changing student demand (Amey, Eddy, & Campbell, 2010; Amey et al., 2007; Ferren & Stanton, 2004; Twigg, 2003). Inter-institutional collaboration is perceived to be especially advantageous within distance education due to its often high program development costs, the challenge to a single institution to stay current with emerging technology, a broader spectrum of required specialized skills, and the potential to distribute education to a broader market (Knust & Hagenhoff, 2005).

The increased interest in distance education consortia has heightened the

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need to understand consortia, and to be able to manage them well. Hence, this research project is timely. This research project also addresses a lack of development in the literature (Johnson, 2005). The underdevelopment is due, in part, to the fragmentation of IOR, which is discussed in the next section.

Fragmentation. A third meta-topic related to IOR study is the high degree of research and theoretical fragmentation in the discipline. This fragmentation has inhibited the development of IOR study, and created challenges for this researcher in finding a theoretical foundation upon which the research could be structured. Further, an under-developed IOR discipline has had, presumably, a negative effect on consortia persistence since practitioners have not had a solid theoretical base upon which to plan consortia. This issue of fragmentation is described in this section, and the implications for this research project are expanded.

Huxham (2003), perhaps the most widely published IOR scholar, wrote:

A characteristic of research in inter-organizational collaboration is the wide variety of disciplines, research paradigms, theoretical perspectives and sectoral focuses from which the subject is tackled. Even the most basic terminology is subject to varied interpretations and there seems to be little agreement over usage of terms such as “partnership”, “alliance”, “collaboration”, “network” or “inter-organizational relations”. A further characteristic of the field is that there appears to be little mutual recognition of research across disciplines and paradigms, so there tends to be little overlap in the articles that are cited in reference lists. The complexity of perspectives can be baffling, making it difficult for individual researchers to interpret material fully that is coming from another perspective. (p. 402)

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The three challenges noted in the above quote, multiple discipline-specific perspectives, terminology, and literature, have proven to be detrimental to the development of IOR as a discipline because a critical mass of commonly understood IOR terms, theories, and models has been elusive. Without such a critical mass IOR remains a low-status science and fails to provide meaningful knowledge claims (Baum & Rowley, 2002). Without meaningful knowledge claims IOR provides less than optimal assistance to practitioners, which in turn may negatively affect consortia persistence.

However, some scholars have asserted that the diversity of perspectives in IOR might be beneficial, if future scholars deepen understanding through disciplinary cross-fertilization and diversity of perspectives (Huxham & Beech, 2002; Schmidt, 2000). A goal of this research project is to contribute to this enriching cross-fertilization, particularly in introducing education administration researchers to the related work being done in other disciplines.

In conclusion, the three meta-topics contributed to this study in at least three ways: suggested a methodology, identified a research need, and anticipated an outcome. To a certain extent the meta-topics have pointed to what is not known about IOR. The next section of this literature review outlines what is known about IOR, by looking at extant research in each of the four dimensions of IOR research identified in Ring et al. (2008).

Dimensions of IOR

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The following four sections of this IOR literature review adopt the structure found in Ring et al. (2008). This structure examines the field along two primary dimensions and two secondary dimensions. The primary dimensions are organization and relations, which are examined first. The secondary dimensions are context and processes, which are examined later in this chapter. The examination of extant literature in these dimensions is not exhaustive, rather it is limited to research most directly related to consortia persistence.

Dimension of organization. Researchers delving into the organization dimension of IOR have focused on either the characteristics of consortium member institutions, or characteristics of the consortium itself. Studies of member institutions have examined institutional characteristics to determine such things as patterns of participation and outcome, or the relationship between organizational structure and adaptive processes that enhance persistence. For example, Kok (2003) found that a consortium in which member organizations had a historical pattern of participation in consortia had an outcome of lengthy, meaningful persistence, and even persisted through several transitions in consortium mandate. Another study of member organizations (Schmidt, 2000) found the type of organizational structure, and the presence of adaptive processes, influenced consortia persistence in higher education consortia. These two studies are examples of research into member organizations in the organization dimension. The research alerted this researcher to factors such as collaborative skills, organizational structure, and adaptive processes as potential

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persistence factors in the consortia studied in this research project.

The second area of study in the organization dimension has been research into characteristics of the consortia. An example of this type of study is Affolter-Caine's (2008) investigation of the effect of spatial distribution of consortia members on consortia persistence. It was found that the geographic distance between consortia members did not influence persistence to the same extent as other factors such as regular interaction, and maintaining member autonomy. Similarly, in other research it was found that higher difference in the relative age and size of member organizations created greater benefit for organizations, with younger, smaller organizations benefiting more than older, larger members (Stuart, 2000), and thus creating greater impetus for the benefiting organization to ensure the collaboration persists.

Research into these organizational properties has found that the objective properties of consortia and the member institutions were of less importance than the subjective properties, such as trust and commitment. Indeed, Offerman's (1985) case studies of terminated higher education consortia affirmed that inattention to these subjective properties was a significant contributing factor in consortia dissolution. These subjective properties are discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Dimension of relations. Researchers who have studied consortium relations have examined how consortium member institutions related to one

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another, in terms of their non-interactive and interactive relations. Studies of non-interactive relations examined relatedness properties which were relatively static, such as the disparity of member institution prestige or respective core competencies. Studies of interactive relations examined dynamic relations such as the flow of information and resources. Existing studies of relations helped inform this research project regarding the structures and processes of consortia.

Non-interactive relations. In the general IOR literature there has been relatively little documentation of non-interactive relations (Ring et al., 2008). However, within higher education there has been some interest in this area, particularly surrounding inter-sector consortia such as college-university and university-corporate collaborations (Abramson, 1996). Interestingly, there has been a perception and some evidence that either high or low differences in prestige lead to collaborative persistence, whereas mid-level differences have a lower persistence rate. It has been postulated that either a partnership-of-equals, or a consortium with a dominant member, eliminated power issues, and thus improved persistence (Trim, 2001; Williams, 2001). An additional finding has been that there tends to be less difficulty integrating policy which is close to students, indicating that operational factors may be less of a barrier to IOR than strategic policy differences (Amason, 2007). These were helpful avenues to explore in this research project.

Interactive relations. In both the general IOR and in higher education literature there has been considerable interest in the properties of interactive

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relations. These properties have been categorized by Ring *et al* (2008) as content flow, governance, and structure. These properties are properties of the consortia and members' relations, as opposed to relations with the broader environment or relations between individuals. These latter relations are discussed in the sections on context and process.

Content flow. Studies of content flow have focused on how information and other resources pass between a consortium and its member institutions. For example, Johnson (2005) attributed the use of a common learning management system (LMS) provider as an important factor in the persistence of the online college consortium he studied. Other important content flow studies in higher education have included the role of faculty training in consortia success, the critical need for adequate funding, and the importance of accountability information feedback in higher education consortia (Elgort & Wilson, 2008; Gatliff & Wendel, 1998; McCafferty, 1997). One of the differences between literature in higher education and general IOR literature has been the emphasis on information flow. General IOR literature has tended to research private sector consortia, where concern has been frequently expressed regarding sharing too much proprietary information with potential competitors with whom a company happened to be working in an alliance. Additionally, there were differing international tolerances for sharing information, with some nationalities and cultural groups more reluctant than others to be forthcoming with consortium partners (Lomi, Negro, & Fonti, 2008). Being aware of both the mechanisms and

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the openness of content flow assisted in this research project; particularly in gathering data to answer the research question regarding internal factors influencing persistence.

Governance. Studies of governance of interactive relations have focused on the management measures used to control the flow of content. This area of study has generated substantial interest among higher education researchers, particularly in such areas as managing financial flows (D. Anderson et al., 2008; Johnson, 2005), faculty workload and incentives (Eddy, 2010; Godbey, 1986), and voluntary versus statutory consortia formation (Amey et al., 2007; Blackwood, 1977; Pidduck, 2005). A dominant theme in both the general and higher education IOR literature has been how the various forms of governance engender trust. Trust within IOR is facilitated by formal means such as contractual arrangements which are coercively enforceable, or by less structured means such as normative relations and institutional reputation (Collins, 2008; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Selkirk, 2011). In their study of college partnerships, Amey, Eddy, and Campbell (2010) found that consortia which relied upon contractual arrangements for trust creation had a lower persistence rate and the consortia with a higher persistence rate demonstrated a gradual increase in *partnership capital* through commitment to the types of processes in which mutual understanding was socially constructed over time. These findings have been at odds with such traditional economic and management theories as Transactional Cost Theory, which discount trust as a factor in IOR, and instead

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assume a purely rational agent calculation (Williamson in Bachman & Zaheer, 2008). This researcher attended to the use of contractual versus partnership capital and their relative effectiveness in building trust in the cases studied.

Structures. Studies of interactive relations structures have examined the organizational structures found in IOR. Within higher education, a variety of consortia forms have existed and vary in terms of the degree of integration and interdependence of partners and stakeholders. Similar to governance literature, the various structures have often been related to trust between consortium partners. For example, brokering entities require less trust than those offering joint programs. Consortia which tend to persist are those which have adopted structures appropriate to the relative trust level existing between members (Barton, 2005; Stein & Short, 2001). The match between the type of consortia and trust engendering structures were noted in this research project.

Dimension of context. Researchers who have studied the context dimension of IOR have focused on societal level, and/or individual level, conditions of a consortium. Societal, or *macro*, level analysis has examined aspects of the external environment. Individual, or *micro*, level analysis has examined aspects of an individual person's functioning in a consortium.

Macro level context. IOR study of context at the macro level has entailed looking beyond the boundaries of consortia to examine conditions in the external environment. Macro context studies have included topics such as the legal,

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political, economic, or industry characteristics of the broader environment. This level of study was of particular interest to this research project because of the project focus on cultural logics in the macro level environment.

At the macro level much of the literature has addressed the formation stage of consortia: specifically the external pressures motivating organizations to collaborate in a consortium, such as political mandates (Blackwood, 1977; Pidduck, 2005; Theisen, 2008) or new online competitors and opportunities (Eddy, 2010; Johnson, 2005). The presence of online education opportunities and threats was highly prevalent in the late 1990s, when virtual universities sprang up and almost as quickly disappeared. Institutions formed consortia while foregoing standard business practices such as market research, and proper cost control (Bacsich, 2005; Carchidi, 2002; Keegan et al., 2007; Knust & Hagenhoff, 2005; Paulsen, 2003). A consistent finding in this body of research has been that despite external pressure to form a consortium, there should be clear partner commitment to the enterprise (Ring & Van De Ven, 1994). No research into the relationship between cultural logics and consortia was found in preparing this literature review.

Micro level context. At the micro level, research has been of individuals and groups, such as the composition of consortia teams, an individual's history and social capital, and their individual goals and commitment (Amey et al., 2010; Atkinson, Springate, Johnson, & Halsey, 2007; Connolly, Jones, & Jones, 2007; Johnson, 2005; Perrault, 2009; Pidduck, 2005). Findings have supported the

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need for individual alignment with consortia goals, and strong, positive social ties to foster consortia persistence. A particularly interesting finding has been the need for “boundary spanners” (Glowacki-Dudka, 1999): individuals accustomed to dealing with internal and external audiences in a leadership capacity, such as senior academic officers. Ironically, while there have been consistent findings that chief executives need to be supportive or champions of consortium participation, it has been perceived that their role of institutional champion at many external tables actually may hinder their ability to be fruitful contributors to the implementation of a consortium (Johnson, 2005). In other words, the chief executives’ inability to constrain competitive drives proved a barrier to realizing collaborative benefits. In this research project, investigating individual roles in the consortia studied was helpful in identifying internal factors influencing persistence.

Dimension of process. Researchers studying consortia processes have focused on the active transactions involved in forming, maintaining, evolving, and dissolving consortia. Again, the literature in this dimension has coalesced in two levels; macro and micro. Studies of the macro level have focused on processes at the consortia, or higher, level such as consortia life cycles. Studies of micro level processes have focused on shorter term processes, such as building team trust.

Macro level processes. Macro level studies have addressed topics at the

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consortia, or higher, level. Frequently researched consortia macro processes included the life cycle of a consortium (Bond, 1980; Gray, 1989; Ring & Van De Ven, 1994), learning phases (Amey et al., 2007; Armstrong, 1997), or the phases of trust building (Amey et al., 2010). These contributions have been important to IOR study in understanding the dynamic, evolutionary process in which consortia are constantly engaged. As Ring and Van De Ven (1994) noted, process “is central to managing IORs” (p. 91). While the complexity and uniqueness of consortia has prevented highly prescriptive theory development, there have been important generalizations made regarding consortia lifecycle theory. For example, while Gray (1989) and Lancaster (1969) modeled relatively set stages in consortia life cycles that Bond (1980) could not confirm, he did find a related macro process of important “decision points” which created a “fork in the road” in consortia persistence. Noting decision points was an important data capture in this research project.

As well, Huxham and Vangen (2005) found an interesting series of paradoxes in consortia lifecycles. For example, in successful consortia institutional members need common understanding, mutual trust, and shared commitment to common goals. Paradoxically, these critical attributes are only developed through time and working together to form what the researchers term *relational density*. They concluded that tolerance for ambiguity is needed as these attributes develop.

Understanding consortia life cycle processes was especially helpful in this

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research project. It facilitated identification of when a new iteration of a consortia life cycle began, and focused questioning and analysis as to what triggered the new iteration and the effectiveness of the response to that trigger.

Micro level processes. Researchers who have examined micro level IOR processes have focused on interaction between individuals. Perhaps because many educators have been trained to focus on individuals (students) and their learning processes, this area of research holds a high concentration of IOR-related higher education research. Research in this area has included topics such as sense-making activities, particularly in relation to trust building (D. Anderson et al., 2008; Glowacki-Dudka, 1999; Johnson, 2005; Luna-Reyes & Andersen, 2007; Pembleton, 2011) and leadership (Dorado, Giles, & Welch, 2009; Jervis-Tracey, 2005; Johnson, 2005). The extant research has supported a need for consortia managers to be attentive to activities which contribute to individual member alignment with consortia goals and values, the importance of trust and trust-building experiences, and appropriate leadership style to contribute to these processes. All of these characteristics were investigated in this research project.

The above discussion of the four dimensions of IOR study was intended to provide an overview of the IOR research landscape. The overview provided a holistic perspective on the various facets of the diverse field. It also noted the aspects of IOR to which this study paid particular attention in determining factors which influence consortia persistence. However, IOR research has had at least

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one shortcoming in relation to the interests of this study: it overly privileges the internal environment. The following section introduces an area of organizational studies which augments IOR literature in understanding the role of the external environment in organizational persistence.

Organizational Studies and Consortia Persistence

As noted above, IOR research has tended to over-privilege the internal environment. Over-privileging the internal environment has had the effect of treating a consortium as a closed system, without due consideration given to the interaction and influence between a consortium and its external environment. As was argued earlier in this paper, a consortium is perhaps one of the most permeable of organizations, and so overlooking the influence of the external environment has been especially detrimental to the understanding of this type of entity. Further, consideration of all factors influencing persistence, both internal and external, is important if research is to contribute to improving the present low rate of consortia persistence. An area of organizational studies which has focused on the influence of the external environment on organizations is open systems theory. This review of relevant organizational studies literature begins with an examination of open systems theory and its potential contribution as a theoretical grounding for this research project.

Open Systems Theory. In the last one hundred years three broad theoretical perspectives have emerged in organizational studies: rational systems

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theory, natural systems theory, and open systems theory (Scott & Davis, 2007). Each of these theories “calls attention to certain significant, enduring and essential features of organizations” (Baum & Rowley, 2002, p. 2). Rational systems theory has focused on the formal structures of organizations, and the pursuit of organizational goals. Natural systems theory has focused on the informal organizational structure, and the composite of goals found in an organization, including individuals’ diverse motivations to participate in an organization. Open systems theory has built on rational and natural theory to include the role of the environment in an organization. Within open systems theory an organization is defined as: “systems of interdependent activities linking shifting coalitions of participants; the systems are embedded in – dependent on continuing exchanges with and constituted by – the environment in which they operate” (Baum & Rowley, 2002, p. 2). Most contemporary organizational studies have incorporated rational, natural, and open systems theoretical perspectives, to at least some degree, with open systems tending to be the overarching theory. Understanding organizations as sets of coalitions and exchanges occurring in an organization and with its environment has provided a helpful mental map from which to investigate the factors which shake these coalitions and impede exchanges, and potentially influence persistence. Within open systems theory seminal articles by Meyer and Rowan (1977), and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), have emerged in which they extended the understanding of an organization’s interaction with the environment from instrumental to cultural.

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They demonstrated the influence of the norms and values of industry sectors, or *organizational fields*, on the structure and processes of organizations. These norms and values, or *institutional logics*, have been referred to in this document as cultural logics of the external educational environment.

These logics represent common worldviews and have shaped model organizations, which are subsequently mimicked within the industry. Hence, this mimetic process has resulted in organizational structures and processes which are common to organizations throughout a particular industry. For example, universities tend to share common organizational structure and processes which are based on a collegial model rather than a hierarchical business model, due to the particular logics commonly accepted in the higher education sector. Organizations which have drifted away from the institutional logics in which the organization is embedded have tended to reflect this drift in differing organizational structures and processes (Holm, 1995). What was important for this study of persistence was whether consortia persistence was influenced by its structures and processes being in alignment with, versus having drifted from, the contemporary, dominant cultural logics of the educational environment in which it was embedded.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed scholarly literature related to persistence of higher education distance education consortia. Included in this review were three meta-

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topics, an overview of IOR literature in four dimensions, and salient works in organizational studies. The literature which formed the three meta-topics provided an indication of the need for this research project, guidance as to the methodology selected, and pointed to a possible beneficial outcome of the project. The review of IOR literature identified factors that contributed to consortia persistence and therefore became a point of investigation in this research. The review of organizational studies literature in open systems theory provided a theoretical basis for focusing investigation on the role of cultural logics in consortia persistence. Together, these interdisciplinary sources form a picture of an emerging body of literature that has both gaps in need of investigation, and extant knowledge claims that helpfully informed this research project. The next chapter extends the discovered need for this research into a methodological plan for investigation.

Chapter III - METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview and rationale for the research methodology used in this study of factors influencing higher distance education consortia persistence. This chapter also outlines the ethical risks of this research project and the mitigations taken to minimize those risks. To provide a context for the rest of the chapter, a general overview is provided.

Overview of Methodology

This research project investigated factors influencing persistence in higher distance education consortia, with a focus on the influence of consortia alignment with the cultural logics of the educational environment. Findings contribute to improving meaningful consortia persistence, which is important because to date persistence has been low (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Park & Ungson, 2001). To facilitate generating an understanding of the complexity of consortia, and the influence of cultural logics upon persistence, this study utilized a multilevel, longitudinal comparative case study methodology. The methodology is referred to in this research project as multilevel because research was conducted at the level of the external environment; as well as at the inter-organizational, organizational, and intra-organizational levels. The study examines consortia over the span of several years, so is longitudinal. A comparative case study was

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conducted on four higher education distance education consortia. The criteria for case selection are described below.

The research project entailed first selecting the consortia, and then gathering data on the consortia and the cultural logics of the external educational environment in which they were embedded. Data related to the both the consortia and the educational environment was collected through document review and open-ended expert interviews. The time period studied was from the time of consortia origin to 2012. After collection, data from the research was then analyzed for evidence of influence upon persistence. Emphasis was placed on structural and process determinants of persistence, as well as the influence of alignment with cultural logics because these represent the greatest gaps in extant IOR research literature. The research project is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Methodology and Rationale

This section provides a description of the methodology that was employed in this research project, and a rationale for the methodology. In a typical case study, the research questions establish the boundaries of the case to be studied and often entail the study of a well bounded subject such as a person, neighbourhood or organization (Ellinger et al., 2005). However, in this research project the research questions extended the boundaries of the case study beyond the subjects of study, the consortia, and into the external environment in

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which the consortia are embedded. This extension into the external environment facilitated an investigation into the relatedness of the consortia with their environment; in particular the alignment of a consortium's internal cultural logics with the cultural logics of the external environment. Therefore, this research project needed to ascertain both the characteristics of the external environment, and the characteristics of the consortia.

To ascertain characteristics of both the external environment and the consortia this research project was envisioned as a two-phase investigation. The first phase was to entail data collection and analysis related to the external environment and the second phase was to entail data collection and analysis related to the consortia. The rationale for this two-phased approach was an assumption that an understanding of the external environment, in particular the cultural logics of the educational environment in which a consortium was embedded, would sensitize the researcher as to what to look for in the investigation of consortia and their alignment with the external cultural logics. For example, if it was clear that post-secondary institutions' autonomy from governmental influence was a strong cultural logic in the external environment, then investigation into the respective consortium would be alert to the presence or absence of this logic internally. However, this two-phased approach was quickly abandoned once data collection commenced because it was readily apparent that both the documents collected and the individuals interviewed frequently produced rich information related to both the environment and the

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consortia. Therefore, data related to both the external environment and the consortia was collected simultaneously. As a result of this change to methodology, data related to the respective environments was identified as either primarily external or primarily related to the consortia at the analysis stage of this research project rather than at the collection stage. This meant that data filtering and analysis proved to be an iterative process rather than a linear process as initially envisioned. For example, as logics in the external environment emerged during analysis, data sources previously examined would be reviewed again for confirmation of the logic and evidence of the logic in the respective consortium. The iterative approach may well have proven to be a methodological improvement as the repeated examination of key data sources resulted in a nuanced understanding of both the external environment and the consortia. Other than this change from a two-stage data collection methodology to a single integrated methodology, the research project proceeded largely as outlined in the research proposal, beginning with consortia selection.

The research project began with the selection and recruitment of the consortia to be studied. Consortia selection was based on a combination of intentionality and convenience. A representative sample of consortia with differing types and durations of persistence was selected to improve external validity of the study by applying replication logic to a varied sample of cases (Yin, 2009). Replication logic is essentially determining whether similar actions had similar results. Therefore, consortia with significant similarities were selected. All

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the selected consortia were Canadian consortia involved in some way with delivering higher education distance education programs, with at least one staff member. Canadian consortia were selected because this has been an under-researched jurisdiction, there was sufficient context similarity to improve replication logic, and because of researcher convenience. Consortia of accredited higher education institutions engaging in distance education were selected because, again, this has been an under-researched sector.

Investigating this under-researched sector was timely and relevant to activity in the field since at least one such consortium had been initiated in most Canadian provinces within 10 years of the researcher initiating this project. Meanwhile, in the two years previous to this research project beginning, numerous major program oriented consortia closed in Canada and the United States, including Arizona University Network, Ohio Learning Network, California Virtual Campus, and Campus Saskatchewan. The general low persistence rate of consortia described in Chapter One, together with the over-representation among consortia that had recently dissolved higher distance education consortia, indicated a need for greater research into persistence in this sector. The consortia selected for this research project also had at least one staff member. This criterion aided in replication logic since it meant the scale of the consortia were somewhat similar, although one consortium was significantly larger than the others (staff sizes were 1.5, 5, 7 and 23). Having had at least one staff member also aided in data gathering since there were dedicated individuals able to

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provide data sources. Another criteria for selection was researcher convenience and familiarity. The consortia were all reasonably geographically close and the researcher had some familiarity with the entities.

The final criteria for consortia selection was a variety of persistence levels, in order to provide a representative sample. At the time of data collection one of the four consortia was continuing operation, two had merged, and one had been dissolved. The variation in persistence represented by these cases provided insight into factors influencing persistence because they provided similarity in context and type yet difference in persistence.

After consortia were selected for this research project data was collected regarding the external environment and the consortia. This project's approach to data collection, and the research methodology in general, was modeled after research by Reah and Hinings (2005) and Thornton (2001). Both of these studies examined the shift in logics within an industry. The former researched the shifts in logics prevalent in the Alberta health care system in the 1990's and the latter researched the shifts in logics prevalent in the higher education publishing industry from 1958 to 1990, and the ensuing pattern of company acquisitions. The research showed a significant shift in industry logics over time. In the case of Alberta health care logics shifted from doctor oriented best practice logics to business efficiency logics. In the case of academic publishing logics shifted from an editorial orientation to a market orientation. These logics impacted the

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organizational structures and processes of the publishing companies.

Companies which did not align with the new industry logics were less likely to persist, and were instead acquired by the emerging large, market-oriented, publishing houses. Thornton's (2001) research indicated that a company's alignment with the shift in logics influenced its persistence. These findings helped inspire this research project, and provided a model for the research methodology.

Similar to Reah and Hinings (2005) study and Thornton's (2001) study, this research project is a retrospective longitudinal study. The time period studied was from the time the respective consortia launched until 2012. Data collected from this broad time span allowed a rich longitudinal picture of the consortia operation, their evolution and key decision points. A longitudinal study allowed this researcher to chart the consortia development against the changing contexts in which they were embedded and to develop a greater sense of the factors influencing the persistence trajectory. Data was collected for activity from just prior to consortia launch to 2012, when this research project commenced. The launch dates of the consortia varied from 1994 to 2002. Three of the four consortia launched within a four-year period.

Data was collected from both document reviews and expert interviews. Similar to the findings of Reay and Hinings (2005) and Thornton (2001) these sources provided both objective data and robust descriptions of the time period.

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The document review included such artefacts as ministry annual reports and business plans, commission reports, consortia reports and information circulars. The review included 136 documents totaling over 2,500 pages.

Expert interviews included personnel highly knowledgeable regarding the educational environment and the consortia, and included individuals such as ministry officials, institutional administrators from consortia member institutions, and consortia senior staff. In total 15 individuals were interviewed, including one “off the record” for verification purposes only. Three individuals provided data related to two consortia. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and verified by the interviewee as outlined in Appendix 3.

Experts were identified through past and present positions held, publications, referral by knowledgeable peers, and researcher judgement. Comparable knowledge was sought from all cases. Interviewees were sought until sufficient data saturation and cross-confirmation was achieved (Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn, 2000; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Yin, 2009). In other words, no new interviewees were sought after little new information emerged and the same information was being conveyed by multiple interviewees. Research participants were voluntary, and kept anonymous in the final reporting of this research. Samples of research participation consent documents are available in Appendix 4. Details of research data capture, storage, and interview scripts are available in Appendix 3.

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Once data had been collected the four cases were individually analyzed and then a cross-case comparison was conducted. Comparative case study methodology was selected for this research project because of its strength in assessing complex causality, gaining holistic insight into organizational processes, and the relationship between a phenomenon and the context in which it is embedded (Suddaby & Lefsrud, 2010). These strengths were very helpful in determining the factors that influence consortia persistence.

Analysis of the collected data entailed coding the source document, verifying the coding of representative documents with an experienced second coder, and then examining the codes for emergent themes related to persistence. Codes were developed through a combination of existing theoretical perspectives and iterative coding of key documents. The final code list is available in Appendix 6.

To develop the code book for analysis documents related to the external environment were coded based on codes from the two main theoretical frameworks being used in this research project, Amey *et al* (2007), and Huxham and Vangen (2005). Codes were refined over three iterations of examining key documents and finally 10 codes relating to cultural logics and 10 codes relating to other persistence factors were identified as unique and substantively represented in the documents. The same 20 codes were applied in the coding of key documents related to the internal environment of the consortia. Documents used

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in this preliminary coding included ministerial reports and plans, consortia reports and plans, and interview transcripts. These documents were both rich and representative.

Documents from this preliminary coding were second coded by a trained qualitative researcher. High coding agreement was achieved with an 88% agreement and a Cohen's Kappa of .872 on the 1,583 second coded quotes. This was well above the 80% agreement suggested as a target by Creswell (2009).

After coding analysis was conducted in the single cases a cross-case comparison was conducted. To facilitate analysis, and to reduce bias of a single framework (Yin, 2009) the single cases were described using three theoretical frameworks: Amey, *et al* (2007) or the Amey model, Huxham and Vangen (2005) or the Huxham model, and open systems theory. The single cases were described and persistence factors identified; first using the Amey model because it is a life cycle model and facilitated a chronological description. Then the Huxham model was used to analyze the consortium to provide alternate perspectives. Finally, open systems theory was used to assess the consortium alignment with the external environment's cultural logics. In the concluding chapter, cases were compared to ascertain common persistence factors which could be generalized. The net effect of the rival explanations, or meta-triangulation of the various frameworks was to reduce the bias of a single

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framework (Yin, 2009). After completing the analysis and interpretation through applying the various frameworks, the research questions were answered in the study conclusion and future implications were determined.

This research project depended upon certain theoretical and practical assumptions, which are discussed in the following section.

Research Assumptions

This research project assumed certain conditions would exist to make it feasible. First, it was assumed that there would be access to required data sources. This proved to be the case with a range of representative documents and interviewees available. Only one individual refused a requested interview.

Second, it was assumed that the theoretical models being used were valid and reliable. These included the Amey model, the Huxham model and open systems theory. The assumption that these theories were valid and reliable was reasonable given the stature which they hold in their respective fields. As well, the models were substantively confirmed in this research project.

Third, it was assumed that resources needed to complete the study would be available. This was a reasonable assumption at the time the project was initiated; however, in the course of the research project significant personal circumstances demanded researcher attention and delayed the project. However, this did not detract from the quality of the research since it is a

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retrospective study and may well have enhanced the project by allowing the data to “ripen” through researcher reflection.

Research Questions

The primary and secondary research questions are repeated here from the first chapter and then discussed. The primary research question was, “What factors influence persistence in four Canadian higher distance education consortia?” Secondary questions include:

1. What are the cultural logics of the educational environment in which the cases are embedded?
2. How well do consortium operations align with the cultural logics of the education environment in which they are embedded?
3. To what extent, if at all, does a consortium’s operational alignment, or misalignment, with cultural logics influence its persistence?
4. To what extent, if at all, do other external factors, aside from consortium alignment with cultural logics, influence consortium persistence?
5. To what extent, if at all, are external factors that influence consortium persistence common to multiple consortia?
6. To what extent, if at all, do internal factors influence consortium persistence?

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7. To what extent, if at all, are internal factors that influence consortium persistence common to multiple consortia?

These questions were largely confirmatory of established theory.

However, the theories had not been confirmed in a higher distance education consortia setting, especially within the Canadian context. The role of cultural logics in consortium persistence, however, was more exploratory, in that cultural logics had not been explored in a higher distance education consortia setting.

Practicalities

The practical challenges in this research project included obtaining permission to access information, and the coordination of research logistics. Access permission entailed identifying agreeable and appropriate consortia, with available data. As noted above four Canadian consortia were identified as candidates for study and appropriate data was obtained.

Ethics

The main ethical concerns in this study entailed maintaining data security, and mitigating emotional trauma to research participants involved in a dissolved consortium. Despite these concerns, this study was a minimal risk research project.

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Detailed description of data security risks and mitigation measures are outlined in Appendix 4. The primary data risks included unauthorized access and loss of data. Access security was maintained through physical and logical measures. Data redundancy was maintained through software that synchronizes every 10 minutes to a secondary computer. Regular back-ups were made to an external hard drive, which was stored in a personal fireproof safe when not in use.

The ethical risks and proposed remedies related to research participants are outlined in Appendices 4 and 5 and largely entail providing for voluntary withdrawal from the research and review of interview transcripts. These mitigations and remedies were approved by the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board as per Appendix 5.

The issue of emotional trauma to research participants was minimal risk. Participation in the research was by fully informed consent, and interviews were confidential and anonymized. Research subjects and institutions have been identified by non-personal identifiers in all transcripts and in this document.

Tools and Techniques

The following tools and techniques were used in this study:

- Document gathering sources: internet search, library searches, Request for Information, informal network sources

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- Document analysis: Atlas.ti software for qualitative analysis was used for narrative analysis. Techniques for document analysis included coding approaches recommended by Saldana (2009), and Frieze (2014)
- Data collecting and recording: documents collected were converted to .pdf for uniformity and stored in Dropbox and Atlas.ti, with appropriate metadata for retrieval.
- Interviews were recorded using both an Olympus DS-71 digital audio recorder and an iPhone for redundancy.
- Interviewing questions were open-ended and designed to draw out a holistic picture of the complex processes and value related indicators.

Limitations

Commonly asserted limitations of case study research include a lack of generalizability and the subjectivity of the researcher (Yin, 2009). Generalizability was enhanced through the use of “multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2009, p. 1). This research project used both interviews and a variety of document types, as well as metatriangulation of the analysis through multiple theoretical frameworks. Researcher subjectivity was minimized through validation of transcripts, researcher reflectivity, and vetting interpretations with a methodology expert.

Future Chapters

Future documentation of this study includes four additional chapters. The first three discuss the single case descriptions and findings. The final chapter includes cross case comparison, discussion and implications of the findings, and implications for future research, theory and practice.

This concludes this discussion of research factors influencing persistence in higher distance education consortia. The chapters to this point have introduced the study, reviewed background literature, and outlined the methodology. It has been demonstrated that there is a need for this research, and developed an implementable process for investigating and analyzing persistence in four Canadian consortia was outlined. The outcome of this research should contribute to an improvement in consortia persistence.

Chapter IV – CASE A

This chapter is the first of three analytical chapters in which the cases under study are described and analyzed. This chapter describes and analyzes Case A. In the first section of the chapter the consortium is generally described. In the following three sections the consortium is analyzed using three different theoretical constructs to help answer the primary research question of what factors significantly contribute to consortium persistence. The first theoretical construct is a model developed by Amey, Eddy and Ozaki (2007) hereafter referred to as the Amey model. The Amey model is also being used to provide greater description of the consortium because it is a life cycle model and facilitates a description of the consortium's evolution over time. The second theoretical construct is a thematic model developed by Huxham and Vangen (2005) hereafter referred to as the Huxham model. This model highlights the key themes for consortium management consideration and moves the analysis into greater depth in the areas of these themes. The final theoretical construct is that of open systems theory in which the norms and values, or cultural logics, of both the consortium and the external environment in which it is embedded are compared. This comparison addresses the question of alignment between the consortium and its external environment, which is a key secondary research question. The fifth and final section of the chapter summarizes the findings from

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the analysis and draws conclusions as to the factors significantly contributing to the persistence of the consortium. In a subsequent chapter, the conclusions reached in each of the individual case analysis chapters are amalgamated and compared. Next is a general description of Case A.

General Description of the Consortium

Case A was a consortium in existence since 2002 and offered provincial level facilitative services in a variety of areas of infrastructure and program support. This chapter section provides a general description of the consortium's governance and management structure, service areas, and resources.

Case A existed by virtue of a memorandum of understanding between the province and the consortium's governing body, the board. The board was appointed by the provincial department responsible for higher education in the province. While initially larger, the council in 2012 consisted of eight members, two from the province and six from post-secondary institutions. Post-secondary institution council members were typically Presidents from the smaller institutions and Vice-president Academic or Associate Vice-president from the larger institutions. The council met three times per year, and approved the consortium's strategic plan and oversaw its implementation. While the consortium functioned as an autonomous entity it was administratively a department within one of the province's major universities and utilized the university's infrastructure for such functions as human resource management, accounting, and physical space.

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The consortium is referred to as a hybrid consortium since its legal status and managerial direction resembled a government department with the consortium submitting plans and reports like a government department and receiving an annual directive letter like a government department. However, operationally it was governed like a consortium with shared representation from the government, post-secondary institutions and consortium management on the board. As well, operational level projects and services had advisory groups that took ownership for directing the project or service. The projects and services were often initiated by the post-secondary institutions with the institutions approaching the consortium for technical and facilitative support. The organizational structure of the projects and services also resembled that of a consortium with member institutions having representation on the advisory group.

The consortium was managed by an Executive Director (ED) who was accountable to the board and sat ex-officio on the board. The same person held the ED position for the period under study, 2002-2012. Three managers and the ED formed the consortium's managerial executive and each of the managers was responsible for one of the consortium's three major service areas: student and data services, collaborative and shared services, and curriculum development and professional learning. The student and data services area facilitated gateway sites for student services such as applying to post-secondary institutions, accessing online courses, obtaining transcripts, student record transfer, as well as federation of some system-level data such as provincial

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student identification numbers. The collaborative and shared services area hosted services for post-secondary institutions, particularly smaller institutions. It included services such as learning management systems, video hosting and conferencing, and acted as a student gateway for collaborative, multi-institutional programs. The curriculum development and professional learning area administered the process for allocating grant funding for online program development, hosted sites for open educational resources, and facilitated community of practice organizations related to provincial higher education such as researchers of teaching and learning, and instructional designers. The service area provided support to these communities of practice through services such as hosting websites and facilitating meetings. In all of these service areas the consortium did not retain ownership or control of the services but only facilitated services or content availability and only at the system, or multi-institutional, level. Each of the projects was directed by a reference group or advisory body comprised of representatives from participating institutions. All projects were participated in voluntarily by post-secondaries, and the consortium did not facilitate projects involving less than three institutions.

Case A's resources came largely from the provincial government through a combination of base and grant funding. Base funding increased over the life of the consortium from approximately two million dollars in 2002 to approximately three and a half million dollars in 2012. Base funding supported administrative costs and system level infrastructure such as the student and data services area,

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some of the collaborative services, and new initiatives. Approximately three quarters of base funding was used to pay for the 23 staff (2012) and the remaining quarter paid for project expenses and administrative costs. Grant funding was administered on behalf of the provincial department to fund projects; largely online program development. Since the consortium's launch approximately one million dollars was distributed annually to post-secondaries to develop online programs. The consortium administered a peer review process that determined the program development funding allocations, but did not make funding allocation decisions itself. Educational resources developed with these funds were shared with the rest of the provincial institutions through a repository hosted by the consortium.

A third type of funding the consortium received, which did not flow from the provincial government, were fees from post-secondary institutions for some of the shared services the consortium provided, such as hosting learning management systems. Most multi-institutional services began with seed money from the province and typically followed a three-year life cycle leading to self-funding. Over the life cycle provincial funding was gradually decreased to zero and ongoing service costs were ultimately paid for by the participating institutions to the consortium on a cost recovery basis.

Throughout the ten-year period under study in this research project the consortium grew in size, funding level and more significantly it grew in the

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number of projects it facilitated and the level of participation in these projects broadened. Indeed, fewer than half the services offered by the consortium in 2012 were available in 2002 (P61). It is safe to say that the consortium not only persisted but that it thrived in the period under study.

This general description provides an overview of the governance, management, services and resourcing of Case A. Elements of this description are delved into in greater detail as the consortium is analyzed in the following sections using the three theoretical constructs, beginning with the Amey model.

Amey Model Analysis

In this chapter section Case A is analyzed using a life cycle model developed by Amey, Eddy and Ozaki (2007). The analysis highlights factors that contribute to the consortium's persistence. The Amey model is described briefly in the literature review chapter of this study, as are the other two theoretical constructs that are used to analyze the cases under study. However, a more in-depth description of the models is provided in this first analytical chapter to help readers understand how they are being applied in the analysis. In subsequent chapters the models are not described; only applied in analysis. To begin the description of the Amey model, it will be helpful to view the model in graphic form (Figure 1).

Figure 1.1. Partnership Development Model.

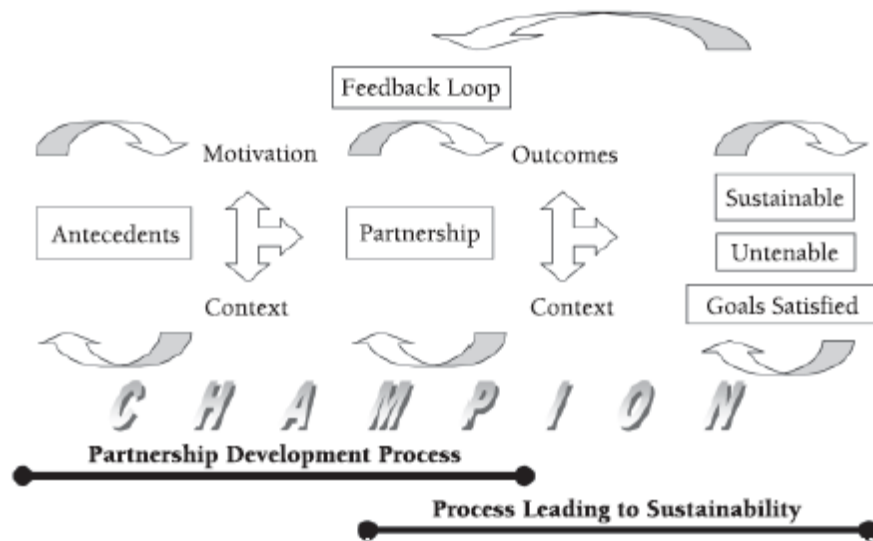


Figure 1 – Amey Model

The Amey model is a life cycle model which consists of two broad, overlapping process stages. The first stage is the Partnership Development Process, and the second is the Process Leading to Sustainability. In the first stage of the model its authors identify three elements influencing whether a consortium will launch: antecedent conditions, contemporary context, and partner motivation. In the second stage of the model its authors identify three elements influencing consortium sustainability or persistence: partnership structure, changing context, and realized outcomes. Overlaid on both stages are two elements: feedback, and a consortium champion. Each of these elements is

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briefly described and then applied to the context of Case A to evaluate whether the element is reflected in the life cycle of the consortium. The first element to be described is the *antecedent conditions* leading to the formation of Case A.

Antecedent conditions. In the first stage of the Amey model, the partnership development process stage, it is postulated that the life cycle of a consortium begins with historical antecedent conditions that incentivize or disincentivize consortium formation. These conditions could include “external policies or regulations, prior relationships, resource needs, or a challenging issue” (Amey et al., 2007, p. 10).

The general antecedent conditions in Case A’s provincial higher distance education milieu prior to the 2002 formation of the consortium included: stable government priorities which emphasized access and decentralization, a history of collaboration among postsecondary institutions, emerging interest in enabling technologies for distance education, and growing discontent with the government agency charged with providing distance education in the province. Each of these antecedent conditions is examined in more detail.

The provincial government’s priorities had been stable for over 10 years prior to 2002. The same political party had been in power in the province from 1991 to 2001 and during that time the ministry responsible for higher education

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focused its priorities on increasing access for students (P130)¹. Access included the reduction of both financial and geographic (relocation) barriers which may have prevented student access to higher education. For example, the government required institutions to maintain a tuition freeze for several years during the 1990's. As well, to reduce relocation costs for students outside the heavily populated region of the province where the universities were located, the number of institutions offering degree programs increased from three located in the populated region, to 11 with partial or full degree programs spread throughout the province (P130, P131).

A second antecedent condition was a strong history of collaboration between postsecondary institutions. For example, the entity responsible for organizing credit transfer between postsecondary institutions was the oldest organization of its kind in Canada with over two decades of collaboration between post-secondary institutions. As well, other system-level collaborative organizations existed, including coordinated user groups, a common provincial application system, centralized educational technology development, and a common administrative data warehouse (A4, A5).

¹ As per Athabasca University, Research Ethics Board approval for this project the identities of the consortia studied are masked. To reduce the likelihood of identification the secondary publications cited which could identify the consortia are also masked.

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A third antecedent condition was an emerging interest in enabling technologies for distance education. Traditionally, distance education in the province had been provided by a single, central agency. However, as the cost and complexity of educational technology decreased other post-secondary institutions sought to enter the distance education market. Consequently, there were increased numbers of technology and distance education project funding requests coming from postsecondary institutions to the provincial government (A2).

A fourth antecedent condition was growing discontent with the central distance education agency. Some of the institutions in the rural areas found the agency becoming a competitor with what was perceived as an unfair cost advantage. The agency "could come in and offer programs, maybe at a lower cost than the college because they were seen to be heavily subsidized by the provincial government, and the colleges kind of resented that" (A2). The universities also were not supportive of the agency, not because of it being a program competitor, but because of it being a competitor for limited government funds. Also, there was not strong support for the agency's leadership. Finally, there existed limited academic support or champion for the agency because it retained no full time faculty. Course authors were recruited externally (A2, A4, P132).

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These four antecedent conditions provided the fertile soil in which the idea of the new provincial consortium germinated. The next two elements to be discussed from the Amey model are elements which, if present, help determine if the idea of the consortium is to take root. The two elements are the immediate *context* at the time of consortium formation and the partnership *motivations* for joining the consortium.

Context. Amey, *et al.*, (2007) list a number of contextual factors that could provide rationale for institutions to join a consortium. These contextual factors could include: government mandates, limited institutional capabilities, potential to serve new or expanded markets, and the potential to leverage under-utilized resources.

The context at the time of the formation of Case A was that a new political party had been elected to form the government. The newly elected government's "agenda marked the most radical shift in both substance and philosophical orientation in forty years" (P131, p. 105). The new agenda included a strong cost-cutting mandate, "the new government had come in and their mandate was very much, get the budget under control" (A3, cf P96). The first step in exercising this mandate was to conduct a review which entailed an examination of all government departments to determine the key functions of the departments and to identify cost containment opportunities. As a result, in early 2002 on what came to be known as "Black Thursday" (A3, P130) many government offices

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were closed, redistributed, or downsized, and thousands of public employees were laid off. Governmental agencies that were not directly involved in program delivery were particularly targeted. The two main distance education related entities were both closed. One was the previously mentioned distance education agency. The other was a centre which had provided faculty professional development, and assistance leveraging emerging educational technologies, particularly to the college sector. While these system-level entities were “easy targets” (A3) for budget cuts because they did not directly reduce institutions operating grants, the province did recognize there was potential lost ground on two fronts if the agency and the centre’s functions were not sustained. There was expertise in distance learning that would be lost, and potential program development and administrative cost savings through reduced system redundancy would be lost.

I think [the province] felt it had done a pretty good job on distance learning technology opportunities. It had been in the game since ... the 70s... (and) there was a good sense of cooperation among the institutions to keep this train moving in the right direction. But, yeah, I think there was a goal to say ‘Let’s invest the dollars a little more wisely, filling in the gaps, or in particular areas where a system wide approach needed to be taken as opposed to what was perceived as a little bit of duplication/overlap, maybe I don’t know, maybe getting into each other’s business that wasn’t productive’. (A2)

So, there existed a tension in the context of 2001-2002 governmental priorities. There needed to be efficiency gains achieved in part by reducing the number of direct government entities. On the other hand, there were potential efficiencies through collaboration by reducing redundancies, and there was a

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strong history of collaboration and of utilizing distance learning technologies. In the distance education context, efficiencies could be especially gained through non-redundant program development and delivery, and coordinated infrastructure.

To preserve what had been working in distance education while at the same time reducing the number of government entities some functions from the agency and the centre were redistributed; largely to be housed within institutions. This redistribution was intended to gain cost savings through elimination of duplicate central administrative support departments such as payroll offices, facility managers, etc. as well as having the political advantage of reducing the number of government entities. Distance education program delivery previously administered through the agency went to a university in a rural region of the province. The infrastructure to support distance education which had been in the centre was preserved in a low profile entity that “administratively (looks) like a project on the [university] books.” (A1) This entity was Case A.

Case A’s mandate had two foci. The first, and less public focus, was to play a coordinating and enabling role for post-secondaries by fostering “a collaborative systemic infrastructure that allowed their systems to be better utilized and government funding to be more focused and used in more effective ways” (A1). In other words it fostered both innovation and efficiency gains. It was to play an important but non-visible role. The consortium model was to be “a

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partnership in the sense of making sure that the organization had a coordinating function; [Case A] was seen like the ‘Intel-inside’ as opposed to a brand unto itself” (A1). The second, and more public, focus was to provide central access to “all online and distance courses and programs and learner support services offered through our province’s public post-secondary institutions” (P96). It is important to note that even the more public focus of Case A was as an enabling entity rather than as an entity doing direct service or program delivery.

To summarize, the context for the formation of Case A was one of change. In that time of change the government wanted to fulfill a cost saving electoral mandate yet at the same time advance the existing collaborative and distance education strengths within the province.

Motivation. Amey, et al. (2007) identify both rationale and power as motivations for member institutions to participate in a consortium. Rationale relates to the inherent outcomes of the consortium, whereas power relates to more instrumental outcomes such as gains in social capital or access to resources. Within the context of 2002 the post-secondary institutions had varying motivations for coming on-board with this new entity, Case A. These motivations included both inherent rationale to support the entity’s mandate, and instrumental power motivations. The inherent motivation largely centred on wanting to avoid duplication in the system and to “fill the gaps” in the system (A2). The instrumental motivation largely centred on wanting access to resources, such as

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program development funds offered through the consortium, and access to individuals who were resource influencers. Several research participants speculated that some institutions were at the table because very senior members of the ministry, including those with budget authority, were heavily involved in the project and the institutions wanted to remain in favour with those senior ministry members (A1, A2, A4).

Champion. Within the Amey model it is deemed imperative that the consortium have a champion both to launch the project and to sustain it. The authors define a champion as “a person or group that advocates for the initiative” (p. 11) and emphasize the importance of the champion’s “personal, cultural, and social capital” (p. 11) over the need for a formal leadership or authority position. The champion needs to believe in the inherent value and outcome of the consortium and have the power, in some form, to influence others to support the endeavour. In this regard Case A had three champions that were identified by multiple research participants. The first identified champion was a senior administrator at one of the province’s premier institutions. The individual was described as “pulling a lot of weight” and being “a fabulous mind and administrator” (A3). The individual was clearly a champion in the early years who “really helped to bring all the colleges, university colleges, and the other universities to the table to kind of support this vision” (A3). The second champion was a senior administrator within the ministry. This individual was

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enthusiastically involved in the project and was foundational to its formation and launch. The senior level of the individual sent a clear message to the institutions as to the importance of the consortium in the eyes of the provincial government.

(A1)

The third champion of the project was the consortium's executive director. Prior to the formation of the consortium the individual had been appointed to the provincial advisory group on open and distance education. He played a lead role in conceptualizing a new model for the province and that model was adopted as the template for Case A. While he had not intended to become the executive director of the entity, he was recruited into the position and clearly believed in the vision and mandate. He already had a great deal of social capital as a forward thinking and collaborative individual and was able to leverage and develop that social capital. (A3)

So, it is clear that the consortium had strong, well placed champions who had sufficient instrumental power and social capital to influence the various stakeholders to participate in the consortium's formation and launch.

The second general stage in the Amey model is the Process Leading to Sustainability. Within this stage the authors identify three elements that influence sustainability; partnership framework, outcome achievement, context changes. Each of these elements is examined, beginning with partnership framework.

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Partnership framework. Within the Amey model there is not a one-size-fits-all recommendation on how a consortium should be structured. Rather, the authors offer design considerations for shaping a consortium framework. The primary design considerations are that consortia entail “interdependency and joint ownership of decisions” (p. 7), and the structure is designed to be mutually beneficial to the stakeholders. Each of these design considerations is examined.

In the initial and ongoing structure of Case A there was clear and intentional design that fostered joint ownership of decisions and interdependency. At the point of formation the consortium design emphasis was on reducing redundancy and filling gaps within the provincial post-secondary system without becoming a competitor to the institutions. Joint ownership was achieved, in part, through the governance model. The consortium was governed by a body of senior administrators from both the post-secondary institutions and the provincial ministry. The governing body membership was by invitation from the ministry and included institutional administrators from the various post-secondary sectors, as well as government representatives and ex officio membership of the consortium Executive Director. Governance membership by invitation insured government had some control over the consortium, which they hadn't had with the previous entities the consortium was supplanting. Representation from the institutions formed the majority on the board and was designed to ensure “pretty much the whole system had a sense of shaping this

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new entity” (A2). Membership by invitation also provided some assurance that the governing board had the competence and support needed from members.

The consortium interdependency rested on a number of factors. The first was the consortium mandate to reduce redundancy. This mandate was, in part, fulfilled through managing hosted and shared services such as a central online student application service, hosted learning management systems and various joint library services. In the context of provincial cost cutting these services were viewed by the institutions as efficiency gains without risking a dilution of their brand or fostering competition. As institutions participated in these shared services it increased switching costs, i.e., to leave the shared services institutions would incur significant infrastructure costs. So, by buying into the consortium’s mandate the institutions inherently became more interdependent. (A1)

The second factor that created interdependency was the cost cutting context of the new government during a time of blossoming opportunity to leverage educational technology for distributed learning. After implementing cost cutting measures the government was quick to re-invest in targeted areas, primarily in expanding professional faculties such as engineering and medicine, and in online education. Funds for developing collaborative online education, such as a new joint, non-residential medical program, flowed through the consortium, which, again, increased the interdependency of institutions upon working with each other and the consortium in order to access new funding. As

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one administrator put it “the minute you put funding into it (online program development) and you tell the institutions that, look, we are trying to promote online learning and we will give you funded FTE’s in these program areas, but you have to develop the online courses... they will sit up and listen... because they all wanted the FTE dollars” (A5).

So, it is clear that Case A’s structure fostered interdependency and incentives to come to the decision-making table.

The second partnership design consideration identified by Amey et al. (2007) is that the consortium has to be of mutual benefit. In the case of Case A mutual benefit is fostered by both structural and service design features. Structurally, all of the consortium’s initiatives are opt-in, i.e., there is never a mandated requirement to participate. Since institutions always have the option to not participate in any individual initiative, the decision to opt-in would only be made when there is value to the institution. Indeed, the concept of providing value to post-secondary institutions is deeply embedded in the strategy and operations of the consortium and all service designs are based on the provision of value. In one of the early public documents emerging from the consortium the basis for service design is summarized as “the identification of resonant value from the perspective of each institution” (P66). The term “resonant value” was taken from management literature, especially authors situated in the Harvard Business School (J. C. Anderson, Narus, & van Rossum, 2006). As understood

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in that literature, a supplier providing resonant value to a customer has an intimate understanding of what is of value to a customer and has the ability to document and demonstrate satisfaction of that value. In other words, what benefits or values resonate with customers? In all research interviews with consortium staff the idea of resonant value was referenced, and in most documents emanating from the consortium the concept of resonant value is at least implied. Resonant value, as understood at Case A, would roughly equate to what Amey et al. (2007) described as mutual benefit. So, the concept of mutual benefit is deeply embedded in the consortium design and operations.

Outcomes Achievement. The next aspect of the second general stage in the Amey model described is the role of outcomes and feedback leading to decisions whether to continue or dissolve consortium operations. Within the Amey model dissolution of operations is typically due to either the consortium goals being achieved, or goal achievement is deemed untenable.

First, the role of outcomes and feedback is discussed. The authors of the Amey model define outcomes of a consortium as the benefits relative to the costs of the consortium. While these outcomes are established during the consortium formation, the member understanding of the outcomes is honed as the consortium becomes operational. As operations continue, feedback to the consortium members clarifies both the intended and actual outcomes (p. 9) and whether the outcomes are being achieved. As feedback is received, members

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make the decision whether to continue the consortium or dissolve it. Central to this go/no go decision is how the feedback is framed. It needs to link performance assessments to the benchmarks developed during start up.

This understanding of outcomes and feedback is now applied to Case A. The initial benefits envisioned for Case A included reducing systemic redundancy and spurring innovation that would fill gaps in the system. At the same time as reducing redundancy and spurring innovation, the entity was to only minimally increase system administrative costs. This benefit of minimal administrative cost increase was to be achieved, at least in part, by embedding the consortium within an existing tertiary educational institution's infrastructure, i.e., one of the major universities. The consortium utilized the university's administrative systems, such as payroll administration, telecommunications, etc.

Amey, *et al* (2007) asserted that feedback must be given to relevant stakeholders and framed according to the priorities of those stakeholders. The consortium demonstrated this framing of feedback through a number of channels. First, the annual reports to government were framed in direct response to the government's priorities articulated in official planning documents. Moreover, in the era of government demanding accountability, the consortium moved to real time reporting of activity through an online tool that showed metrics of particular interest to governmental stakeholders (P65). Second, reports to institution level stakeholders reflected their priorities. For example, project level

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reports were sent to participating institutions, rather than omnibus reports on all programs going to all institutions. These project level reports to post-secondary institutions were often high level, graphical representation emphasizing high participation rates (which acted as an indicator of providing benefit since all initiatives are opt-in) and “sandbox” initiatives (which indicated fulfillment of experimentation/innovation intended outcome). The graphical nature of reports targeted executive decision-makers needing quick reference material upon which to make decisions related to participation in consortium initiatives. At the same time there was a conscious effort to remain low key to avoid being targeted as an interfering entity that was starting to take on a life of its own similar to the precursor entities.

everything we do is kind of done under a stealth cloak... as soon as we pop our heads up too high or become boastful or start to look like change agents, that's how we get in trouble. Our secret to success is to stay under the radar and be seen to be just slightly ahead of our time... we listen to what people are asking for and try to deliver on that (A1).

Context. The third aspect of the second general stage in the Amey et al. (2007) model is that the consortium must change with the context. This adaptability relates to both of the other two aspects of the model which have been discussed above: the consortium framework, and outcomes. The context changes, and the ability to accommodate this change within the consortium framework and outcomes, leads to a re-evaluation of the consortium

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sustainability. First, how the Case A context changed will be outlined followed by the implications for the consortium framework and outcomes.

For the duration of the period of time under study, 2002-2012, the consortium operated under a government formed by the same political party. The party came into power with a mandate to balance the provincial budget. The resulting cost saving emphasis within the system led to the dissolution of some entities and the formation of the Case A consortium which had a system service mandate. While continuing to show economic restraint throughout its tenure, by 2003 the government emphasis, began to also target expansion in professional programs, especially medicine and engineering, as well as some trade programs (P131). The government announced an initiative which was “the largest expansion of the public post-secondary sector in 40 years” (P97), and entailed the additional funding of 25,000 student seats.

The other major shift in the Case A provincial context was policy change resulting from a major 2007 report by a former provincial cabinet minister (P81). The report gathered input from a province-wide, six-month long series of public consultations. The primary recommendations of the report were to “recognize two distinct but interrelated imperatives: the provision of access and the pursuit of excellence” and to achieve these recommendations the post-secondaries would need to “develop a sense of collective purpose to guide our efforts, with a heightened emphasis on collaboration and coordination of effort” (P81 p. 4). The

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primary recommendations of access and excellence were largely focused on regions outside the heavily populated area of the province. These regions had the lowest participation rates in post-secondary, and the lowest program completion rates. These rates were considered indicators of low access and low educational quality. To address these issues the province quickly converted several of the regional colleges into “university colleges,” which continued to offer traditional college certificate and diploma programs, but now also offered full degree programs. The report’s call for collaboration and coordination was essentially a call to unbundle degree programs from the exclusive domain of the research universities and to offer full undergraduate degrees at what were deemed as teaching universities (P131). As one research participant observed, “In 2006 there were four big universities and the following year there were eight universities... it changed the landscape significantly” (A1).

In the Amey model, a shift in context needs to be accommodated in a consortium’s framework and possible changes to expected outcomes. First, implications of context changes for consortium framework will be considered. In the Case A consortium the shift in context did not seem to require a major change in framework. The framework upon which the consortium was established was essentially a matrix framework. Most services were project based and subscribed to on a voluntary basis by the post-secondary institutions. As was noted in the general description section of this chapter, the consortium offered services in three general areas: student and data services, collaborative

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and shared services, and curriculum development and professional learning. The first service area, student and data service, was not oriented to providing direct service, but rather the consortium acted as a vehicle for data exchange. For example, while it hosted the centralized student admission application service it only acted as a portal. Unlike some other provinces' equivalent services where the centralized admission application service had some decision making power, the Case A service only passed through data to the post-secondary institutions. This was in keeping with being the "Intel Inside" of the provincial post-secondary service and never to infringe in any area associated with a post-secondary institution's brand, i.e., program and student service.

The second service area, collaborative and shared services, was a vehicle for post-secondary institutions, or departments within post-secondaries, to access services at reduced cost and complexity. Examples of shared services included arranging hosting of learning management systems, and video conferencing systems. The consortium also played a facilitating role in shared services such as a 24 hour a day, online student writing tutorial service. The actual services were provided by the institutions on a shared basis but the consortium provided the portal through which these services could be coordinated and provided.

The third service area, curriculum development and professional learning, had two foci: funding collaborative curriculum development projects, and

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coordinating professional development activity in the area of curriculum development. The funding process entailed three steps. First, monies were allocated by the province in the form of grant funding, then post-secondaries submitted funding applications, and finally funding allocations were made through an out-of-province peer review process. Again, all stages of the process were carefully structured to place the consortium in only a facilitating role. The funding amount was set by government, not by the consortium. The consortium provided guidelines and assistance to those wishing to apply but did not screen applications. The final funding decisions were made by out-of-province experts without a conflict of interest using a peer-review process. This peer-review process is broadly used and accepted within the academy as a means to provide objective decision making; so it was readily accepted as a fair decision making process which minimized bias in program funding decisions. The second foci, professional development, was again a facilitated service rather than a direct service. The consortium did not, for example, offer a set of best practices for online course development. Rather, it facilitated a provincial community of practice within the field of curriculum development. Members of this community of practice developed a best practice resource.

As can be seen in the design of the major services the consortium provided, the consortium was very much a facilitative service entity with expertise in collaborative processes and educational technology related services. It functioned as a matrix organization with some staff who had collaboration

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process expertise, others with technical expertise, and some with subject expertise in online learning. On any given project a team of individuals was assembled to work with the participating post-secondaries to identify, implement and achieve the goals of the participants. So, at this operational level, the inherent flexibility of the organization did not need to change to accommodate the provincial post-secondary landscape which emerged after the 2007 report. Only the individual projects changed depending on the needs of the post-secondaries. For example, when colleges expanded to also be teaching universities as a result of the 2007 report, the consortium played a facilitating role in the professional development of faculty, particularly in relation to their expanded role as researchers. While the consortium did not have to change its structure to accommodate the contextual change resulting from the 2007 report, it did change some of the services it facilitated; again to accommodate colleges shifting to universities.

The one change to consortium framework that occurred as the consortium's context changed was a change in overall governance. While each project was governed by an advisory group made up of participating post-secondaries, the overall governance of the consortium was by a board of invited administrators from post-secondaries. Initially, the board was quite large, comprised of presidents and vice-presidents, and met fairly frequently. "The initial governing board was a little bit larger than it is currently, and that was by design... it was larger to make sure that we covered the bases" (A2). However,

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as the consortium became more established the meeting frequency and board size and composition changed accordingly. “Over time you don’t need to tie up president’s time like that, and obviously representation changed... the governing board... got a little bit smaller, which is appropriate” (A2).

So, the consortium framework did not incur substantive changes to accommodate changes in the consortium’s context because of the inherent flexibility of its initial framework. Similarly, there was little need to change the consortium’s intended outcomes since they were also inherently flexible, as will now be described.

As recorded above, the initial benefits envisioned for the Case A consortium included a reduction in systemic redundancy and to spur innovation that would fill gaps in the system. Since these outcomes were fluid and specific redundancies and gaps were not identified in the consortium mandate, the consortium’s expected outcomes did not have to change as the context changed. However, the evaluation of whether Case A was contributing to reducing redundancy and addressing gaps changed with the changing context. For example, the 2007 report identified the need to increase access and quality, especially for what are termed “the regions,” meaning the areas outside the heavily populated area of the province. As noted above, the consortium played a facilitative role in addressing these outcomes through assisting both with the funding mechanism and the technological barriers to expanded access. So, the

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basis for evaluation of the consortium in the post-2007 report era was based, in part, on whether its work in reducing redundancy and addressing gaps contributed to improved access and excellence. Again, the feedback provided to the stakeholders demonstrated that the desired benefits were achieved.

According to Amey et al. (2007) the feedback provided to stakeholders leads to decisions as to whether to continue the consortium or not. The decision to discontinue is made if it is deemed the objectives of the consortium have been achieved, or if the consortium is untenable. Since the Case A consortium was a facilitating entity there was not a foreseeable, clear “mission accomplished” point. It continued to receive organizational endorsement as evidenced by participation rates in the initiatives it facilitated, as well as being seen as an entity that got results. One post-secondary executive who sought to launch a technology related learning endeavor “asked around in government and (had) been told that [the consortium] is the place to get things done quickly and quietly and effectively” (A1). Clearly, the decision from stakeholders, especially given the voluntary nature of participating in an expanding number of consortium initiatives, was to continue the entity. The institutions essentially “voted with their feet.”

The purpose of this chapter section is to describe the Amey model, describe Case A based on the model, and evaluate whether Case A reflected the elements in the model. Based on the case study presented in this chapter section it is this researcher’s conclusion that for the period under study, 2002-2012, Case

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A substantively reflected the Amey model elements. At the time of this research Case A was a robust, on-going consortium that persisted, and indeed flourished. Reflecting the elements of this accepted model for consortia may be explanatory of Case A's persistence. The evaluation of factors influencing Case A's persistence is discussed further at the end of this chapter.

Huxham Model Analysis

The next model used in the analysis of Case A is the Huxham model. Similar to the format of the previous section using the Amey model, the Huxham model is first briefly described, then used in analyzing Case A for factors related to persistence.

The Huxham model was articulated by Huxham and Vangen (2005) and is a thematic model containing 18 different themes. The high number of themes is due to the complexity and idiosyncrasy of consortia. The model is also practitioner oriented and emphasizes the tensions within and between the themes that a reflective consortium manager must consider. This practitioner orientation makes the model a particularly useful analytic tool in this research project. The full model is depicted in Figure 2 below:

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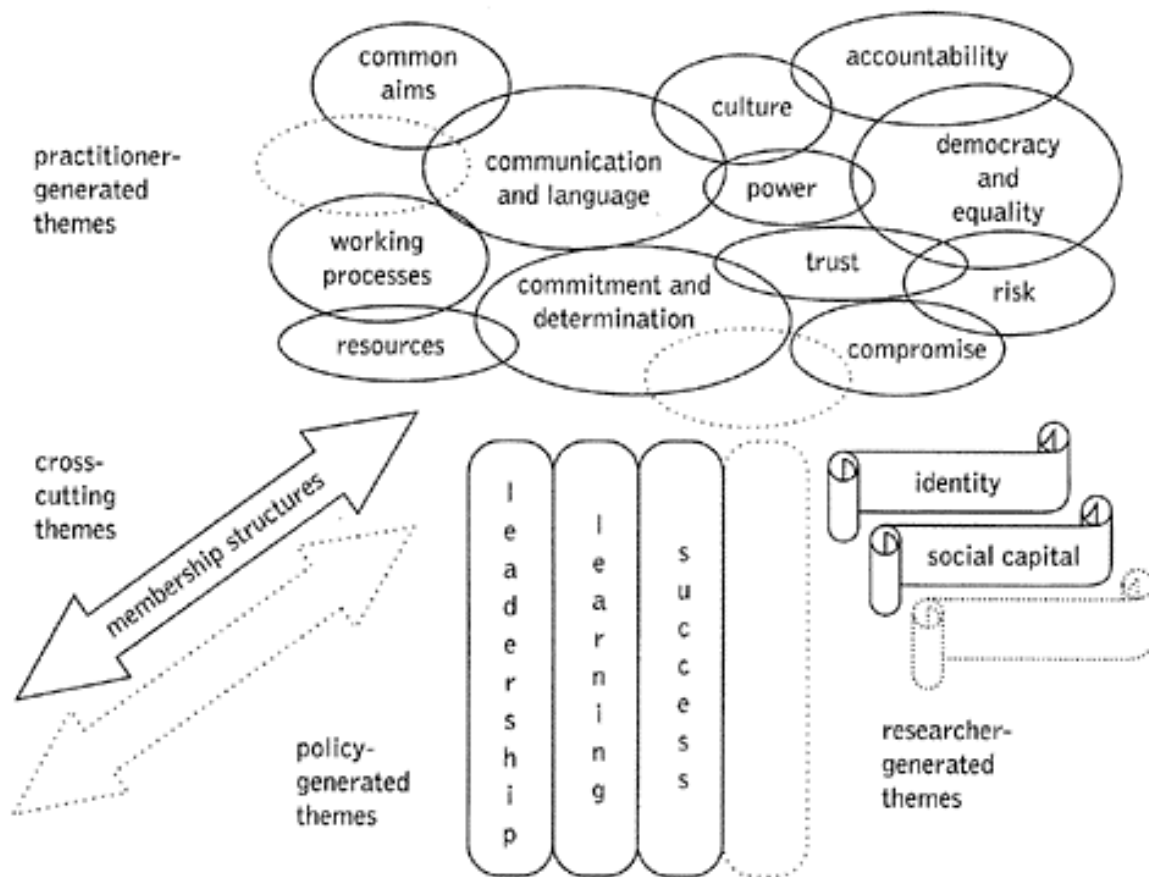


Figure 2 – Huxham Model

The model, based on two decades of action research, identifies themes of consortium managerial consideration. The bulk of the themes, depicted by ovals, were generated by the researchers from transcripts of workshops, consultations and other qualitative research with practitioners. A second group of themes, depicted in three columns, were generated from review of policy documents as well as work with those at the governance level of consortia. A third group of themes, depicted as scrolls, was identified by the researchers as latent themes that were implied by the research participants but were not overtly articulated by

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the participants. Finally, one cross-cutting theme identified across the various sources, depicted in the double arrow, is membership structure.

The breadth of themes identified in the models is, in part, a result of the breadth of inter-organizational entities studied. The differing types of entities included consortia, joint ventures, associations, partnerships, etc. The entities came from varying sectors including not-for-profit, for profit, governmental, and cross-sector entities. As well, the entities varied in size, stage of development, *raison d'être*, external forces, and level of partnership experience. Clearly, not all themes apply to all entities in equal measure.

To adequately address the role of all 18 themes in the persistence of the cases under study is beyond the scope of this research project. Instead, this section of the chapter focuses on the themes identified by Huxham and Vangen (2005) as being foundational, and themes suggested from other research related to the higher distance education consortium context (Amey, 2010; Baus & Ramsbottom, 1999; Crow, Larson, Olson, & Wahl, 2006; Katz, Ferrara, & Napier, 2002; Zaheer, Gözübüyük, & Milanov, 2010). These themes include consortium aims and purpose, trust, structures, power, and leadership. Several of these themes overlap with elements from the Amey model discussed in the first section of this chapter. To avoid duplication, where overlap between the two models occurs only the difference in nuance in the Huxham model is discussed. However, before delving into each of these themes and how they are manifest in

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the context of Case A, a brief description is provided of the general framework regarding consortia which undergirds the Huxham model.

In general, the themes in the Huxham model identify factors which contribute to gaining collaborative advantage, and avoiding collaborative inertia. The tension between seizing collaborative advantage and avoiding collaborative inertia is the undergirding framework of the Huxham model. Collaborative advantage is the achievement of aims by organizations working together which could not have been achieved by the organizations separately. Common wisdom, as portrayed by the authors, is that organizations with compatible aims and complementary resources can achieve collaborative advantage. Unfortunately, the common experience is collaborative inertia, such that in practice, “the output from a collaborative arrangement is negligible, the rate of output is extremely slow, or stories of pain and hard grind are integral to successes achieved” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 60). The themes in the Huxham model each identify factors that must be managed if collaborative advantage is to be gained and collaborative inertia to be avoided. This tension between advantage and inertia is the framework through which the key themes are applied in the analysis of Case A. Each of the five key themes is first described, and then applied to Case A.

Compatible Aims and Purpose.: The first key theme under review is compatible aims and purpose. The common wisdom is that for a consortium to gain collaborative advantage the various member organizations must share common aims. However,

There is a fundamental paradox at the heart of collaboration. The possibility for collaboration advantage rests in most cases on drawing synergy from the differences between organizations; different resources and different expertises. Yet those same differences stem from different organizational purposes and these inevitably mean that they will seek different benefits from each other out of the collaboration. (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 82)

Therefore, while the paradox of organizational differences may reduce the likelihood of consortium partners sharing *common* aims, this does not mean they won't have *compatible* aims.

Huxham and Vangen (2005) further parsed an understanding of collaborative aims beyond simply being compatible. The authors identified three levels of aims within consortia, as well as degrees of genuineness and explicitness. Within a consortium, differing aims may be held at the individual, member organization, and consortium level. As well, aims may vary in degrees of genuineness (i.e., genuine vs pseudo) and explicitness (explicit vs assumed vs hidden). The authors referred to the totality of these multiple levels and degrees of genuineness and explicitness as an entanglement of aims. This entanglement, while complex and in part speculative, may contribute to collaborative advantage

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when the aims are compatible, and conversely contribute to collaborative inertia when they are not.

As Huxham and Vangen (2005) pointed out, it is difficult to research pseudo, and hidden aims, as well as individual and even organizational aims. However, the researchers learned something of their nature. For example, explicit aims that were really pseudo aims, i.e., espoused in name only, were often in response to an external party's aims, such as a government funding program including criteria that funding recipients collaborate. Another form of hidden aims identified were survival aims such as a consortium manager who could lose a job if the consortium ceased operation. A final potential hidden aim identified was sabotage. It was found that some organizations joined a collaboration that threatened their domain in order to ensure the collaboration either failed or was contained. These hidden aims are similar to what, in the Amey model, would be considered instrumental motivations.

The final aspect of achieving collaborative advantage through developing compatible aims articulated by Huxham and Vangen (2005) was that sometimes compatible aims included how aims were achieved as well as the aims themselves (p. 89). In other words, aims regarding process as well as outcomes. For example, in some collaborations a few partners insisted on working in real time, face-to-face collaborative teams as opposed to decentralized relatively autonomous contributors to a project.

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The Huxham model is now used to analyze Case A and how it managed the competing tensions of an entanglement of aims. The primary aim of Case A consortium was to influence the post-secondary system toward efficiency and innovation. However, it was to achieve this aim without being perceived as a centralizing, decision-making entity which threatened institutional autonomy. Case A was explicitly initiated to assist a newly elected government achieve cost cutting goals through reducing redundancy in program development and system services, as well as to foster innovation. At the same time, the government had a less explicit aim: to give more direction to the post-secondary system, which they were not able to do through the arms-length entities which Case A to some extent replaced. As one former official noted,

government felt from a governance point of view the [precursory agency] was not a structure that they could direct towards their priorities as much as they would like to do. So in the [Case A] governance structure, government was allowed to have a little bit more sway in how their money was being used (A2).

However, as noted earlier, going to market as a change agent “would get you killed,” and centralization was “anathema” to the provincial post-secondary institutions. So, a tension existed between the aims of influencing direction and not being perceived as heavily centralizing. To mitigate the tension between these seemingly incompatible aims Case A adopted structures, approaches to power, and leadership which allowed the consortium to walk the line between influencer/facilitator and decision-maker. Structures, power and leadership are

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themes in the Huxham model which are discussed below in their respective sections.

One other tension related to aims which Case A consortium was not able to address directly was the tension at the more individual level. As discussed above, Huxham and Vangen (2005) identified three levels of aims: consortium, member organization and individual. This research project has focused on the consortium level and to a lesser extent organizational level. However, several research participants indicated some issues implementing collaborative initiatives due to individuals creating barriers. For example, when asked what surprised them about Case A's collaborative endeavours, one research participant commented:

The negative piece that surprised me, was the level of territorialism that some components of institutions had. For example, registrars. They want to keep their own institutional processes in place regardless of whether or not a new collaborative system was going to help the system, help the institution, or help the students. It didn't matter as long as their system was in place. That really struck me. That was a real surprise. I thought that number one, students would come first, especially with registrars. And then the institutions and the processes. But no it flipped around. Processes first, then institutions because they have to answer to the president, and then the student. And I guess that really surprised me; that we weren't able to crack that nut. (A5)

Similarly, another research participant commented:

So we kind of hit a lot of, sort of silent resistance from institutions. And they basically just drag their feet in terms of implementing the technology and they kind of came up with excuses; it's not hard. (A4)

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So, while Case A consortium had effective structures, approaches to power, and leadership to address incompatible aims at the consortium and member organizational levels, it seems there was limited success in overcoming internal resistance by individuals within member organization's ranks. The various hidden individual aims were beyond the reach of the consortium's influence using the approaches the consortium typically employed. In cases where these barriers were placed internally and could not be overcome the projects were never initiated. If the hidden aim was sabotage, it worked.

In the next sections the consortium's structures, approaches to trust, power and leadership are explored. This exploration includes a description of the inherent tensions within and between these themes and the ensuing entanglement of aims. As well, the sections include a description of how these tensions were addressed in Case A to better achieve collaborative advantage.

Membership Structures. In the Huxham model the tension described in relation to consortium structures is due to the ambiguity and complexity of member organizational status. Ambiguity can exist in membership status and commitment, and in the nature of member representativeness. Ambiguity of member status can involve differing voting privileges, accountability, etc. Member commitment can vary from quite low to high. Member representativeness may be ambiguous, especially when individuals represent multiple stakeholder or interest groups. Representing multiple interests in a consortium can create a complexity

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of interests. So, while the member organizations might all sit around the same table, there can exist tensions related to differing member status, commitment and representation. The managerial challenge lies in managing the perspectives which may arise due to lack of clarity as to why members are at the table, the interests they represent, and the complexity in managing the varying interests.

In a curious contrast to the intuitive goal of reducing tensions related to ambiguity and complexity of board membership, there is what superficially appears to be intentional ambiguity and complexity in Case A's governance. The members of the board were not sent as representatives from various stakeholder groups; rather, board members were invited by government. Further, the invitations were not on a formulaic basis such as two representatives must be from the rural colleges, and two from urban research intensive universities, etc. Rather, invitations to sit on the board were made on a case-by-case basis. Why an individual was invited to the board was not stated (A3). So, it was unclear whether a board member was representing a sector, or was on the board because they held necessary expertise in technology, innovation or collaboration. While board membership was by invitation, there was a strategic balance in sector representation on the board (A3). In other words the board was representative, but not representational. However, by virtue of not being representational the board members had greater unity of voice. As one interviewee put it, "of course, the [board] is speaking on behalf of [Case A], representing [Case A] to the ministry" (A5). By virtue of focusing on its interface

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with the ministry, the board members maintained a united focus on system level issues, rather than sectoral lobbying since they were not on the consortium board to represent a particular sector or interest. This unity, ironically arising from ambiguity, ultimately served to reduce ambiguity of status, commitment and representation, and complexity in the fulfillment of board duties. Reducing ambiguity addressed the tension between the entanglement of aims because board members were not on the board to achieve organizational or individual aims, but rather to achieve system level consortium aims. So the structure of the board, including its appointment process and composition, addressed the inherent tensions of aims, and membership ambiguity and complexity.

At a governance level, inherent tensions of ambiguity and complexity were addressed through a clear, unified focus on system level issues. Further, board members were more open to maintaining this system level perspective because of the voluntary and project-based structure at the operational level. Most Case A services were project-based with membership in the project being voluntary. The voluntary nature of projects reduced ambiguity and complexity at the operational level. Since projects were voluntary there was little ambiguity as to the participants' status and commitment. The participants were all of similar status and clearly of similar commitment since they chose to be involved in the project. In addition, the voluntary nature of the project may have reduced ambiguity at the governance level as well. The use of voluntary participation in projects reduced the potential for board members to shift focus from system level issues to

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advocating for or against projects in which their institution was or was not interested. If an institution was not interested in a project then they did not have to participate in it. Tensions might have still existed related to resource allocation for projects, however. But the voluntary and project nature of operations quite possibly reduced the tensions of ambiguity and complexity at both the operational and governance levels.

Trust. In the Huxham model trust between consortium partners is considered necessary to achieve collaborative advantage. As understood in the Huxham model, trust is an expectation that outcomes will be achieved and will be contributed to and enjoyed equitably. The tension that exists within the theme is the risk that partners will behave opportunistically by not contributing fairly to the consortium or claiming greater outcome benefits. Organizations have typically mitigated opportunistic risk in collaborations by choosing partner organizations with which they had positive past experience, or a partner with a good reputation or by establishing contractual obligations. As well, opportunistic risk was mitigated through a gradual escalation of the scale, and hence risk, of collaborative ventures undertaken by a consortium.

Within Case A's history there was a gradual building of trust between the primary stakeholders: government, post-secondary institutions, and consortium staff. Initially, trust existed based on the reputation of the individuals involved in the start-up. As was discussed earlier, the executive director had a provincial

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level reputation as a collaborator and innovator, a key board member from a major institution was widely respected, and the governmental managers most closely involved in the Case A start-up were also widely respected by those in the post-secondary community based on their prior experience as senior administrators in post-secondary institutions, i.e., they were perceived as “one of us” by the post-secondaries rather than as career bureaucrats. Also, there was relatively little at risk. The initial budget for the consortium was only a little over two million dollars.

Gradually, as the consortium’s reputation grew and it became known for bringing resonant value to the post-secondary system, trust between the stakeholders grew beyond being based on a few individuals. This trust was achieved through a history of stakeholders not behaving opportunistically. As well, processes were developed to support the various trust relationships between stakeholder groups. For example, reporting to government by the consortium showed clear alignment with governmental goals, creating government to consortium trust. Similarly, processes that were familiar to post-secondary institutions and that didn’t interfere with their brand created a reputation for the consortium as a safe and effective partner. All of these processes served to lower perceived risk and heighten expectation of shared benefits, i.e., they served to enhance trust. As trust was gained, the concern for hidden aims was decreased which served to further reduce tensions and apprehensions related to a potential entanglement of aims.

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Power. In Huxham and Vangen's research the issue of power and power use was frequently raised as a concern by consortia managers. In their research, they found that consortia managers reported people playing "power games," or engaging in "power struggles" (p. 174). Often the power struggles in consortia related to some member organizations using one of their power levers, such as funds or legislative power, to coerce the consortium to adopt their aims or preferred structures.

While power struggles were viewed negatively by consortia managers, in the Huxham model power is treated as a means to an end. The question is, to what end. Within the Huxham model power use is categorized by beneficiary. Power is categorized as either used for self gain (power over), for mutual gain (power to), or for the altruistic empowerment of others (power for). When power is used over others it fosters opportunistic behavior that undermines trust. When power is used to mutual benefit it advances the goals of the consortium. When power is used for advancing the cause of those a consortium serves then it advances the ultimate solution for which a consortium was formed. In terms of managing a consortium, the tension that needs to be balanced is between the urge to exploit the consortium for self gain (i.e., is the consortium addressing the interests of my organization?) and to utilize power for the benefit of the consortium, or those the consortium serves.

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In Case A most of the power utilized was power to and power for, and not power over. The tension of exploitive versus mutual gain oriented behavior appears to have been constrained. As an example of utilizing power to, the consortium was careful to not come between institutions' brand and their stakeholders. Again, to use the example of program development, funds were allocated on a peer review basis and the resulting learning resources were made available in a system wide accessible repository. The consortium did not come between an institution and program development funding, i.e., it did not play a decision-making role, it only facilitated the process. As well, the resources resulting from the funded development project were housed in a provincial learning object repository hosted by the consortium, but were not branded as a consortium resources; rather the originating creator and institution retained the branding of the learning resource. In the case of the repository, even though it was hosted by the consortium, it had its own independent brand. These examples illustrate a conscious effort to avoid the temptation to "empire build" on the part of the consortium. In other words the consortium deliberately avoided power for self gain and was oriented to power supporting mutual gain.

While Case A's work was largely focused on projects of mutual gain, i.e., "power to" projects, it did do some work targeted to advance third parties, i.e., "power for", such as the professional development of instructional designers. However, even in these situations the consortium was cautious to remain in a facilitative role. For example, the consortium assisted an educational technology

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users group by hosting online professional development workshops, hosting the group's website, etc. but did not direct the group either administratively or in terms of the content delivered to members. The consortium used its technical expertise and resources in a "power for" fashion and was careful to avoid any appearance of engaging in "power over" behavior.

An obvious tension which could have existed in the use of power within Case A would have been for government to use power over the consortium to achieve specific aims. However, despite the consortium being initiated and funded by government, the government was careful to avoid appearing to use "power over" the consortium or the institutions, thus avoiding the tension created by use of self serving power. The main power relationship was a relatively thin line of accountability. Government issued broad policy directions and in its annual letter of expectation to the consortium highlighted these directions. In response, the consortium submitted its strategic plan and how it would contribute to the high level directions. The decisions related to how to achieve the policy directions were left to the consortium board and management.

One note regarding power, Huxham and Vangen (2005) identified that power in consortia was often perceived to belong to those holding the purse strings. However, the researchers noted that there are many ways to exert power, such as setting meeting agendas, writing proposals and other processes influencing organizational direction. In this sense Case A consortium did retain

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significant power. By virtue of being so heavily networked and holding a reputation for innovation, it was able to exert influence through such means as suggesting projects or future direction. For example, the consortium incentivized projects that were of value to the system, but did not fund the projects indefinitely. Instead, the projects continued on their own merit, which further solidified the consortium's reputation for worthwhile innovation.

A lot of what we do in our change process is about providing incentives for people to participate and to begin to understand the problem. We tend to try to lifecycle every project that we introduce with financial support on the front end that diminishes over the life of a project so that people either say no this isn't working for me or yes I value this service and I'm going to pay for it myself (A1)

This approach to project financing is an example of how Case A's use of power avoided the tension caused by using "power over" others and instead focused on utilizing "power to" and "power for" approaches.

Leadership. In Huxham and Vangen's research they identified that consortia leadership happens at multiple levels and through structures, processes and people. However, since structures and processes are substantively dealt with in other sections of this chapter, this section focuses on the leadership of the consortia management itself.

Engaging with consortia managers in various action research contexts has been the primary methodology used by Huxham and Vangen, particularly Huxham over her 20-plus years of researching inter-organization relations.

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Throughout those years of interacting with consortia leaders there was a near universal recognition for the need of a collaborative approach to leadership when working in the context of a consortium. However, consortia leaders also indicated that this approach was “time consuming and difficult” and sometimes they just needed to be “getting on with it” (p. 225). As a result, leaders often had to strike a balance between leadership in the spirit of collaboration and what Huxham termed “collaborative thuggery” (p. 222). Collaborative thuggery can entail activity such as recruiting activity champions, developing and using strong relational networks, influencing agendas or finding ways to exclude unsupportive consortium members. The tension in using a collaborative approach which includes occasionally resorting to collaborative thuggery, is that thuggery can slide into being manipulative and self-serving. This descent into manipulation and self-service tends to be justified by a desire to get on with it. When leadership slides into manipulation it can destroy the trust needed for a collaboration to achieve collaborative advantage.

In the case of Case A there was a clear valuing of a collaborative approach to leadership and an equally clear orientation to “getting on with it.” The valuing of collaboration by leadership was evident even in the internal management of the consortium staff. As was indicated earlier the consortium management team consisted of the Executive Director and three managers of the main service areas. This team’s decision making approach used a consensus model. If any member of the management team objected to a course of action,

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then the action was not taken (A1). At one point, in approximately 2010, considerable tension was arising within the team and consensus was becoming increasingly difficult on multiple important issues. Rather than abandon the consensus model the management team engaged a consultant to facilitate the team dynamics. The source of the issue was identified as the team members having differing decision making processes, risk tolerances and information needs. Accommodations were worked out and the team resumed functioning effectively under the consensus model.

While the management team, and especially the ED, clearly valued collaborative approaches to leadership there was also evidence of subtle, but effective use of collaborative thuggery. For example, when writing the 2008 concept paper that led to the development of a provincial learning gateway the ED did not present a balanced deliberation for potential partners to consider and hope someone would advance the project. Instead, it was a clear call to action with section headings such as “Our students deserve the best,” “A gateway to opportunity,” and “The best minds agree” (P55). The paper concluded with a timeframe for action and call for collaborators. This concept paper demonstrated the use of agenda setting and a gathering of enthusiastic collaborators: collaborative thuggery techniques, without sliding into self-serving manipulation.

In the course of the research interviews it was consistently identified that the “flavor” of the consortium emanated from the ED. The ED came into the

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position with a relatively high profile in the post-secondary system and a reputation as a collaborator and visionary (A3, A4, A5). It may be that this personal balance of valuing collaboration yet also having a vision for what the system needed to “get on with” significantly contributed to the consortium managing the tension between collaborating, even with some thuggery, and being manipulative.

This concludes the analysis of Case A using the Huxham model. Within this section it has been shown how the consortium effectively addressed the tensions between what contributes to collaborative advantage and what leads to collaborative inertia.

Open Systems Theory

The final section of this chapter analyzes Case A through the lens of open systems theory. As outlined in Chapter 1, open systems theory examines formal and informal organizational structures, as well as the external environment in which the organization is embedded. The commonly held norms and values, or cultural logics, of the relevant external environment tend to shape organizational structures and processes within that environment. In Case A the external environment in which the consortium is embedded is the post-secondary system in its province.

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Since the structural aspects of Case A have been examined using the Amey model, and the Huxham model, this section largely focuses on an examination of Case A's interaction with the external environment. In particular, this section examines whether the internal and external cultural logics (norms and values) aligned, and the significance that alignment played in the consortium's persistence.

As noted in the methodology chapter, cultural logics of both the consortium and the external environment were ascertained through a thorough reading of planning and reporting documents, interviews with informed individuals, and academic literature. Documents and interview transcripts were coded and verified through a second coding.

Analysis of coding showed only weak apparent alignment between the consortium's internal cultural logics and the cultural logics of the external environment. In the case of the consortium the top four cultural logics were, in rank order of coded occurrences: valuing of inter-institutional collaboration, prioritization of educational innovation, fostering efficiency, and finally, fostering educational excellence (coded as collaboration, innovation, efficiency and excellence). However, within the external environment the top four values were: strong emphasis on improving student access to post-secondary education, and much lower emphasis on inter-institutional collaboration, prioritization of educational innovation, and accountability (coded as access, collaboration,

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innovation and accountability). Only collaboration and innovation were top four codes in both the external and internal environment, but had much different emphasis.

This lack of a strong alignment between the consortium and its external environment's cultural logics was curious because typically organizations that drift from an alignment with the external environment cultural logics tend not to thrive, or even persist (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). However, the consortium had indeed thrived. So, alternate explanations were examined.

The first alternate explanation was that the documents used in the research spanned 10 years and while perhaps the cumulative coding totals did not align, coding of documents from similar time periods might align. However, a comparison of documents from similar time periods did not show an alignment. For example, the 2002-03 strategic planning document for both the consortium and the provincial ministry (P62, P95) were compared and the top coding, i.e., the number one priority, for the province was to use education as a pathway to employment and this priority did not even appear in the consortium's document. Similarly, 2006 and 2012 document comparisons did not align.

A second alternate explanation for the lack of alignment between Case A and the external environment's cultural logics was that the consortium was a special entity within the external environment with a sufficiently distinct function that it did not need to overtly align with the external environment cultural logics,

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but must only respect those cultural logics. However, since organizations do tend to align with the cultural logics of an external environment, the question arose as to with which environment's cultural logics, if any, did the consortium align? In other words, did the consortium align with, or at least respect, plural cultural logics?

Further research into the literature in this area revealed a study identifying the presence and resulting tension of pluralism of cultural logics. Dunn and Jones (2010) studied the pluralism of cultural logics of medical doctors, in which physicians experienced a tension "at a nexus of science and clinical practice as well as the social and economic relationship between patient and physician" (Dunn & Jones, 2010, p. 115). The two researchers framed the tension as between the logics of science and care. Related research found financial accountants experienced a tension between regulatory logic (from the profession and government sectors) and marketing logic (from the business sector) (Loundbury cited in Dunn & Jones, 2010). Still other research has found physicians in Alberta experienced a tension between the logics of medical professionalism and business logic following the Klein-era shift from physician determined patient-need based health care to cost-effective health care (Reay & Hinings, 2009). The Dunn and Jones study makes the generalization that professionals are often faced with multiple competing logics.

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If Case A consortium is considered to be in a professional role, similar to physicians and accountants, then it is reasonable to consider the potential competing logics it faced between the post-secondary environment and other realms of cultural logic. The question is to which other realm of cultural logic the consortium had to attend. As discussed earlier, the consortium had a mandate to improve efficiency through reducing redundancy, and to foster innovation. This mandate was essentially a change facilitation mandate. Therefore, the consortium could be considered a professional change facilitator within the post-secondary system. As a change facilitator the consortium would have most closely adhered to the cultural logic of collaborative change management. The logics of this sector are inferred in the work of Harvard professor Michael Beer and others, and include both an emphasis on collaboration and pursuing a vision for change outcomes (Eisenstat, Spector, & Beer, 1990). If collaboration and change are the logics of change facilitation, and were also the logics which guided Case A, then the lack of apparent alignment with the post-secondary environment cultural logics may be considered as an accommodation between the competing cultural logics of the post-secondary environment and the collaborative change facilitator environment, rather than a misalignment of the consortium with the post-secondary system cultural logics. This concept of accommodating cultural logics is examined in more detail.

To test the theory that Case A was not misaligned with the cultural logics of the post-secondary system, but rather accommodated tensions between the

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cultural logics of the post-secondary system and those of a collaborative change facilitator, then the points of competing logics needed to be identified and assessed as to how the tensions are accommodated. To identify competing logics the top coded logics for both the consortium and the external environment were used. As noted earlier, the top four logics of the external environment were access, autonomy, instrumentality and innovation, and the top four logics of Case A were collaboration, innovation, efficiency and excellence. Clear points of conflict could exist between these sets of cultural logics. For example, fostering collaboration could easily be construed as infringing on institutional autonomy if any form of overt coercion were used to achieve the collaboration. To accommodate this tension, the consortium's projects, as has been noted elsewhere in this chapter, are voluntary for member institutions. As well, in allocating program development monies a process of external peer review was used, which again accommodated the post-secondary cultural logic of autonomy. Use of a governmentally controlled process in prescribing project participation or in allocating program development funds would, in all probability, have been opposed on the basis of the process violating institutional autonomy.

A further example of accommodation of plural cultural logics is seen in the implementation of the recommendations of the 2007 report. In the report, access was identified as a key issue, particularly in the less populated regions where students had to relocate to attend university. In open systems theory terms, after the 2007 report access emerged as a strengthened cultural logic in the post-

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secondary system. In response to this shift to an emphasis on access, several community colleges were converted to hybrid institutions offering both college and undergraduate university programs. As noted earlier, the consortium played a change facilitation role in assisting colleges in the conversion. Change facilitation included professional development programs for faculty, and supporting infrastructure development such as hosting video conferencing services. This facilitative role accommodated both system cultural logics of improving access and change facilitator logics of fostering innovation, and excellence.

A final example of accommodation between the cultural logics of the post-secondary sector and Case A existed in the structure of the consortium's governance body. As has been noted earlier the board was representative but not representational. This researcher was surprised at the acceptance of this structure given the high valuing of institutional autonomy evident in the source documents. It was expected that institutions would demand to select their own representatives to the governing board. However, this process was not raised as an issue by any of the research participants. The reason may be that the structure was similar to the very common post-secondary structure of bicameral governance (Jones, 2002), in which governance is shared between an appointed board and an elected academic senate and the administrative areas such as accounting and recruiting play an enabling and advising role. It appears that the consortium's governance structure mirrored post-secondary governance with the

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consortium's board functioning like a college or university board, the project Advisory Groups functioning like an academic senate, and consortium staff functioning like the administrative arm of most post-secondaries in an advising and enabling role. The mirroring of structure, again, accommodated the cultural logics of the post-secondary sector and of a collaborative change facilitator.

In conclusion, there is strong evidence that Case A's cultural logics did not align with the external environment in which it was embedded. However, contrary to open systems theory this did not have an apparent impact on the consortium's persistence as evidenced by its growth and increased support through the research period under study. While thriving despite misalignment is contrary to open systems theory, it is not contrary to prior research into pluralistic cultural logics in which multiple logics are accommodated. In the case of Case A, it appears that it managed to accommodate the cultural logics of the external environment in which it was embedded while still adhering to its own cultural logics of being a professional, collaborative change facilitator.

Conclusion

In this chapter Case A was described and analyzed. A concluding summary of that analysis is offered in this chapter section.

The consortium was first described in general terms and then analyzed with the use of three theoretical constructs. The analysis consisted of examining Case A through the three theoretical lenses as a means to determine if the

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consortium substantively manifested the various elements of each construct and to highlight key factors in the consortium's persistence. The consortium did manifest these elements and it is reasonable to conclude that this indicates a sound consortium design and operation which has contributed to the persistence of the consortium. Analysis of the consortium through multiple theoretical lenses also facilitated an identification of factors of particular importance in the consortium's persistence. These important factors are now discussed and form the main body of this chapter's conclusion.

Employing the three theoretical constructs for analysis led to the identification of several factors in the consortium design and operation which repeatedly surfaced as important. Differing nomenclature is used in the theoretical constructs but the factors identified are conceptually similar. These factors were also stressed by the research participants, which adds conformational weight to the factors' importance. These factors are listed here and then placed within a framework that has emerged from the analysis. Key Factors in Case A's Persistence:

- Respecting institutional autonomy
- Maintaining a purely facilitative role
- Building on past systemic strengths and avoiding past errors
- Incentivizing buy in through intrinsic and instrumental motivation
- Offering, delivering and reporting resonant value
- Use of familiar structures and processes

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- Establishing and leveraging social capital
- Being representative not representational
- Leadership strongly committed to both collaboration and outcomes

An examination of the list of key factors above suggests three very broad categories that contributed to the consortium's persistence. These categories are:

- An imperative
- Structures and processes which accommodated multiple cultural logics
- Respected people who valued both collaboration and outcomes

Each of these categories is summarized and the identified key factors in the consortium's persistence grouped into the categories.

An Imperative. In the Amey model this category is similar to partnership motivation and in the Huxham model it is similar to compatible aims. Essentially an imperative, as defined here, constitutes a reason for working together. From the list of key factors in the consortium's persistence the following factors are included in this category: build on past strengths and errors, ensure resonant value, and incentivize both intrinsic and instrumental motivations. Each of these key factors is significant in the Case A context and constitute an important aspect of the imperatives that led to the inception and persistence of the consortium. At its inception the consortium was built to retain the benefits of a history of collaboration and leveraging technology for education but also to avoid shortfalls

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of prior entities' lack of boundaries and direction. As well, the consortium maintained a rigorous focus on identifying, delivering and reporting resonant value to collaborating institutions. The consortium was careful to ensure that the value of its projects clearly resonated with the institutions and that it was able to demonstrate that value. Finally, the consortium leveraged both inherent and instrumental motivations of institutions. While institutions may have inherently supported ideals of efficiency, collaboration or improved student access, they were incentivized to act on those inherent motivations through instrumental motivations such as funding and cost savings.

Structures and Processes. Which Accommodate Multiple Cultural Logics: As discussed earlier the consortium operated under the cultural logics of a professional collaborative change facilitator while accommodating the cultural logics of the post-secondary sector. From the above list of key persistence factors two factors align with the cultural logics of being a change facilitator: the consortium ensured it maintained a facilitative role, and had a leadership committed to collaboration and outcomes. At the same time three key factors accommodate the cultural logics of the post-secondary sector: it respected institutional autonomy, used familiar structures and processes, and was representative not representational.

In part, the accommodations to which Case A had to attend were as much about what not to do as what to do. While as a change facilitator it had to be

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outcomes oriented it could not achieve these outcomes coercively, or by placing itself in the spotlight as the change agent. It avoided unfamiliar or suspect structures and processes. It also avoided a representational governance structure that could dilute commitment or a systemic focus. So, the accommodation of post-secondary cultural logics entailed careful avoidance of structures and processes that would violate that sector's cultural logics.

Another way to frame the accommodations needed in the context of being a change facilitator in a post-secondary environment is that the entity needs to balance urges of change and of facilitation. Overly enthusiastic urges to initiate change could lead to non-facilitative behavior and conversely, overly facilitative urges may lead to unproductive, and seemingly endless consultation. When a change facilitator operates in a sector that values autonomy and, in certain aspects of its operations, collegial governance, it is particularly important to balance these urges.

Respected People Who Value Collaboration and Outcomes. Having structures and processes in which to operationalize imperatives also requires people to bring the imperatives to life. In the case of Case A, the leadership that brought the consortium's imperatives to life also demonstrated a clear commitment to both collaborative processes and to achieving outcomes. This commitment was especially evident within the executive of the consortium and in the initial board members. The provincial level of respect for the individuals

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involved in governance and management fostered the trust necessary for others to risk collaborating in the new venture.

In conclusion, in this chapter it is shown that Case A consortium substantively manifested the elements of the three theoretical constructs through which it was analyzed. The elements are summarized into key factors associated with Case A' persistence and these key factors categorized into three broad categories.

Chapter V: CASE B AND C

This chapter is the second of three analytical chapters which describe and analyze cases. This chapter describes and analyses two cases, referred to in this document as Case B and Case C. Both of these consortia are dealt with in a single chapter because there was considerable common history between the two consortia. They existed in the same jurisdiction during roughly the same period of time and the two consortia eventually merged. Therefore, to reduce repetition of information related to both consortia they are described and analysed together in this chapter.

Following the pattern established in the previous chapter, this chapter contains five sections. In the first section of the chapter the consortia are generally described. In the following three sections the consortia are analysed using three different theoretical constructs to help answer the primary research question of what factors significantly contribute to persistence. The fifth and final section of the chapter summarizes the findings from the analysis and conclusions are suggested as to the factors significantly contributing to the persistence trajectories of Case B and C. Next is a general description of the consortia.

General Description of the Consortia

Case C was a partnership of five northern post-secondary institutions established in 1994 to bring greater diversity of post-secondary programming to remote communities. The consortium used a variety of distance education technologies to deliver programs to a network of over 80 support sites. The participating institutions pooled resources to share existing programs, build institutions' program development capacity, and offer face-to-face support to technologically, geographically and socially barriered adults².

Case B was an online distance education consortium established in 2002 by the provincial college sector presidents to provide improved access to post-secondary education and build institutional capacity. Goals were to be achieved by building institutions' program development capacity, creating a central online gateway and common delivery infrastructure to deliver courses, and promoting available offerings.

² Technological barriers included either access to technology or knowledge of its use. Geographic barriers were either the lack of local education or the ability to relocate. Social barriers included knowledge of post-secondary academic norms such as how to study, take an exam, etc. (B4, C2).

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Case C was established as a non-profit society in 1994. It was founded as a partnership between four colleges and a distance learning university, all located in the northern half of the province. The colleges had regional service mandates, while the university had a broader mandate and had an international profile within the distance education sector. The consortium was governed by a committee of directors comprised of presidents from each of the participating institutions and they met quarterly. While the five founding institutions remained constant, other institutions ventured into program deliver in the region for relatively brief periods and would join the consortium during these periods. During the periods when these institutions were members of the consortium their presidents also sat on the committee of directors. A variety of operational committees existed in respective service areas, such as library services, curriculum development, counselors and registrar's offices. The operational committees coordinated and implemented services and were comprised of representatives of each member institution. The operational committees met annually, and on an *ad hoc* basis as need arose. The consortium continued operations until 2010 when it merged with Case C.

Case B was also established as a non-profit society. It commenced operation in 2002 and had three layers of oversight and coordination. All three layers had representation from each participating institution: initially all of the 15 colleges in the province. It was governed by a board comprised of the presidents, with a five-member executive committee playing a more hands-on role than the

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full board. The board met three to four times per year, usually during regularly scheduled meetings of the presidents' group. The executive met monthly. A management committee comprised of senior academic officers, and later some student service, information management and business officers, coordinated implementation of the consortium services. An operations committee comprised of course/program developers, often from a centre for teaching and learning, advised the consortium on operations and functioned as ambassadors for the consortium back to the institutions. Both of the latter two committees met quarterly.

Case C was managed by an Executive Director (C-ED) who was accountable to the directors. Four individuals held the C-ED position for the period under study, 1994-2012. The first was recruited from outside the north and the subsequent three C-EDs were seconded from various member institutions. The C-ED, and a part-time administrative assistant, coordinated the partnership's services, which included facilitating program development, and delivering site services. Program development tasks included writing funding proposals, coordinating program development and facilitating professional development in the area of distance delivery course development, and fostering support services tailored to remote learners. Coordinating site services at the over 80 remote sites entailed functioning as an intermediary between local service providers, such as libraries or adult education councils, and the post-secondary institutions. Working with the local service provider the consortium would identify a facility for the

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remote site, install technological infrastructure to deliver courses, and train a local part-time staff person to support students. Typically, the remote sites could accommodate two to five students at a time. Working with the post-secondary institutions, Case C would facilitate administration such as registration and scheduling. Program development and services to students were provided by member institution staff as part of their normal duties.

Case B was also managed by an Executive Director (B-ED) who was accountable to the board. The same person held the B-ED position for the period under study, 2002-2012. The B-ED and four staff ran most operations but also made regular use of consultants and third party service providers to provide services. The consortium services were primarily in six areas: facilitating program development, infrastructure support, marketing, student service, coordinating professional development, and data collection. Program development entailed two service areas. First, coordinating an adjudicated fund distribution process in which targeted provincial program funds were awarded through a peer review process. Second, developing an extensive quality standards and review system for vetting online courses and programs prior to the offerings being eligible to appear in the Case B course catalogue. Infrastructure support entailed both service and policy support for institutions, including: a course catalogue, a registration gateway and developing policy templates for institutions in the areas of online course delivery and operational agreements between cooperating institutions. Marketing of the consortium included broad

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spectrum traditional media advertising such as transit, radio and television ads, as well as online advertising, and electronic brochures. Student service included toolkits for potential and current online students, 24/7 technical support, and an online tutoring service to assist students with writing assignments. Professional development for faculty and curriculum designers was offered through monthly community of practise webinars and semi-annual face-to-face events in tandem with operations committee meetings. The final service area, data collection, entailed gathering basic enrollment and completion data to help identify best practices in learning design, delivery and support.

Case C revenue came from a combination of membership fees and government grants. Revenues were generally in the \$500,000 per annum range with approximately half coming from membership fees and half from targeted government monies largely to support the remote sites. Additional provincial grant funding on a project basis supported new program development or research. Typically, at least one program development project was in development every year. In 2005 the government funding transitioned from year-to-year project funding to a standard line item in the provincial department's budget which did not have to be applied for annually. The major consortium expenses were maintaining the remote sites, professional development (largely travel costs), and administrative salaries. In 2007-08 over 4,000 courses were available to consortium students, however the actual enrollment in these courses via the consortium was less than 1,000 course registrations. While this low

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number of registrations appears to be inefficient, the registrations were actually add-on registrations to courses that were, for the most part, being run simultaneously in other modalities.

Case B resources also came from a combination of annual membership fees, service fees and government grants. Membership fees remained stable throughout its history, and included a \$20,000 joining fee and a \$10,000 annual maintenance fee. Membership fees were uniform regardless of institutional size or activity level. Service fees were collected on a per course registration basis. Government grants largely went to program development or specific project funding. Government grants over the course of the period under study averaged just under one million dollars per year and combined with other revenue sources the consortium's annual budget typically amounted to three million dollars per year. By 2012 Case B had over 20,000 course registrations in approximately 800 unique courses. Over half the registrations and courses were from four of the 15 institutions. The four highly active institutions were located in the two major urban centres and most of their students came from those same centres.

This general description provides an overview of the governance, management, services and resourcing of the two consortia, Case C and B. Elements of these descriptions are delved into in greater detail as the consortia are analyzed in the following sections using the three theoretical constructs, beginning with the Amey model.

Amey Model Analysis

In this chapter section the two consortia, Case C and Case B, are analyzed using the Amey model outlined in the previous chapter. To briefly refresh readers' memory of the model the graphical representation is repeated here before analyzing the two consortia using each of the model's elements.

Figure 1.1. Partnership Development Model.

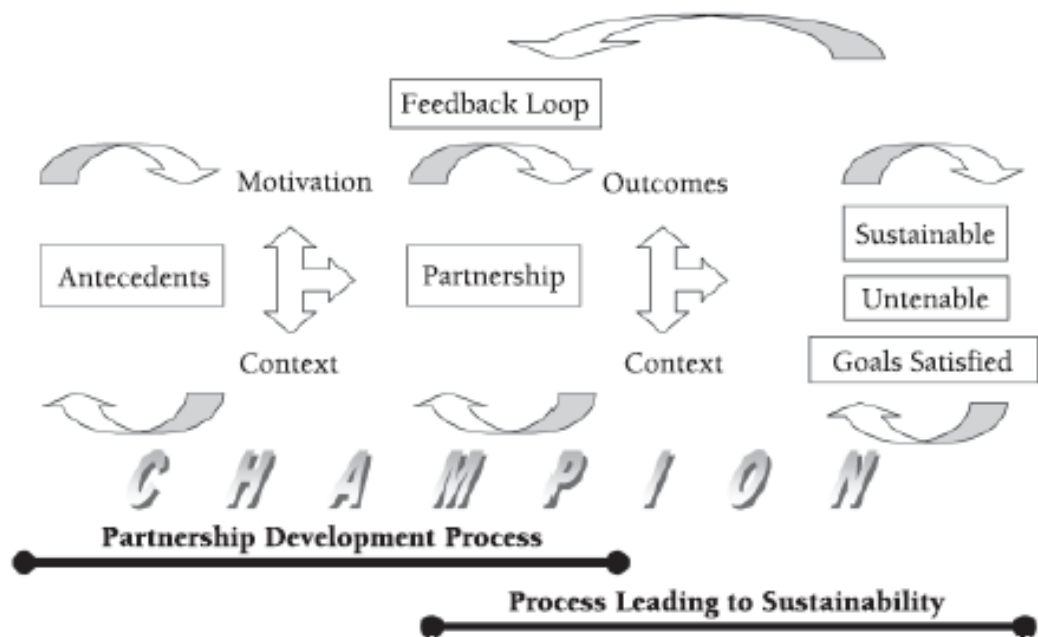


Figure 3 - Amey Model

Antecedent Conditions and Context – Case C. In this chapter two consortia from the same jurisdiction are analyzed. While the two consortia were

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founded eight years apart, they shared some conditions that incentivized their formation.

Prior to 1994 when Case C was formed the provincial ethos regarding post-secondary education was notably diverse, decentralized, innovative and affluent. The province had adopted a diverse range of institution types including vocational colleges (both public and private), technical institutes, community colleges, and universities. The numbers of the various types of institutions and organizations seem almost overwhelming for a province with a population of just over 2.5 million in 1991: over 30 publicly funded colleges, institutes and universities, as well as over 100 private colleges and nearly 100 community learning councils of one form or another. In addition to being diverse, the post-secondary institutions were both geographically and administratively decentralized. The system was administratively decentralized in terms of programming, but also it was also legislatively decentralized with the various sectors of post-secondary institutions, and in some cases individual institutions, falling under their own legislative act. The province had a history of innovation with many firsts in Canada, including the first open university, the first comprehensive credit transfer system, and first consolidation of pre-service teacher education into the universities. Finally, the system was quite affluent. In 1984 the province provided the highest per capita funding of post-secondary in Canada (P133).

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Based on the antecedent conditions there is little to suggest that inter-institutional collaboration would be incentivized. However, the provincial post-secondary landscape changed quickly in the context of the 1990's.

In the 1990's the provincial government underwent a major austerity program to eliminate the provincial debt while at the same time increasing post-secondary accountability measures and funnelling new program funding into narrowly targeted program areas. Post-secondary operating grants from the province were cut by 21% over three years from 1993 to 1996. Accountability measures were introduced that required post-secondaries to demonstrate efficiency (largely on cost per student basis) and a return on investment (largely through graduate employment rates). Additional funds were only available through targeted funding envelopes specific to high employment program areas such as business and computing science. These funds were allocated on a competitive basis, and often included criteria for collaboration between institutions (P134, P135)

As a result of the cuts in government funding, institutions became more dependent on tuition and auxiliary sources for finances. Provincial funding of post-secondary institutions decreased from 72.5% of net operating expenses in 1994 at the start of the cuts, to only 61.1% five years later (P134). The greater dependency on tuition and corporate sponsorship led to increased competition between institutions for students and sponsors, while at the same time government was insisting on inter-institutional collaboration in order to reduce

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redundancy in the system. “The dualism of neoliberal government policy that forces postsecondary institutions to compete in a market on the one hand and the legislation that limits what that market will be and calls for increased collaboration on the other is evident” (P135, p. 102).

Within the milieu of increased competitiveness and collaboration the small northern institutions felt a need to band together to achieve efficiency and to bring broader programming to their constituent regions.

postsecondary was thrust into an environment of, how shall I say it, it was seen as a competitive marketplace. The direction that I remember from the government was that we need to create our own markets and compete for our own footprint within the [provincial] postsecondary sector. And while that caused anxiety within the system, the [Case C] piece of it, the northern guys realized the value in a cooperative formula (C2)

The Case C cooperative formula included three elements: programs, technical expertise and localized support. Among the founding five institutions there was a cumulative diversity in programming. However, none of the colleges on their own could offer a comprehensive program array. Also, some of the institutions had begun to develop significant expertise in using educational technology that facilitated delivery at a distance. One college, for example, was a leader in the use of audiographics which allowed the integration of live audio with transmitted graphics. Finally, the smaller colleges had developed an extensive series of remote sites which provided vital local support to the students who were largely new to distance education and higher education. It was the remote site

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support that was enticing to the university and the larger colleges, which did not have a means to support students face-to-face in these remote communities.

So, the context at the formation of Case C was that government was making significant funding cuts to operational grants, while increasing accountability measures and offering targeting funding. To access the funding, and to make delivery of post-secondary programs to their sparsely populated constituent regions financially viable, the founding post-secondary institutions pooled their programs, technological expertise and remote sites to form Case C.

Antecedent Conditions and Context – Case B. The antecedent conditions prior to the formation of Case B are largely described in the previous sections. The post-secondary sector came through a period of 21% cuts in the 1993-96 period and government was increasingly activist in the administration of post-secondary education. In the late 1990's and early 2000's the province continued on the trajectory of increasing centralization with the announcement of a new approach to post-secondary education, anonymized here as Provincial Campus. Provincial Campus was announced in 2001 as a concept in which the post-secondary system functioned seamlessly for learners and the post-secondary institutions collaborated to facilitate an efficient and coordinated provincial system of higher education (P84). The goal of higher education was largely understood to be instrumental, with graduates having job skills for the booming provincial economy.

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In addition to the pressure to collaborate there was an emerging sense by some in the post-secondary sector that technology could be leveraged to garner revenue through distributed delivery of education online. Ontario was offering online education within the post-secondary sector through a consortium and was considered as a model for revenue generation to offset financial pressures (B2). Further, potential for online delivery within the province was supported through the laying of a province-wide high speed internet backbone, which began in 2001. As well, the potential for online education was strongly advocated by the president of one of the major institutions who had seen online education's potential realized in other jurisdictions.

Thus, the context at the formation of Case B was that government was overtly telling institutions to collaborate, there was a unique infrastructure built within the province, a profit motivation existed and was nurtured by government's market orientation, and an enthusiastic president was looking for opportunity to leverage technology for education. The context was ripe for a distance education collaboration.

Motivation – Case C. As discussed in the previous chapter, within the Amey model motivation is identified as both rationale and power; with rationale being inherent motivation and power being instrumental motivation. The rationale for institutions to form Case C lay in the pooling of programs, technological expertise and local support sites to deliver programs to what would otherwise be

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nonviable sites. The cost of delivery in the north to the “onesies and twosies is just too high” (C2) especially in the context of just having a 21% cut announced. The formation of the consortium allowed the post-secondary institutes to more efficiently fulfill their mandate. However, the consortium also held power motivation. It gave them a unified and stronger voice when advocating for their unique circumstance, which was servicing a population traditionally underrepresented in post-secondary participation, and in a high cost environment. So, both rationale and power motives were present in the formation of the consortium.

Motivation – Case B. Initially, the motivation to investigate a collaborative distance education entity was to capitalize on the perceived revenue potential. This was the era of the tech bubble in which putting .com behind a company name was assumed to ensure relevance and future profit. However, as the hard reality of the dot com bubble burst in late 1999 and early 2000’s the post-secondary institutions turned their attention to other potentials offered by online education. They struck on the idea that a consortium could address two of the other governmental priorities: increased inter-institutional collaboration, and improved student access. Positioning the consortium as a way to address access issues addressed a political issue of rural politicians lobbying to have campuses established in their constituencies.

as ministers come and go you get ministers who have a particular focus on an issue. And as I recall from the ministry at

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that time the focus was on getting institutions to work and play together... (and the) need to mitigate the concerns that would be brought forward from rural MLA's who would say, you know, I want a campus in my riding. (B1)

So, the driving motivation for the consortium shifted from a revenue motive to improved student access. This shift represented both a rationale and a power motivation. There was a genuine interest in offering education to a broader base of students; as well, it was a means to demonstrate to government that the institutions were indeed collaborating and addressing the government objective of improved access.

Champion – Case C. As noted in the previous chapter a champion, or champions, are needed to launch a consortium and these champions require the personal, cultural or social capital to successfully advocate for the endeavour. In the case of Case C, a respected president of one of the founding institutions had seen the potential for distance delivery manifested at his own institution. As well, he saw the potential for expanded programming through shared programs and leveraging the strength of the remote sites to support learners (B4). Largely through his influence he convinced the other presidents of the merits of a collaborative venture, both in terms of program delivery and in strengthening the northern colleges' position in negotiating with government.

[College X] were into regional delivery and technology based delivery ahead of everybody else in the province. So they were wanting to develop, he was wanting to develop a network, a technology-based network for delivering instruction to his 20 some communities, and also to share programs and resources in

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the north in the same spirit that you get in contemporary collaborations. And it was very much a recognition that the scale of operation in the northern colleges is a very small one, 1000 FLE, 1200 FLE, that sort of thing. Their costs are incredibly high. There are unique challenges because it is a northern, remote environment. Unique challenges with aboriginal populations. So by working together there could be some greater effectiveness in facing those challenges. (B4)

Champion – Case B. In the case of Case B, there was one clear champion reported by all interviewed research participants. However, this primary champion had a close group of secondary champions with whom she worked to influence the broader group of post-secondary executives and the government. The primary champion was an institutional president and had worked abroad in the area of educational technology. She saw the potential for utilizing emerging technologies in an educational setting before her peers. When the presidents were looking for a project through which they could demonstrate to government that they could indeed “work and play together” she pushed forward the proposal of a distance education consortium that could improve access. Support for the consortium was not universal among the presidents, so the champion had a meeting with a group of three other supportive presidents, created a list of which institutions were supportive and which were not. They then called the non-supportive presidents and exerted pressure to support the consortium, or risk being left out. They expended some of their social capital, of which they had plenty, to forge support. As one interviewee put it, they were “highly respected. You know there was trust there” (C2). In the end all colleges

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joined (B2). The founding champion and her inner circle of supportive presidents formed the initial executive committee, and over the years each of the early supporting presidents also had a turn at being president of the consortium board.

As the consortium launched there was a focus on getting the enthusiastic institutions up and running quickly as a proof of concept. Since the implementation of the courses required a great deal of coordination and support of operations internal to institutions, the consortium relied on institutions with a highly supportive vice-president academic, of which there were two. These two, also maintained the enthusiasm of the management committee.

The other champion to emerge over time was the executive director. While not initially a high profile individual, the executive director was mentored and profiled by the founding champion. She was brought to all the presidents' meetings to provide an update on the consortium, to meetings with senior government officials, and was the central liaison with the management and operations committees. As well, the executive director was very good at fostering collaboration: "she has an innate sense of what is a collaboration. I am sure she is widely read in the field of collaboration but even if she had read nothing about collaboration she would be doing a good job at it; it is just a fit with who she is as a person" (B4).

So, while there was a clear founding champion there was also a clearly identified, nurtured and leveraged circle of secondary champions. These

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secondary champions rose to greater prominence within the consortium over time as the primary champion looked ahead to her retirement; which occurred in 2010. The transition of the champion role also included the emergence of a respected executive director.

The second general stage in the Amey model is the Process Leading to Sustainability. Within this stage the authors identified three elements that influence sustainability: partnership framework, outcome achievement, and context changes. Each of these elements is examined, beginning with partnership framework.

Partnership Framework – Case C. As is described in the previous chapter, the Amey model suggests that design considerations for a partnership framework ought to include interdependency, joint ownership of decisions, and mutual benefit for stakeholders. Each of the two consortia are considered in the light of these three design considerations, beginning with Case C.

As noted above the main inherent benefits for member institutions of the Case C consortium lay in access to supported students in remote sites, developing distance education expertise and access to broader programming. The benefits gained by the respective institutions were complementary. The institutions with the support sites tended to also have expertise in how to develop and deliver distance education but had limited numbers of programs. Conversely, the institutions with broader programming wanted to extend their reach through

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distance education so the expertise and supported sites of the other institutions were advantageous. The university had distance education expertise and breadth of programming, but limited supports in the north for barriered students. Therefore, the complementary strengths brought into the consortium created an initial interdependence between the institutions in broadening the delivery of their core service, post-secondary studies to northern students.

As well, there was an interdependence between institutions in receiving the more instrumental benefits of the consortium. As noted above, a secondary motive for forming the consortium was to have a stronger, unified voice representing the northern institutions to government, as well as demonstrating accord with the emerging governmental priorities of collaboration and access. In the mid 1990's milieu of governmental austerity, a collaborative venture was the only means of securing additional governmental funds. The institutions were thus interdependent in terms of the more instrumental political and economic realities of the day, as well as the inherent benefits of improving delivery of their core service.

Within Case C there was also clear joint ownership of decision making between member institutions. Presidents met monthly in the early years to work out both governance and operational issues. The small size of the institutions meant the presidents were involved in the operational details such as which

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programs to offer, and for which potential programs to request development monies. Agreement was virtually always by consensus (C2).

While the consortium had an initial interdependency and joint decision making, it is not as clear that it provided mutual benefit to all stakeholders. For example, the institutions that tended to provide the programs did not gain access to large numbers of students. The main benefit they received was in building capacity for distance delivery and in the optics of serving their constituent regions. The “onesies and twosies” did not sufficiently boost enrollment to be of great benefit. As well, it is not clear that there was a great benefit to government. There was a political benefit in being able to claim greater access for northerners, but it was at a high financial cost (B4). Perhaps the stakeholders receiving the greatest benefit were students who did not have to leave their communities to receive supported post-secondary studies.

In summary, the partnership framework did create interdependency, joint ownership of decision making and provided mutual benefit to stakeholders; however there was discrepancy in the level and uniformity of these elements.

Partnership Framework – Case B. Interdependence, joint decision making, and mutual benefit were also evident in Case B. How those were manifested in Case B was, in significant ways, similar to how they were manifested in Case C’s partnership framework. Both consortia were created to broaden program accessibility, demonstrate collaboration and build institutional

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capacity for developing and delivering distance education. However, there were also important differences. The first difference was in how the interdependency was structured. In the Case C model, institutions pooled resources with some bringing a network of established support sites and technical expertise while others brought a broader array of programs. Conversely, in the Case B model, the consortium itself often provided the resources to achieve the intended goals, such as improving access through centralized marketing of online courses, a centralized delivery capacity, building capacity through developing quality standards and professional development, and offering centralized student support. In the Case B model the consortium infrastructure took on a greater role, which may have reduced institution-to-institution interdependency and instead created institution-to-consortium interdependency. In this sense, the consortium may be viewed as a service provider rather than a partnership hub. This may explain why institutions don't put their full slate of online courses in the Case B course catalogue. Indeed, at least one major institution with an established inventory of online courses felt it did not need the marketing or central gateway services of the consortium so never mounted more than 10% of its courses on the consortium course catalogue. By 2012, only 40% of online courses offered by member institutions province wide were mounted on the Case B course catalogue (P13). Typically, the rationale for not mounting courses with the consortium was that institutions could save the consortium transaction fee. This fee could amount to 10% of tuition. Again, this may indicate a lack of inherent

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interdependence between institutions. Since most institutions did not mount all their courses with Case B this meant they also had to maintain their own systems for online course promotion, registration and delivery. In essence, they maintained dual online education administrative systems. Dual systems made the switching cost of dropping Case B not only very low, but actually attractive if there would be no loss of student enrollment. This lack of switching cost significantly reduced the interdependence between member institutions and with the consortium.

The exception to the minimal interdependence in Case B was in the case of students in need of support, especially those in remote northern communities. In these situations, the larger, urban institutions with the program breadth needed an *in situ* partner institution to provide library service, counselling, exam invigilation, etc. However, the *in situ* institutions were reluctant to take on these high cost students without compensation. As a result, Lead-Partner relationships were developed with a split of both the revenue and the enrollment credit, the latter being an important accountability measure for government reporting, particularly for the high cost, low enrollment northern institutions. But for the most part, the high support students were not the main Case B market, with less than 10% of students seeking a local support institution (P13). Rather, most students were from urban areas, and indeed about half were from the same urban area as the institution they attended. The students choose online education, not because of being geographically barriered, but because of time, domestic or employment

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obligation barriers (P13). So without a strong institutional interdependence, the consortium may have been perceived as more of a service provider rather than a communal project between institutions.

Case B, as noted above, provided not just inherent benefit of broadening access to post-secondary study and building capacity, it also had instrumental benefit of demonstrating to government that institutions were collaborating. As one research participant put it, “at the outset you know the ministry thought it [Case B] was a good thing and being good do-bees if the ministry wants us to do this, and if we’re going to ever get any more money from the ministry, we better be seen as participating” (B1). So, the main value for some member institutions may not have been inherent benefit, but rather instrumental. In that sense, the institutions were interdependent in that they had to do something together and Case B was a relatively low cost, low risk endeavour in which they did not have to give up much in the way of autonomy while still appearing to collaborate.

In terms of joint decision making, the consortium had full representation of all institutions at all three levels of administration: board, management committee, and operations committee. As one research participant described it, “There was *über* oversight” (B2). For the most part, decisions were consent decisions, although decisions could be made by majority vote.

Finally, the question of whether the Case B partnership framework provided mutual benefit to stakeholders is again similar to Case C. Clearly,

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students benefited and enrollment increased by 10 to 20% every year. However, enrollment was still relatively low, with one president commenting in 2012 that even after more than 10 years in existence total enrollment in Case B courses would be a “rounding error” in his institution’s enrollment count (B2). In contrast, at some institutions the Case B enrollment in their courses was up to 5% of total enrollment at the institution, constituting much more than a rounding error (P13, P110). These institutions tended to be the rural colleges that would not have had the province-wide exposure to potential students without Case B. Therefore, for some institutions that chose to list courses with the consortium there was a benefit in improving access. As well, institutions all improved in their technical expertise and capacity through participating in the consortium. Finally, government had a benefit in being able to point to a collaborative project which improved access for students (B4).

In summary, again similar to Case C, the Case B partnership framework did create some interdependency, joint ownership of decision making and provided mutual benefit to stakeholders; however there was discrepancy in the level and uniformity of these elements.

Outcomes and Feedback – Case C. The next aspect of the second general stage in the Amey model to be outlined is the role of outcomes and feedback leading to decisions whether to continue or dissolve consortium operations based on whether benefits were outweighing costs. In the case of

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Case C, the key benefits were access to supported students, distance education expertise and broader programming. The costs were the administrative costs, remote sites costs and program development.

Amey, *et al* (2007) asserts that feedback must be made to relevant stakeholders and framed according to the priorities of those stakeholders. While there were three main benefits sought from the Case C consortium, it was apparent that both the board and government were primarily interested in enrollment numbers. In early years enrollment reporting was deemed satisfactory; however, toward the later years a

substantive problem with [Case C] was its inability to provide the most basic accountability information. Simple things like how many students from institution X took courses in a year... Very very basic things. And the thing that drove me crazy about that was that at one time [Case C] was able to provide that information. (B4)

In addition to not providing information stakeholders wanted, the consortium was providing information some stakeholders did not particularly want. In the final years of Case C's operation it began two substantive (i.e., greater than \$150,000) research projects related to distance education. While the results of the research were widely reported it was not the information stakeholders wanted. "We ended up doing research where we were supposed to be providing service" (C2). The research projects would be helpful to the university in fulfilling its research mandate; however, this was not a priority for the contemporary college presidents.

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So, lack of feedback which addressed the priorities of the stakeholders was probably a contributing factor to the outcome decision that was eventually made in 2010 to merge the Case C consortium with Case B.

Outcomes and Feedback – Case B. As noted above, the benefits sought from Case B were increased student access, capacity building, and, more instrumentally, to demonstrate inter-institutional collaboration. For the most part, Case B feedback to stakeholders was framed to address these priorities. A review of the annual reports of both the consortium and the provincial department shows a marked similarity in language. It was clear the consortium mimicked governmental terms and aligned its reporting accordingly. Indeed, one of the strengths noted by most of the interviewed research participants regarding the consortium was the quality of the reporting. The use of reporting was a conscious strategy to ensure buy in from stakeholders. Early champions of the consortium ensured...

consistency of the messaging, consistency of the relationship with government no matter what, and you change ministers all the time, consistency of meeting with them, letting them know what is going on and the benefits... being on the (presidents' meetings') agenda and making sure that the reports are there, you have your budget reports letting them know how you spent the money that they are investing... and then making sure that, showing the results. How many students. Get the consistency of the testimonials, get it in print, get a report and annual report for government, an annual report for the (presidents). Hard to dismiss you when you start seeing the numbers add up. (B3)

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In addition to reporting good stewardship of monies and returning results in terms of enrollment, the consortium also attempted to satisfy the instrumental benefits of demonstrating collaboration. All publications included all member institutions' logos to demonstrate the collaborative nature of the consortium.

However, there were also shortcomings in the feedback provided by Case B. One aspect of feedback that was intended to spur greater member participation was an annual report that included the number of courses and enrollments by institution. Those institutions with no, or very few, courses and enrollments "were shamed into belonging" (B3). Unfortunately, government also took note of the lack of involvement and it led to a questioning of the efficacy of Case B as a system-wide tool for building collaboration and access (B4).

A second shortcoming was in demonstrating value to the key decision makers among the stakeholders. "we have always struggled, we are struggling to this day, about nailing the value proposition" (B2). As was noted earlier, for some of the rural colleges the value proposition lay in exposure to a broader pool of potential students. However, for larger institutions that had an existing significant public profile there was mixed participation and the larger institutions that did participate often did so because "we also felt that we are fairly big player around the colleges and technical institutes and we felt that it was kind of our duty to participate" (B1). So, some key institutions participated in the consortium out of duty, rather than a particular value proposition, and without a strong value

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proposition it was difficult to demonstrate value in the reporting provided to stakeholders.

One final area that may have been a shortcoming was in providing feedback related to capacity building. Initially, very few institutions were offering significant online education, so “it was a huge learning curve” (B1). While the capacity building activities were especially important in the early years of the consortium, it was difficult to demonstrate the relative value of Case B services such as quality control mechanisms and professional development workshops, in a jurisdiction which assessed value on quantitatively measurable outcomes. As a result, these services may have been undervalued, especially by the presidents’ group which did not work at the operational level most affected by these services.

So, the feedback provided by Case B to stakeholders was generally considered relevant and of good quality, but there was some concern regarding how to demonstrate value, or in terms of the Amey model, a net benefit.

Context – Case C and B:. In this section the external context of both consortia is described and how each of the consortia adjusted to contextual changes is examined. Both consortia are discussed because the context in which they operated was shared.

As was noted in earlier sections of this chapter, at the time of Case C’s founding in the mid-1990’s the province was in the midst of an aggressive

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austerity program and was increasing accountability measures, centralizing new program development decisions through targeted funding, and requiring inter-institutional collaboration while encouraging competition for increasingly important tuition and donor revenue. By the late 1990's the austerity program, together with unexpectedly high resource royalty revenues, led to a balanced provincial budget with surplus to pay down government debt. In its 1997 business plan the province asserted "We achieved what we set out to do: building a better (province) by balancing the budget, setting clear priorities and sticking to them, and changing the way government does business" (P109). Part of changing how the government did business was to reduce the degree to which government was a service provider, and instead took on a policy role. For example, four vocational schools which had been directly operated by government were transitioned into autonomous, board-governed post-secondary institutions.

As the austerity measures were relaxed, the province began to re-invest in higher education but still wanted to see a coordinated system of higher education rather than siloed institutions. In 2002 the government issued a vision statement for a concept called, in this document, Provincial Campus. In the vision statement three goals were articulated: a cohesive, collaborative system providing seamless learner transitions, skills based learning, and flexible access to learning (P34). The stated goals were not translated into specific structures or programs; rather, the players in the higher education system were provided the goals and asked to respond.

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The general goals articulated in the 2002 Provincial Campus vision document remained as the priorities for government for several years and began to take more concrete form with the passing of legislation that introduced a governance framework with six sectors identified and mandates established for each institution (P111). As well, a quality council was introduced to oversee new program approval with a view to ensuring quality. At the same time, government was becoming increasingly uneasy about entities that did not fit well into the ministry's governance framework and yet received government monies (B4). Indeed, the provincial auditor questioned the appropriateness of funding entities such as Case C and B, which were created by post-secondary institutions because, while the post-secondary institutions were directly accountable to government, the entities were not. This accountability issue was probably of particular concern to a government that had identified increased accountability as part of the new way government does business.

The final major junction in the 1994-2012 period was another significant financial cutback in 2011. After several years of steady 6% annual increases in post-secondary grants the government, under financial pressure itself, issued a 7% cut to post-secondary institutions' operating grants. At a meeting of post-secondary presidents in 2012 a government official told the presidents that the cut was essentially because the cabinet did not see the institutions operating as a system and the cut was meant as a "tug on the reins" to get the institutions to work together (B2).

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To summarize, the governmental emphasis and environmental trends throughout the period under study were consistent: governmental emphasis on increased student access, system collaboration, and accountability.

In response to these milestone events Case C and B responded somewhat differently. As was noted earlier, Case C did not provide substantive or relevant accountability reports. Also, as noted earlier, it began to expand its activities from collaboratively enhancing access for students and began to dabble in research projects. Meanwhile, Case B remained relatively focused on enhancing collaboration, providing access and providing reasonable accountability reports. So, with the growing frustration regarding Case C reporting and research, and with the rising enrollment and expanding services of Case B the presidents began to question the need for two consortia. As well, with the advent of a provincial network of high speed internet bringing broadband internet to over 400 communities, students increasingly did not need the hub and spoke technology of Case C, i.e., an instructor broadcasting to a constellation of remote support sites. Instead, a many-to-many configuration could be used, not just in the north but across the province, with instructors located anywhere broadcasting to anywhere. So, while Case B struggled to a degree to demonstrate value, it was more suited to the changing political and technical environment than its northern colleague, Case C.

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As was noted in the previous chapter, within the Amey model the two main determinants of a continuation decision was the adaptation to changing environmental context, and the feedback assuring stakeholders that desired outcomes are being achieved. In the case of Case C, there was not a change with the political and technical context and indeed it seemed to “swim against the current” of the province’s demand for greater accountability. As well, institutions involved in both consortia increasingly saw the two consortia doing similar work. So, to function more like a system, the boards of the two consortia agreed to merge the two entities. This had the advantage of Case C sharing its expertise in community support for students, and sharing its budget, with Case B. In return, Case B brought its more evolved program offerings, quality standards and asynchronous student support to Case C. These “win-win” reasons for the merger were what was publicly announced as the rationale for the merger. The merger was made official in 2010 when it was announced by the respective board chairs that Case C would be merged into Case B.

Huxham Model Analysis

Similar to the previous chapter, the Huxham model is used in an analysis of Case C and B. The thematic model is represented here to again remind readers of its structure.

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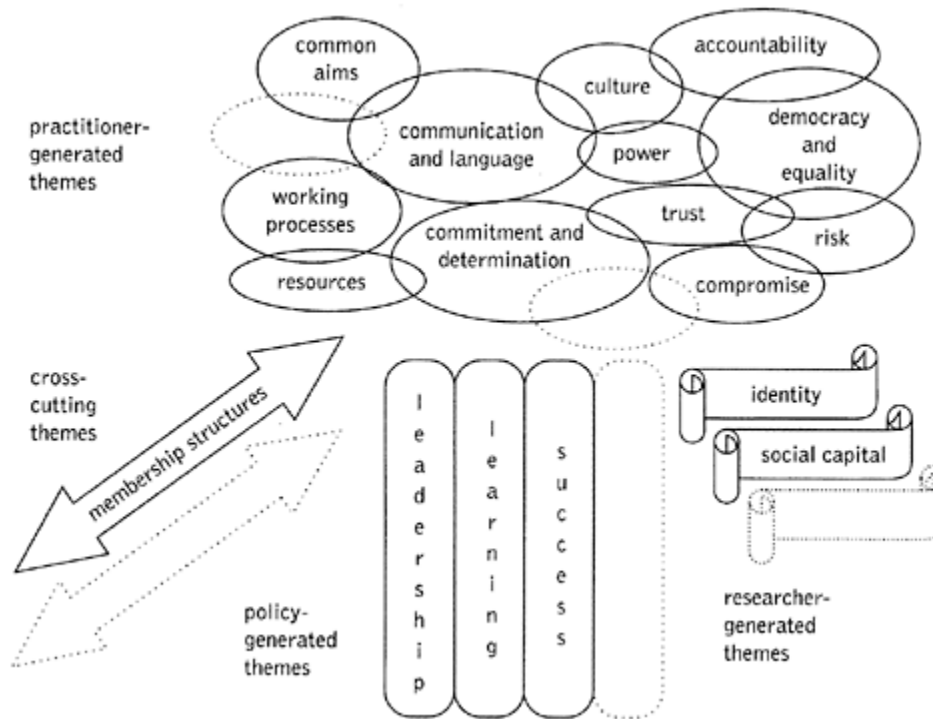


Figure 4 - Huxham Model

The themes considered include consortium aims and purposes, trust, structures, power and leadership. The themes are considered with a view to identifying factors contributing to collaborative advantage and avoiding collaborative inertia.

Compatible Aims and Purposes – Case C. Huxham and Vangen (2005) identified three levels of aims in a consortium (individual, member organization and consortium), as well as varying degrees of genuineness and explicitness. These aspects of aims and purposes and the tension of managing the entanglement of aims are first discussed in relation to Case C.

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As identified in an early section, Case C's core aims were to broaden programming, access students at remote support sites, build distance education capacity, and more instrumentally, satisfy government calls for system collaboration, and to have a united northern voice in advocating to government. At a member institution level the aims varied, with some seeking to build capacity in distance education and to gain access to supported students and other institutions seeking to broaden program options for students. These aims differed, but were compatible. However, as time passed and distance education capacity became increasingly uniform among the institutions there was less incentive for the institutions that had been seeking capacity building to remain in the consortium. As well, the numbers of students needing site support decreased, which reduced the need for the site expense in order to gain the enrollment numbers (C2). Meanwhile, with the advent of Case B and distance education being viewed as a provincial need, not just a northern need, the advocacy role of Case C was less compelling in presenting northern issues as unique. The above aims were compatible but over time decreased in relevance.

While the consortium's core aims were mutually compatible to the member organizations there was one aim which was unique to only one of the member organizations. As was noted above the consortium was comprised of five core organizations, with others joining at various points. All of the member organizations were colleges except for one university. The university shared the educational aims of the colleges, but in addition had a research mandate which it

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applied in the context of Case C in the later years of the consortium. At the same time there was a transition of leadership happening at the colleges with the new presidents; some of whom did not see research as part of Case C's mandate and felt that expending consortium energies in this area was a sign the consortium had "lost its way" (C2). This research aim emphasized by the one member institution seems to have been incompatible with the other members' aims.

In the Huxham model the above mentioned three core aims would be considered explicit aims. In addition, the consortium held at least one assumed aim: efficiency. By bringing programs to students through a collaboration the institutions could more efficiently leverage their respective strengths. The government also supported this aim of efficiency and it was an assumed aim in the government's call to have the post-secondary institutions act more like a system (P100). Case C initially satisfied the various stakeholders' assumed aim of efficiency. However, with the advent and growth of Case B, the government aim of efficiency at a provincial level was not compatible with having just a regional consortium like Case C. It was also not efficient to have two post-secondary distance education consortia within the same province, especially when all but one of the Case C members were also members of Case B. Having two consortia would have been efficient if they had distinct purposes; however, "it was always a bit unclear about the difference between the services of [Case C] and [Case B]" (C1). The nuanced differences between the Case C hub and spoke structure and the support it offered at the remote sites, and the Case B

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many-to-many structure wasn't well understood "from an office tower in [provincial capital]" (B4). So, the assumed aim of efficiency was not compatible with some of the regional aims of the member organizations and stakeholders.

In summary, while there were explicit and assumed aims, this researcher did not find evidence of hidden aims which could sabotage the consortium. However, it seems that the compatible aims just became less relevant and the importance of the assumed aim of efficiency overshadowed the diminished need for supported access, capacity building, and regional collaboration and advocacy.

Compatible Aims and Purposes – Case B. Similar to Case C the aims of Case B were to provide access, build capacity, and to demonstrate collaboration. These aims were compatible, however, Case B was plagued with the issue of non-participation of some institutions which were consortium members in name only. It would seem these institutions' genuineness regarding the consortium aims was questionable, so these aims may well have been only pseudo aims in the case of those institutions.

As well, there may have been a lingering hidden aim of seeing distance education as a cash cow, which had been an early motivation for institutions in the pre-startup phase of the consortium formation. While the primary espoused aim for the consortium was to improve access, some tensions arose when actual program development began. The initial plan had been for unduplicated programming in order to more efficiently expend costly online education

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development dollars, i.e., only one institution would develop and deliver a program in a given discipline. However, as the more lucrative programs began to be allocated for development those institutions not receiving these allocations objected because they anticipated future inequity in tuition revenue. The issue became sufficiently controversial that in 2005 the non-duplication principle was abandoned and a “programming diversity” principle adopted, i.e., it was deemed in students’ interests to be able to choose from a variety of similar programs, each with its own distinctive features (B2). So, while the espoused aim of collaborating to provide student access seemed mutually compatible between member institutions, it was “collaboration, as long as it doesn’t pinch” (B4).

The Huxham model also notes there are sometime process aims as well as outcome aims, i.e., how the outcomes are to be achieved. In the case of Case B several process aims were evident including: not having government as a consortium member, full sector membership, and avoiding an appearance of being a centralizing entity. Not having government as a consortium member was important for the colleges since it created the appearance of a voluntary collaboration rather than a government directed entity. While this structure fit well with the new “way government does business” (P109), i.e., being a policy-setter not a service-provider, it also created a transactional relationship between the consortium and government, rather than a partnership. As one research participant phrased it, there were “many a fight - going into government over and over again” (B3). Indeed, Case B had to sell the value of the consortium on an

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annual basis and in 2011, when post-secondary budgets were cut 7% the Case B's allocation from government was cut 70% (B2). In general, the process aim of being independent of government created a tenuous incongruity with being dependent upon inconsistent government funding.

As well, the process aim of having all institutions from the college sector as consortium members was important to achieve the aim of presenting to government an example of sector collaboration and system thinking. However, it also meant there were significant uninterested or dissenting voices perpetually at the board table. This was evident in the number of times the board has voted on dissolving the consortium. Between 2007 and 2012 there were four instances of a motion being brought to the floor for a vote on whether to dissolve the consortium (B2). Ultimately, the board voted for continuation each time, but the regularity of the question being raised would in all likelihood not encourage greater commitment, investment or participation from marginal member institutions, or the government.

Finally, a process aim of not appearing to be a centralizing entity was important to overcome concerns regarding institutional autonomy. At one point presidents contended that the quality standards developed by Case B were violating the intellectual freedom of their faculty and the consortium was "telling us how to teach" (B2). So, to overcome some member institutions' suspicion of the consortium it ensured full representation at board, management committee

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and operational committee. Again, this meant organizational energy was expended addressing uninterested or dissenting voices rather than constructively forging new initiatives.

In summary, while the process aims were intentional there were perhaps unintended consequences that weakened Case B.

Membership Structures – Case C. The tensions described in the Huxham model in relation to membership structures are associated with the ambiguity and complexity of member organizations' status. Ambiguity can exist in status, commitment and member representativeness. Case C's membership structure was relatively simple. There were only five member institutions and all participated relatively equally in board and operational matters. However, over time ambiguity and commitment began to emerge. Four of the five presidents, and later all five, were on the board of both Case C and Case B. As well, toward the latter years of Case C, none of the original founding presidents remained. So, ambiguity emerged among the newer presidents as to why both consortia existed. As well, there began to emerge ambiguity as to where services should be provided since institutions belonged to both consortia. "Programming was becoming a smaller piece of [Case C] as [Case B] enlarged their program and course menu" (C1) and with programs potentially being developed under different umbrellas the Case C board members had divided loyalties between the two consortia. So, while initially membership structure was not ambiguous or

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complex, a creeping ambiguity emerged between the two consortia and newer presidents were perhaps less appreciative of the nuanced differences between the two consortia.

Membership Structures – Case B. On the surface, Case B's membership structure was similar to Case C's and relatively unambiguous and simple. All colleges belonged to the consortium with presidents sitting on the board, senior academic officers on the management committee and program development coordinators on the operational committee. However, there was obvious ambiguity in commitment. Board meetings were held during meetings when the college presidents were meeting for other matters. As a result, there was good attendance but not because there was deliberate commitment to attend. As well, there was considerable turnover in presidents and each had to be oriented to the Case B commitment made by their predecessor. "Every new president would phone me and say, 'What the hell is this stuff? You know I see it as a line item in our budget'" (B3). Over the ten-year period being studied in this research project, only two presidents of the original 15 remained on the board. So, maintaining commitment levels was always a challenge for the consortium. The membership complexity was also greater than Case C. As one research participant pointed out "[Case B] is a much more complex model because there are more players, it is technology centric, which is very specific, and the variety of players at the table... I mean the complexity is huge compared to [Case C]"

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(C2). The most complicating factor was the mix of “players at the table,” with small rural colleges and large urban colleges holding differing priorities such as investment of funds into capacity building and program development versus increased marketing.

Managing the tensions of why members are at the table was also somewhat complex. Presidents were asked to leave their institutional hat at the door and focus on representing a system-wide perspective to increase access through online education. However, presidents “are all a bunch of type A's and when you get the presidents together elbows can be high” (C2), making it difficult to shift gears from representing their institutional interests to the interests of the system as a whole. So, managing the tensions of ambiguous commitment and complex representation was a challenge for Case B at the governance level.

However, there was less ambiguity at the operational level. Individuals at the operational level did not have the same responsibility to compete for scarce resources as the presidents. Instead, there was a more direct focus on the student benefit and on learning this new modality of education. In the early years, many at the operational level were on a steep learning curve together and the mutual support and cooperation was needed,

it was huge learning for [college], but at the same time it was a great opportunity. And so what we saw was the opportunity for students, the opportunity to expand our horizons around our program offerings... it was more about how can we become a community college that reaches out beyond its borders

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sort of thing. Without spending a lot of money. I think one of the anomalies we discovered is that, if you want to properly develop and support distance learners it is actually not that inexpensive, it is actually quite costly because the curriculum development and having faculty understand the underpinnings of what a curriculum should look like, that you simply can't take your course outline and create a bunch of power points on it and it becomes an online course. (B1)

So, while at the governance level the tensions of ambiguity and complex representation were a challenge, at the operational level there was greater clarity and unanimity.

Trust – Case C. In the Huxham model trust between consortium partners is identified as necessary to achieve collaborative advantage. Readers will recall the tension in this theme is seen in partners exhibiting opportunistic behaviour which is typically mitigated by working with familiar, or reputable partners, and with use of contracts. In the case of Case C, the founding presidents were quite familiar with each other, having worked together for years prior to Case C as well as staying on for many years. However, personnel changed which resulted in changes to the commitment to Case C.

There were a group of presidents that were with those colleges... for quite a long period of time and as long as they were still there they kept their fingers in [Case C]. There was a core group who had established the partnership and stayed for many years. As retirements came and, you know, new presidents came along the amount of time and interest they put into [Case C] diminished. (C1)

With the decreased interest in the consortium the potential for inequitable contribution or benefit could have increased. However, that did not seem to

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develop, “there was mutual trust and respect around the table” (C2) even in the latter years of the consortium. So, distrust did not seem a factor in the eventual decision to merge Case C into Case B; indeed, the mutual trust of the presidents may have contributed to that decision. At one point when the governance group was discussing future action “we looked at each other and said this is not why we’re here, why are we doing this” (C2) and quickly consensus grew that it was time to fold the consortium into Case B.

Trust – Case B. Conversely, trust was an issue through much of Case B’s history. At the outset, institutions didn’t trust the quality of other institutions’ online programs and would not accept those courses and programs for transfer credit. In response, Case B developed extensive quality standards and a robust review process. Courses had to meet these standards before they would be mounted on the consortium course catalog. As well, institutions did not trust there would be reciprocal benefit in serving other institutions’ student needs, so the Lead-Partner formula for tuition and FLE splitting was developed. Finally, institutions did not trust that there would be equitable revenue generated if some institutions had monopolies on particular programs, so the non-duplication principle was dropped (B2, B4). While these potential sore points were addressed, the challenge of non-participating institutions still getting to claim membership and hence the appearance of collaborating seemed to some members to be opportunistic, and was never resolved.

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While the consortium grappled with trust issues at the governance level, again, this issue was far less pronounced at the more operational levels, i.e., the management committee and the operations committee, where there did seem to be significant trust.

the provosts at the time all got along. They worked incredibly well together. They were friends. I mean I was out socially with some of them and clearly they were friends. But, they were leaders in their institutions plus they had an understanding of the whole province's environment. And they worked well together, so they not only participated in this enterprise but they had a number of issues that they were used to working through. (B1)

So, the glue that seemed to create trust within the consortium was largely the mutual respect and trust of the more operational participants, who perhaps were not the "Type A personalities who got their elbows high" (C2).

Another source of trust was the consortium staff, eventually. While there was initially distrust at the board level, there grew to be trust of the consortium staff as the presidents came to accept that the staff were not empire building or threatening institutional autonomy (B3).

So there were many trust issues needing to be resolved throughout Case B' history, especially at the governance level but less so at the operational level. While most trust issues were resolved, the issue of member organization non-participation lingered.

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Power – Case C. Readers will recall that within the Huxham model power is categorized into: power used for self gain (over), power used for mutual gain (to), or power used for others (for). The tension to be managed was the urge to use power for self gain rather than for mutual gain, or for those the consortium serves. In the case of Case C, it seemed that there was little in the way of power struggle. Indeed, all research participants cited a united focus on helping barriered students in remote communities as the real strength of the consortium. In fact, most of the work done by the consortium was by college personnel who did the consortium related work above and beyond their jobs at their home colleges. “the northern colleges put tremendous amounts of manpower hours into [Case C] ... it was just an opportunity to serve the communities of the north” (C1). So, it seems that managing the tension of using power for self gain versus for mutual gain or for those the consortium serves was not a tension that needed to be managed.

Power – Case B. In the case of Case B, power struggles were a part of the consortium’s history, including its genesis. As was noted earlier, the consortium was brought into being by a core group of presidents exerting pressure on the rest of the group to join the consortium. This power was exerted for mutual benefit and for altruistic benefit. It was of mutual benefit to build capacity for online program development and delivery, and to increase enrollment. It was of altruistic benefit to provide access for barriered students.

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However, the *de facto* non-participation of some member organizations noted earlier may, effectively, have been a passive form of power for self gain. Rather than put courses into the Case B catalog, and pay the Case B transaction fee when students registered, the non-participative member organizations kept the revenue. Other organizations argued that students were being disadvantaged by not all courses being available through a single portal. This may have been true of general courses: however, some of the online courses which the non-participating institutions withheld were actually very specialized courses for specific industries. Students would be aware of the courses through their workplace so access was not hampered. Further, not having to recoup the Case B transaction fee through higher tuition may have actually made the courses more accessible. So, while there were clearly power struggles the level of altruism in these struggles remains in question.

Other power struggles were discussed previously, including: non-duplication of courses, Lead-Partner revenue and enrollment agreements, and votes to dissolve Case B. All of these issues entailed member organizations seeking to avoid being disadvantaged if not seeking self gain. Managing all of these issues reflects the Huxham model tension of managing self gain versus mutual or altruistic gain. Perhaps the main conclusion is that power struggle was a constant issue to be managed throughout the consortium's history.

Leadership – Case C. Following the pattern of the previous chapter, this section focuses on the leadership of the consortia management. The tension to be managed in the Huxham model is, on the one hand managing in a collaborative fashion, engaging in collaborative thuggery when needed, and avoiding, on the other hand, falling into self-serving manipulation. In the case of Case C there was no evidence of consortium management engaging in self-serving manipulation. Leadership was collaborative and engaged the site level partners that were hosting the remote sites (C1, B2). However, while managing in a collaborative fashion wasn't an issue, leadership may have been an issue. Several of the research participants indicated that the consortium lacked dynamism. Instead, the consortium "was very much in a steady state mode" (B4) with the director largely coordinating operational administration (C2) rather than setting and driving an organizational vision. In the Huxham model leadership needs to balance the slow process of managing collaboration with the need to "just get on with it." In the case of Case C the leadership may have erred on the side of being collaborative.

Leadership – Case B. Unlike Case C, the Case B Executive Director was consistently referred to in terms of "a natural collaborator" (B4), "a really good leader... who understood, truly, truly understood the needs of online education" (B1), "trusted" (B3). So, leadership was trusted and competent, and managed in a collaborative fashion. The leadership was also able to engage in a certain

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degree of collaborative thuggery through the recruitment of activity champions and strong relational networks. However, despite the Executive Director's vision for online education within the province and wide respect, the consortium still faced repeated dissolution votes. In this case the issue may have been more structural than a leadership issue. One approach to collaborative thuggery which Huxham notes is to find ways to exclude unsupportive consortium members. However, with Case B's structure it was virtually impossible to exclude the unsupportive due to the "all or none" approach the founders took to consortium membership, i.e., all sector institutions were pressured to join the consortium in order to present a unified, collaborative "system" of colleges. As a result, the Executive Director always had unsupportive members at the table. Those unsupportive members acted somewhat opportunistically by appearing as a member of a collaborative venture yet were not genuinely committed to the effort. As a result, other institutions which were supportive may have not fully participated simply out of defense, i.e., mount courses on the Case B calendar opportunistically where they could gain enrollment and withhold courses in which they could gain enrollment independently. So, despite strong leadership the consortium Executive Director was somewhat hampered in their ability to engage in substantive collaborative thuggery.

This concludes the analysis of Case C and Case B using the Huxham model. Within this section it was shown how the consortia effectively, or less

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effectively, addressed the tensions between what contributes to collaborative advantage and what leads to collaborative inertia.

Open Systems Theory

The final section of this chapter follows the pattern of the previous chapter and analyzes Case C and Case B through the lens of open systems theory. Readers will recall the analysis examines the alignment of the internal and external cultural logics, and the significance that alignment plays in persistence.

Open Systems – Case C. Following the methodology of the previous chapter the coding of the internal and external source documents was examined to ascertain alignment. In the case of Case C, because the consortium had effectively been shut down at the time this research was conducted there were fewer documents available for analysis than in the cases of consortia which were still operational. Only eight documents related to the internal environment were analyzed; however the documents were substantive and analysis resulted in over 150 coded quotes related to internal cultural logics. There were 26 documents related to the external environment, and these were also analyzed. Both the internally and externally related documents contained rich descriptions of the environments and included: interviews, consortium descriptions, provincial business plans and some prior scholarly research documents. The diversity and richness of the coded documents garnered a reliable reflection of the cultural logics.

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Comparison of the coding reveals a strong alignment between the internal and external cultural logics, with the top three codes being the same in both internal and external documents. In all documents the most frequent code related to providing access. The emphasis on access was consistent throughout the period under study. As well as access, in the early years the government of the day emphasized the need for “fiscal responsibility and accountability” (P109), which was coded as efficiency and accountability. Internally, efficiency was also a commonly coded value although primarily in the interview documents. The second most frequently coded logic internally was collaboration, which did not start appearing as frequently in the external documents until the early 2000’s. Overall, there was significant alignment of the internal and external logics, with the top half of the coding frequencies being the same for both the internal and external environments.

As was noted previously, it is expected that an entity with internal cultural logics aligning with the external cultural logics would thrive. However, Case C was described as having “lost its way” (C2) and was eventually merged with Case B, with both government and the board in accord on the decision. Ironically, it was perhaps the very alignment of cultural values that led to the decision to merge. The shared logic of broad access, collaboration and efficiency led the various stakeholders to see greater access, collaboration and efficiency potential if Case C resources were shared provincially rather than regionally, and in return communities served by Case C could access programs from across the province.

Open Systems – Case B. Similar to Case C there was close alignment between the internal cultural logics and the external environment's cultural logics. The 41 documents examined produced 347 coded quotes related to the external environment logics and 153 coded quotes related to the internal environment logics. Three of the top four codes were shared by both the internal and external environment. These top three codes were: access, collaboration, and accountability. The remaining codes were similar in rank order. Taken as a whole Case B cultural logics seem closely aligned with the external environment's cultural logics. This alignment would be an explanatory factor in the consortium's persistence and growth, despite only year-to-year funding from the government rather than an ongoing commitment. Again, this tentative funding model relates to the province's reluctance to fund third-party entities.

Conclusion

In this chapter the consortia Case C and Case B are described and analyzed. A concluding summary of that analysis is offered in this chapter section.

The consortia were first described in general terms and then analyzed with the use of three theoretical constructs. The analysis consisted of examining the consortia through the three theoretical lenses as a means to determine if the consortia substantively manifested the various elements of each construct and to highlight key factors in the particular persistence trajectory taken by each

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consortium. These factors are discussed and form the main body of this chapter's conclusion.

Following the pattern of the previous chapter the factors influencing persistence for the consortia are listed and then discussed.

Key Factors in Case C's Persistence:

- Good initial compatibility of aims and benefits between consortium members
- Good initial alignment with the context and the internal/external cultural logics
- High trust, low power struggles
- Did not react to changing context of government calls for broader collaboration and increased accountability, as well as technological changes.
- A gradual fragmenting of aims (research vs service)

Over its lifespan Case C's status shifted from initially being an innovative solution to, in later years, being viewed as redundant. In terms of the Amey model this represented a lack of adaptation to the changing environment. Essentially, the consortium remained focused on the solution it had developed without realizing the problems it was solving had changed. Initially the problems being solved were how to efficiently serve a remote constituency, to build distance education capacity, to have a strong voice to government, and to

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access government funds. By collaborating in developing and delivering distance education programs the member organizations addressed the problems and built capacity in distance education. However, over time, people in the north had better internet access, and were more able to be self-supporting technologically and perhaps educationally (B3). As well, the government was looking for system-wide collaboration, not just partnerships. Government was also putting an emphasis on accountability which was not being addressed in Case C. As a result of remaining focused on the solution it had developed, the consortium was gradually overshadowed by an emergent consortium that more closely addressed the contemporary environment. So, while the initial consortium structure and services were effective, the need to change at a foundational level was not examined.

Key Factors in Case B's Persistence

- Strong champion
- Greater instrumental interdependency and aims than inherent interdependency and aims
- Alignment with external cultural logics, yet only tentative provincial funding

During the period under study Case B grew and in many ways thrived. It satisfied many of the factors identified in the theoretical frameworks as needed for persistence. However, some factors were only partially satisfied, including: dependence on strong leadership, greater instrumental than inherent benefits,

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and only partial alignment with the external cultural logics. This partial satisfaction may be the reason for repeated votes on whether to dissolve the consortium.

At the outset of Case B a strong champion engaged in collaborative thuggery, probably with mutual benefit motives, to create a consortium in which all sector institutions were members. Throughout the history of the consortium it had to address trust and power issues due in part to varying levels of member commitment and genuineness. These issues were, for the most part, reasonably addressed, which again may indicate strong, even ingenious leadership. However, it may also indicate structural issues that had to be overcome on the strength of the leadership. Repeatedly depending on leadership strength makes the consortium person-dependent rather than able to be sustained on the inherent value of the consortium. In some ways, the very strength of leadership that brought all institutions in the sector into the consortium may have created a structural weakness of perpetually having low commitment members in the consortium;, largely for instrumental reasons. As well, despite aligning with the external cultural logics the consortium did not receive strong signals of support from the government in the form of long-term funding commitments. This lack of provincial commitment may have made less committed institutional presidents even less likely to commit to the consortium.

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In conclusion, it has been shown that both Case C and Case B manifested many of the elements of the three theoretical constructs through which it was analyzed. The elements were summarized into key factors associated with the consortia's persistence and these key factors were discussed as to how they contributed to the persistence trajectory of the respective consortia.

Chapter VI: CASE D

This chapter is the third of three analytical chapters in which cases of individual consortia are described and analysed. In this chapter, which covers the period of 2000 to 2010, Case D is described and analysed. Following the pattern established in the previous chapters, this chapter contains five sections. In the first section the consortium is generally described. In the following three sections the consortium is analysed using three different theoretical constructs to help answer the primary research question of what factors significantly contribute to persistence. The fifth and final section of the chapter findings are summarized from the analysis and conclusions drawn as to the factors significantly contributing to the persistence trajectory of Case D. Next is a general description of the consortium.

General Description of the Consortium

Following the pattern of previous two chapters, this section provides a general description of the consortium, including its governance, management, services and resourcing. However, unlike the previous chapters, before describing the consortium it is important to understand the unique structure of post-secondary education in the province.

The provincial post-secondary landscape was dominated by two universities, and a single technical institute which had multiple campuses

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throughout the province. These three institutions accounted for 85% of provincial post-secondary funding in 2008-09 (P92) and the larger of the two universities commanded over 40% of the total post-secondary student enrollment in the province (P91). As well, there was a provincial network of regional colleges which functioned as local learning centres. They brokered credit courses from the universities and technical institute, and developed some non-credit programming. Finally, there were approximately a dozen small religious and Indigenous colleges associated in some fashion with one or the other of the universities. The striking dissimilarity in size between institutions was relatively unique in the country, as were the few but large institutions relative to the population size (D2). As a comparison it can be seen in the following table that there were half the number of large institutions in Case D jurisdiction, on a per capita basis, when compared to the Case A, and Case B/C jurisdictions.

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Related Case	Institutions with enrollment greater than 1,000 FTE (2012)	Provincial Population (2012)	Institution:Population
A	24	4,546,300	1:189,429
B, C	21	3,880,800	1:184,800
D	3	1,086,000	1:362,000

Table 1 - Number of Large Post-secondary Institutions per Population

(sources: provincial ministry sites and StatsCan)

Within the provincial post-secondary landscape described above, Case D was a coordinating body initiated in 2000, and formally established in 2002. It was formed by the provincial government to implement its plan for improving rural and remote residents' access to post-secondary education by creating more online education courses. The plan addressed two perceived provincial deficiencies. The first deficiency was post-secondary institutions' capacity to develop and deliver online education, and, the second was the low inventory of online post-secondary courses. The consortium distributed provincial funds to

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address these deficiencies until its dissolution in 2010 when it was declared to have fulfilled its mandate (P112).

Case D was a non-legal entity³ funded by the provincial government, and with some minor start-up funding from the federal government. Funding was initially for a five-year window (2000-2005), with the caveat that funds were subject to availability. Monies came from a targeted provincial fund allocated to leverage educational technologies to enhance learning. The consortium initiated activities in 2000 with the main activity being distribution of funds for online course development. An official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the partners wasn't signed until late 2002, at which time the consortium was considered officially launched (P125). Despite the MOU having explicitly identified the consortium as a non-legal entity it was always referred to as a partnership. For consistency it will be referred to as a consortium within this document. The consortium was governed by a management board comprised of senior academic officers from the three larger post-secondary institutions in the province, the presidents from the smaller educational organizations, and an *ex officio* member from government. The board chair worked closely with the Executive Director (ED) to set the board agenda for the three or four board meetings held each year. Board decisions were by consensus. Other operational

³ A non-legal entity is one which has not been formally established and registered as an independent organization, such as a corporation or non-profit society.

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committees existed to coordinate consortium activities; primary among them was a policies, programs and planning committee which made recommendations for distribution of the annual course development funds as well as developed strategic plans for board consideration (P28, P18).

Case D was managed by an ED who was accountable to the board but an employee of the government. The first, and only, ED was not appointed until mid-2003 and served in that capacity until the consortium's dissolution in 2010. Staffing varied over the life of the consortium but never exceeded six employees. Initially, the consortium services were primarily in two areas: funding and facilitating capacity building, and coordinating distribution of funds to the institutions for online course development. By 2005 the consortium had added a third service area of providing online services to students such as a credit transfer guide, directory of online courses, and static web pages advising on matters such as application procedures and study tips (P16, D1, P25, P32).

Case D funding came exclusively from government. The bulk of the funds were directly from the provincial government, and in the early years of the consortium the province also directed federal funds into the consortium. The annual budget ranged as high as six million dollars at its peak, with over 40 million dollars expended over the life of the consortium (P114, D1). Approximately 60% of the annual budget went directly to institutions for course development and was largely allocated in proportion to the operating grants the

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respective institutions received. The three large institutions received over 80% of the course development funds and the remaining funds were allocated to the smaller institutions on an *ad hoc* basis, largely determined by the merit of individual course proposals (D2, D3, P125). The process for course fund distribution began with the consortium setting the allocation amounts for which the larger institutions would be eligible. Then the institutions put forward a slate of courses they would develop with the allocation. Each institution's slate of courses was developed through internal processes at the institution. The final cumulative list of courses to be funded for a funding period (normally six months) was recommended by the board's program subcommittee to government and sent, for information, to the consortium management board. The main criteria for course development funding was non-redundancy, i.e., different institutions were not funded to develop essentially the same course. It should be noted that not all courses were online. The fund from which the course development monies were drawn was for "technology enhanced learning." As such, technological enhancements to largely face-to-face courses were also funded, such as developing computer simulations or recording lectures (D1, D3, P125).

In addition to funding course development the consortium budget was used to fund professional development, online services, and consortium administration (P125). The initial provincial plan for technology enhanced learning called for the development of 200 online courses by 2005. That number was exceeded by almost 50% by 2005. A final count of funded projects was not

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published but research participants estimated 500 to 600 projects were funded between the years 2000 and 2010. Another achievement was the annual professional development conference which gained a national reputation as a helpful resource for faculty and instruction designers (D1, D3).

This general description has provided an overview of the governance, management, services and resourcing of Case D. Elements of these descriptions will be delved into in greater detail as the consortium is analyzed in the following sections using the three theoretical constructs, beginning with the Amey model.

Amey Model Analysis

In this chapter section Case D is analyzed using the Amey model outlined in a previous chapter. To briefly refresh readers' memory of the model the graphical representation is repeated here before analyzing the consortium using each of the model's elements.

Figure 1.1. Partnership Development Model.

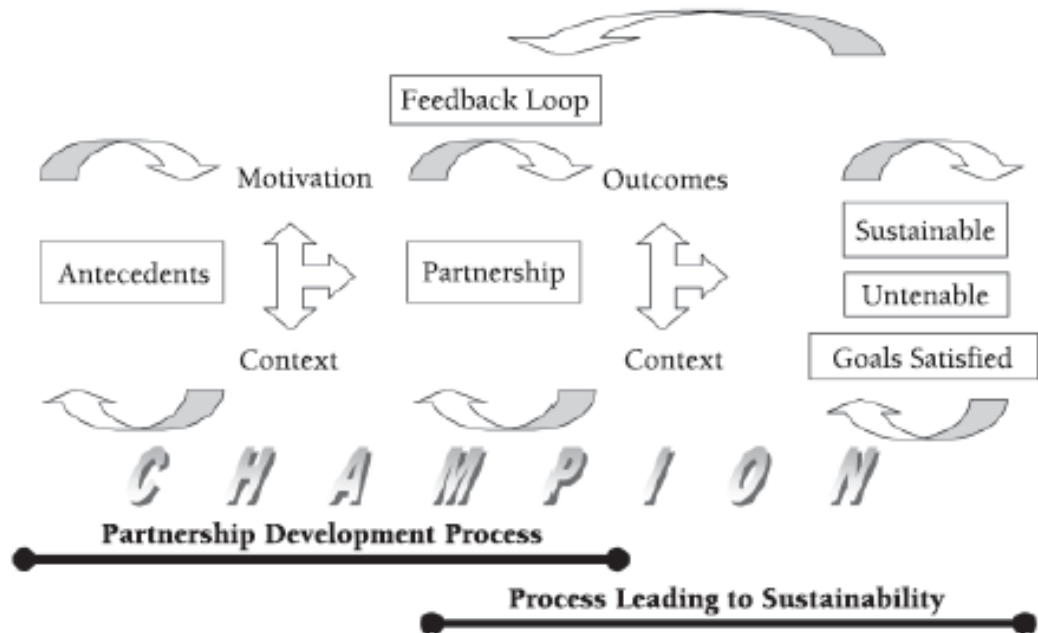


Figure 5 - Amey Model

Antecedent Conditions. In this section antecedent conditions that incentivized the formation of Case D are identified, and include several governmental reports which called for improved access and greater collaboration between post-secondary institutions.

In the years leading up to the formation of Case D there were provincial reviews and reports that incentivized the formation of the consortium. In 1993 and 1996 the government commissioned major, independent studies of post-

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secondary education in the province, particularly the two universities. The resulting reports both emphasized the need for greater access to post-secondary education, especially in the rural areas, and the need for increased collaboration between the institutions to improve student transferability and minimize redundant programming (P94). The second of the reports included substantial input from the universities. The institutions also indicated benefits for potential cooperation, but with a focus on support services such as joint procurement, and on developing high speed fibre optic cabling between the campuses (P94). It was also noteworthy that during this time the governing political party held only a slim majority and was particularly weak in the rural areas. So, for political reasons there was strong motivation to be perceived as servicing the rural areas.

In 1998, at the request, and with the sponsorship of the provincial government, a discussion paper was developed by a working group of post-secondary educational technology and distance education personnel. The paper and its undergirding research was intended to assess the state of technology enhanced learning in the province. The paper asserted the province was falling behind in the area of educational technology (P10) and recommended post-secondary institutions collaborate in the area of technology enhanced learning and program development. The discussion paper recommendations were accepted, almost verbatim, in a 2000 document which outlined the province's plan for accelerating adoption of technology enhanced learning within the post-secondary sector. The plan provided the basis for the launch of Case D.

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At about the same time the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC) had signed a document identifying areas for pan-Canadian action, including leadership in developing online learning (P115). Being a signatory to the CMEC document further illustrated the provincial government's commitment to accelerate adoption of technology enhanced learning. The CMEC document and the provincial reports all indicated an inter-institutional collaboration approach was considered "best practice" when developing technology enhanced learning (P125). Taken cumulatively the various reports and policy papers built a rationale for a provincial initiative which accelerated technology enhanced learning activity within the provincial post-secondaries and to use a collaborative approach.

It is also noteworthy that in the four provincial planning documents when referring to institutions working together the authors tended to refer to the need for "inter-institutional collaboration." In the sections which capture institutional input reference was typically made to "inter-institutional cooperation" (P110). Polenske (2004) makes a helpful distinction between collaboration and cooperation in the context of inter-organizational relations. Collaboration includes direct mutual participation, whereas cooperation is an agreement to an arrangement. Collaborative arrangements entail a degree of merging of institutional boundaries, whereas cooperation entails maintenance of institutional boundaries with exchanges between cooperating but autonomous entities. It is

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unlikely that the differing use of terms and the associated nuances was unintentional.

These antecedent conditions incentivized the formation of the distance education, post-secondary consortium, especially the government's call for: improving access, building technology enhanced learning capacity, and increasing online educational opportunities. However, there was little evidence of the post-secondary institutions sharing the government's enthusiasm for technology enhanced learning, other than from within the ranks of the educational technology and distance education personnel. Additionally, there was little evidence of post-secondary institutions embracing inter-institutional collaboration except among the educational technology and distance education personnel, and except for support services administration and research.

Context. The antecedent conditions of governmental priorities to increase student access, and to improve capacity to develop and deliver technology enhanced learning, incentivized increased interest in developing a consortium, at least from the government's perspective. In addition to the antecedent conditions there were contemporary contextual factors at the time of the consortium launch which incentivized its formation. These contextual factors were largely financial.

At the time of the formation of Case D the government had recently been re-elected, and it had several reports indicating a need for increased access, which could be achieved through increased numbers of online courses, which in

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turn required developing the capacity to build and deliver the courses. As well, the post-secondary institutions had little history of inter-institutional collaboration. Each of these contextual elements is discussed below.

The government had been re-elected in 1999, just prior to the initiation of Case D. The governing party had campaigned and been elected on its record of fiscal constraint and balanced budgets. Despite re-election the governing party had fallen from a dominating majority to only holding power by convincing two members of another party to join their government (P17). The governing party was particularly weak in the rural areas, so any new money to come from the constrained public coffers would be put to best political advantage if it buoyed support in those constituencies. As well, the perception of efficiency garnered by collaborative efforts would also be appealing to the fiscally conservative rural voter base. Post-secondary initiatives with a rural access focus “represented a political strategy” (D2) on the part of government.

Subsequent to the 1998 discussion paper noted above, the government requested that the post-secondary institutions submit proposals for initiatives which would implement the paper’s recommendations for greater access and to address the lagging use of educational technology. “It didn’t take the institutions very long to say ‘Well, yes, we are behind and what we need is money’” (D1). After being re-elected in 1999 the government agreed to make new funds available to implement the proposals but with the caveat that it be within the

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context of inter-institutional collaboration (D1, D2). The post-secondary institutions proposed a coordinating body be formed for the purpose of fostering the development of online education. The institutions were agreeable to the proposed body because they saw it “as an opportunity to sit down and talk to one another and basically carve up a limited pie of resources” (D2). However, “the notion of the collaborative partnership was the government's idea” (D1). Other than a *carte blanche* acceptance of a collaborative approach as best practice, it is not clear how this approach suited a province with only two universities and one college.

Subsequently, the provincial government, with some financial support from the federal government, announced a five-year targeted funding program to develop technology enhanced learning. The funding program would be used to fund capacity building and course development (P86). In a period of fiscal constraint, this was a unique opportunity for the post-secondaries to access new monies (P114). The government was under political pressure to follow through on a public commitment to launch the funding plan shortly after its election, so funds began to flow in 2000. However, agreement between the post-secondaries and government regarding the terms of the MOU was not reached until late 2002. In the interim, as a means to equitably allocate monies the same funding formula was used for distributing the technology enhanced learning funds as was used for operating funds. The three large institutions received over 80% of the funds in proportion to their relative size and existing budgets (D1, P125).

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Another important element within the province's contemporary context was the existing level of inter-institutional collaboration. Not only was there little to no collaboration, the institutions were reputed to enjoy the greatest amount of autonomy in the country (D2, D3). A comprehensive review of the technology enhanced learning plan in 2005 listed "challenges in implementing the collaborative model" (P125) as a key issue faced by the consortium. All research participants indicated that, once formed, Case D was the only body at which senior institutional personnel conferred. Indeed, the post-secondary institutions each had their own enacting legislation and governmental mandates. Even what were ostensibly collaborative entities, the regional colleges, had autonomy to choose what courses they would broker from the three substantive institutions.

In summary, the context for the formation of Case D was one in which institutions had a history of high autonomy and little collaboration, there was a lack of capacity, and possibly appetite, for developing online programming, public funds were constrained but new funds might flow if institutions collaborated in advancing technology enhanced learning in the province. As well, government was eager to improve post-secondary access by the half of the province's population living outside the major urban centres.

Motivation. As discussed in previous chapters, within the Amey model motivation is identified as both rationale and power, with rationale being inherent motivation and power being instrumental motivation. Clearly, the promised new

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funds and a government mandate to collaborate created instrumental motivation for the post-secondary institutions to join this newly formed consortium. This instrumental motivation is sufficiently discussed above. Less clear was the inherent motivation for post-secondaries to join the consortium; but it did exist at some levels.

The 1998 report, referenced above, came from a representative group of post-secondary, educational technology and distance education personnel. The group was formed at the invitation of the provincial department responsible for advanced education and included personnel from all the major post-secondary institutions, and the provincial department of advanced education. Within this report enthusiastic recommendations were made for advancing the use of technology for learning, both on campus and at a distance, and for institutions to do so collaboratively. In part, the recommendations came from a view that the issues being addressed were system level issues so required a system level solution. The recommended form of a system level solution was inter-institutional collaboration, as opposed to an autonomous, central entity. As well, this group was aware that other jurisdictions in the country were taking a system level, collaborative approach. “Based on their review of the issues and priorities, and strategies and structures emerging in other Canadian jurisdictions, the group proposes that a coordinating body be formed to advance the provincial [technology enhanced learning] initiative... [which reflects] a system-wide collaborative approach” (P110). Members of this group had been in discussions

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for over ten years on how to meaningfully collaborate and use technology to improve access. The proposal to form Case D addressed long held values of many members of the distance education and educational technology staff at the institutions (D3). However, the educational technology and distance education group seemed to stand alone in their concern for access and use of educational technology. For example, even among faculty members who had participated in Case D funded projects improving student access was not a major rationale. Only 10% of faculty participating in Case D projects cited increased student access as a factor in why they participated in the work (P125).

In summary, both instrumental and inherent motivations existed for institutions and for government to form Case D. Instrumentally, government was advantaged by being seen to be addressing rural concerns, and institutions were advantaged through the receipt of new funding. Inherently, all stakeholders held, to varying degrees, a desire to improve student access to education, and to improve institutional capacity to develop and deliver technology enhanced learning. Also, government and some pockets of the institutions valued taking a collaborative approach to achieve these goals.

Champion. As was noted in previous chapters a champion, or champions, are needed to successfully launch a consortium and they require the personal, cultural or social capital to advocate for the endeavour. In the case of Case D, none of the research participants could identify an individual or group of

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individuals who took on a champion role other than the group of educational technology and distance education personnel group noted above. As well, none of the documents surveyed inferred a champion role having been adopted and the majority of institutional employees surveyed for the 2005 review indicated there was not strong leadership guiding implementation of learning technologies (P125).

Instead of a clear champion emerging, there were very general recommendations for leadership of the consortium. The primary planning document for the proposed initiative recommended the government ministry take a leadership role and post-secondary institutions strongly commit to the initiative (P86). This approach to leadership was somewhat watered down from the original discussion paper that led to the technology enhanced learning plan. In that paper it was explicit that senior administrators at the major post-secondary institutions take an active role in the consortium and its functions be interwoven in the institutional strategic planning (P110). As one research participant recounted the sentiment intended by early plans for the consortium: “(we hoped) that they (the institutions) would have more direct participation in [Case D] at the highest levels. And therefore it would be more aligned with the, sort of, institutional strategies and have that level of interest and involvement” (D3). So, while it was hoped that senior administrators from the post-secondary institutions would take on the mantle of champion there is no evidence that this occurred.

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The second general stage in the Amey model is the Process Leading to Sustainability. Within this stage the authors identify three elements that influence sustainability: partnership framework, outcome achievement, context changes. Each of these elements is examined, beginning with partnership framework.

Partnership Framework. As was noted in previous chapters the Amey model suggests that design considerations for a partnership framework ought to include interdependency, joint ownership of decisions, and mutual benefit for stakeholders. Case D is considered in the light of these three design considerations, considering first interdependency

The interdependency of the consortium existed by virtue of the instrumental benefits enjoyed by government and the post-secondary institutions. The government could claim they were addressing the need for increased access to post-secondary education for rural populations. In the 2002 throne speech the government heralded this

Through the development of [Case D], our post-secondary institutions will increase on-line and distance learning opportunities for [province] people ... Students in rural, northern and urban locations will have new opportunities to access a greater range of programs through on-line learning" (P116)

Similarly, by participating in the consortium the institutions enjoyed instrumental benefits of new monies. While the new monies afforded the institutions the ability to develop new courses, and to build new capacities, these

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were not benefits which institutions could only gain through participation in the consortium. There was no inherent dependence on the consortium since funds for post-secondary education may come from multiple sources. However, Case D provided a relatively painless avenue for funds acquisition, so perhaps it could be said there was an interdependency of convenience. One test of interdependency is the switching cost of the partners. In the case of Case D, if other funding streams were available there would have been no significant switching cost for the institutions. However, as long as the money flow was through the consortium, there was switching cost and hence an interdependency of a sort existed.

The second design consideration in a partnership framework is joint decision making. In the case of Case D there was little to no joint decision making by the consortium members. Key governance decisions were made by government, such as: to form the consortium, the only major service expansion to include credit transfer, and the decision to shut down the consortium (D1). While the announcement to dissolve the consortium framed the decision as having been made by the management board, all research participants contested this version of the decision making and stated that, again, the decision largely emanated from government.

At a more operational level, the decisions were also not joint. Decisions regarding which courses to be developed were largely made by institutions, and the province retained veto privileges (P125, P129). There were no discussions as

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to which courses would best serve the provincial residents, or how to collaboratively develop offerings into cohesive programs. All research participants, and the 2005 review, noted the lack of strategic criteria for course development. As one research participant noted, the funding decisions were not made jointly with a system perspective; rather, funding was simply for

more online learning opportunities. So that meant more content online by the universities and by [college]... but in terms of implementing it, like making sure the courses that were available online were actually courses that people in rural and remote [province] wanted, or that they actually added up to a degree for example. That was something that seemed to be... but an afterthought (D2).

The final aspect of partnership framework design considerations in the Amey model is that it should foster mutual benefit. In the case of Case D there were benefits beyond the institutional access to funds. Hundreds of courses were developed and over 3,000 students per year took courses developed with funds from the technology enhanced learning program (P125). Staff and faculty were afforded opportunities to develop professionally, and an important network of professional support was created (D1, D3, P125). Government was able to claim action on addressing rural access and that it was providing leadership in ensuring post-secondaries were technologically current.

In summary, while some mutual benefit was gained, the partnership framework provided little in the way of interdependency or joint decision making.

Outcomes and Feedback. The next aspect of the second general stage in the Amey model to be outlined is the role of outcomes and feedback leading to decisions whether to continue or dissolve consortium operations based on whether benefits outweighed costs. In essence, the model asks four questions: what are the expected benefits and the associated costs, is there appropriate feedback, does the feedback demonstrate the benefits are being achieved, and, finally, are the benefits worth the costs. Case D had good answers to three of the four.

Regarding the first question, in the case of Case D the key benefits being sought were capacity and course development, and enhancing collaboration – all leading to improved student access. The costs were the administrative costs. So the benefits and costs were known. The next question is whether there was appropriate feedback regarding whether benefits were being achieved.

Amey, *et al* (2007) asserted that feedback must be made to relevant stakeholders and framed according to the priorities of those stakeholders. While there were multiple benefits sought by the stakeholders in the case of Case D, the desired feedback seemed to have a narrow focus on the development of courses. In some ways this is an older accountability model than used by many jurisdictions and warrants a brief discussion.

If education is treated as an input-process-output production process, then accountability measures can be placed at any of the three stages. For example,

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an input measure, and one used for many years in jurisdictions, was cost per student. If a jurisdiction's spending per student was high relative to comparable jurisdictions, then the assumption was that a better educational process was in place with better outcomes. A measure of process sometimes used in post-secondary is the time to graduate. The assumption is that a shorter aggregate time to graduate is better. A measure of output may be the employment rate of graduates. Presumably, the greater the proportion of employed graduates the more effective the education. While many jurisdictions have moved to largely using output measures, the province in Case D largely used an input measure for evaluating the consortium.

In Case D, the main accountability measure was the number of courses funded, an input measure. The funding amount provided and the number of courses available were the most commonly cited quantitative measures in government documents. In one 2005 press release the government recounted that over \$17 million had been invested and 200 courses developed by post-secondaries "to enrich their learning environments and increase access to courses and programs" (P119).

While there was a focus on the number of courses developed there were no quality standards associated with the courses, a process measure. "The institutions would never have let [Case D] have enough power to say 'these are the standards we will adhere to.' The institutions were very, very conscious of

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maintaining their autonomy when it came to those kinds of things” (D1). Finally, there were few output requirements. There was no requirement that funded courses were ever enrolled in by students. In fact, in some cases the funded courses were never actually produced (D3, P125). The 2005 review reported that accountability measures on deliverables had “not been effective, with little consistent data available” (P125). It may have been that output measures were not aggressively sought because of what may have been revealed. In the 2005 review it reported figures difficult to obtain, but it estimated that the large majority of students taking the online courses developed with funds from the consortium were actually students on site at the urban campuses, not those residing in the rural areas (P125). This information weakened the government’s claim to be effectively addressing rural access needs.

The *de facto* benefit being sought from Case D seemed to be an increase in the number of available online courses. Feedback existed to affirm that this benefit was met. There were reports on the number and type of courses funded to be produced. This means that the second and third questions from the Amey model can be answered in the affirmative that yes, feedback existed and the desired benefit was being achieved.

This leaves the fourth and final question: did the benefits warrant the costs. Ultimately, the answer was no. There was a significant administrative cost to running the consortium, approximately \$750,000 per year, and the benefits of

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increasing the number of online courses could have been achieved at lower cost by simply giving the course development funds directly to the institutions, which is ultimately what the province decided. As one research participant put it,

in the end the... money was simply folded into the base budgets of the institutions at the same rate that it was being allocated by [Case D]. I mean, somebody finally figured out, that you don't have to meet every time, every year in order to allocate the funds if you're not changing the formula. And since we weren't and there was no will among the participants to change the formula, no will at the governmental level to change the formula ... so eventually people said why do we need this? Because it is not adding anything anymore. We will just take the money and give it to the universities and the colleges in roughly the proportion they were given it to themselves anyway and then we will wind up [Case D] and we will declare victory. (D2)

So, the consortium had known benefits and costs; stakeholders received appropriate feedback to tell them their desired benefits were being achieved; but in the end, the benefits did not justify the costs.

Context. In this section the external context of the consortium is reviewed and how the consortium adjusted to contextual changes over time is described. In the case of Case D there was little room to adjust since it was an entity of the government and served at the pleasure of the ruling party.

As was noted in earlier sections of this chapter, at the time the consortium was initiated in 2000 a governing party had been re-elected with the slimmest of majorities. The same government was re-elected again in 2003; again with a very narrow majority. During its 2003-2007 mandate the government conducted two reviews which had implications for the consortium. The first was the 2005 review

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at the end of the initial five-year term of the funding envelop from which Case D was funded. It found “all that was needed was some tinkering around the edges to fine-tune a few things” (D1). The second review in 2007 was of the post-secondary system with a particular focus on the issues of accessibility and affordability. The conclusion, in relation to Case D, was, again, that it was performing its function admirably and should continue on course.

Another important environmental factor during the latter period of Case D's tenure was that after the expiration of the consortium's MOU in 2005 a new MOU was never signed, due to two main factors. The first factor was a lack of agreement on terms. There was no indication from any of the research participants of animosity in the MOU discussions; rather, there was a lack of compelling vision or enthusiasm among the decision makers. This condition was noted in the 2005 review as well (P125). A second factor was changing personnel. These changes included changing managers in government, changing personnel in the institutions, and, in 2007, a new government. The new personnel had difficulty understanding the consortium, “particularly when nobody could agree what it was really for” (D1). Without an MOU in place, funding continued on a year-to-year basis at the same level and with the same criteria as previously administered. The funding was without any future commitment (D1, D2).

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In late 2007 the province's ruling party lost in an election, more due to an electoral desire for change rather than due to substantive policy differences (P117). The incoming party was somewhat to the fiscal right of the outgoing party and did engage in cost cutting measures after being elected. The consortium "was a pretty easy target for savings" (D1). By declaring the consortium to have satisfied its mandate of increasing the provincial capacity for technology enhanced learning, the government closed it down, with the blessing of the institutions (D1, D2, D3, P112). Money that had previously flowed through the consortium to the institutions for course development was rolled into institutions' base budgets, again with the institutions' blessing.

The dissolution of the consortium addressed the new government's wish to cut costs and to appear to make changes in the post-secondary system. As well, there was some governmental concern about funding an entity over which it did not have firm, direct control. These were the days following the federal sponsorship scandal, and governments across the country were scrambling to tighten accountability protocols (D2).

In summary, the consortium's context changed most dramatically when government changed. The new government was seeking to cut costs and improve accountability. The consortium was perceived by some as little more than a funding middle man without a compelling *raison d'être*, making it an easy target for cost saving measures. There seemed little will, on the part of

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government or the institutions, to make the consortium anything more than a funding allocation entity; this lack of will to preserve it led to the decision to dissolve the consortium.

As was noted in the previous chapters, within the Amey model the two main determinants of a continuation decision were the adaptation to changing environmental context, and the feedback assuring stakeholders that desired outcomes were being achieved. In the case of Case D, there was little the board was willing or able to do to adapt to a changing context after the government change in 2007, and the feedback regarding the benefits was perceived to not warrant the cost in the light of the new provincial government's priorities. Hence, the decision was made in 2009 to dissolve the consortium in the spring of 2010.

Huxham Model Analysis

Similar to the previous chapters, the Huxham model is now applied to the analysis of Case D. The thematic model is represented here to again remind readers of its structure.

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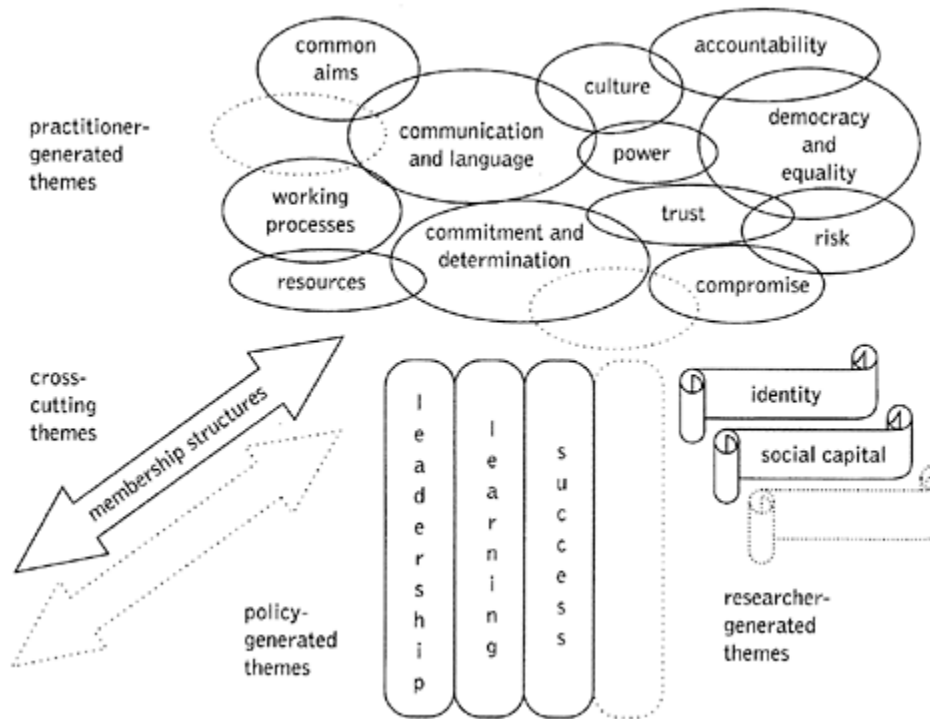


Figure 6 - Huxham Model

The themes to be considered include consortium aims and purposes, trust, structures, power and leadership. The themes are considered with a view to identifying factors contributing to collaborative advantage and avoiding collaborative inertia. As in previous chapters, where there is overlap between the Amey model and the Huxham model only the difference in nuance will be discussed.

Compatible Aims and Purposes. Readers will recall that Huxham and Vangen (2005) identified three levels of aims in a consortium (individual, member

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organization and consortium), as well as varying degrees of genuineness and explicitness. These aspects of aims and purposes and the tension of managing the entanglement of aims are discussed in relation to Case D.

In the previous section, in which the consortium was described using the Amey model, it was identified that institutions were keenly interested in securing the new funds offered through Case D, and, particularly at operational levels, in gaining capacity for technology enhanced learning. It was also identified that government was keen on being seen to address access to education issues in rural areas, to advance the jurisdiction's overall capacity for technology enhanced learning, and to develop greater collaboration among the post-secondary institutions. Both government and the institutions were sensitive to maintaining the tradition of a high level of institutional autonomy from the government, less for the technical institute and more for the universities. At the consortium level, the management was keen to further develop central services such as a credit transfer service and possibly prior learning assessment and central application services.

The entanglement of aims was compatible at face value. However, when the genuineness of some of the aims are challenged the compatibility is less compelling. For example, the government's desire to increase rural access may have been largely for political reasons, since they needed to gird support in those constituencies if they were to regain their former strong majority. If the desire for

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rural access was genuine it is reasonable that their accountability measures would have been concentrated on output measures rather than heralding the amount of money they were spending in that regard. As well, it would be reasonable that, if rural access were a genuine aim the government would have felt it imperative that students could actually complete a full program rather than be offered a smorgasbord of courses developed largely on the basis of faculty member interest in learning a new technology. Finally, if there was genuine commitment to the consortium, from both government and the institutions, it is unlikely that Case D would have operated without an MOU for seven years of its ten year existence and without an Executive Director for three years. So, it may well be that some of the aims were what Huxham and Vangen (2005) referred to as pseudo aims: aims which were disingenuous.

As well, it was not clear why the government wanted to improve technology enhanced learning through a collaborative entity. The collaborative approach seemed questionable on at least two fronts. First, the province only had three large post-secondary institutions: one college and two universities. The college and universities were programmatically and administratively quite distinct. Programmatically, there was little overlap between the college and the universities so there was no need for inter-sectoral collaboration. Administratively, the college operated more as an arm of the government, while the universities were quite autonomous. These are difficult distinctions to be reconciled when working in a consortium. As one research participant put it,

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[Case D] comes along and is... way too weak an organization to solve the underlying contradictions, if you like, between institutions that are beholden to government in a direct, hierarchical manner, and institutions that consider themselves pretty much entirely independent, in terms of the all of the core decision-making that they make (D2)

In addition to there being little need for inter-sectoral collaboration, there was little need for intra-sectoral collaboration. The college, as a single entity was inherently coordinated so no collaborative entity needed to be created. The two universities could coordinate one-to-one without an intermediary and probably would have done so if targeted funding were put in place to incentivize the coordination. In fact, this incentivized coordination happened quite successfully in the area of health education after the consortium was dissolved (D2).

The second reason a collaborative approach was questionable was that there was already some history of distance education at each of the three large institutions which could have been further incentivized relatively easily. The college had campuses province-wide and had already initiated its own system of virtual campuses. As well, one university had its own television station through which it broadcast courses. The other university had had a distance education department since 1925. While all of the institutions were somewhat behind in terms of adoption of contemporary educational technology, given the pockets of distance education activity it would have been reasonable that each institution could have been individually incentivized through targeted funding. As well, the

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institutions were each of sufficient magnitude as to warrant their own full blown faculty development and course/program development departments. If these departments needed to be bolstered, again targeted funding could have achieved this end. So, there was no compelling need to take a consortium approach to improve capacity and increase the number of online courses. The primary rationale, as captured in the 2005 review, was that collaboration was considered best practice at the time (P125). It would seem that collaboration was uncritically accepted in the context of the province's post-secondary landscape, perhaps to be perceived by other jurisdictions as a forward thinking implementer of best practices, or perhaps to create a more high profile entity to which government could point as evidence of its attention to its rural constituents.

In summary, the aims of the consortium and its members were compatible at face value, and did lead to the satisfaction of some of the consortium's aims, such as the increased capacity for, and development of, courses. Satisfaction of these compatible aims led to collaborative advantage. However, there is evidence that at least some aims were pseudo aims, and there may have been aims which were not explicit. The pseudo aims and non-explicit aims may have contributed to the collaborative inertia which eventually led to the consortium's dissolution.

Membership Structures. In the Huxham model tensions between factors contributing to collaborative advantage versus collaborative inertia in

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relation to membership structures are associated with the ambiguity and complexity of member organizations' status. Ambiguity can exist in status, commitment and member representativeness.

In the case of Case D, the membership structure was relatively unambiguous and was not complex. The MOU set out clear membership identification and was straightforward (P28). The main ambiguity was in member commitment. The reason for lack of commitment varied between institutions. As was discussed above, with the exception of the educational technology and distance education personnel, and some faculty, the larger institutions seemed to participate in the consortium largely out of a desire to obtain new funding. Their commitment seemed accordingly shallow. The smaller institutions had more to gain than simply funds. They lacked expertise and the indigenous colleges had a very strong mandate to serve those in the rural and remote areas. So, gaining capacity in the area of technology enhanced learning and developing a roster of online courses had strong inherent motivation. However, research participants indicated that there was minimal participation from the smaller colleges, particularly the indigenous colleges. Speculation was that the colleges were just too understaffed to free personnel to attend consortium committee and board meetings or to invest the considerable time needed to learn the technology and pedagogy of online delivery (D1, D2, D3). Similarly, the 2005 review indicated there had not been the desired level of participation from the colleges, particularly the indigenous colleges (P125).

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Trust. In the Huxham model trust between consortium partners is identified as necessary to achieve collaborative advantage. The tension in this theme is partners exhibiting opportunistic behaviour, which is typically mitigated by working with familiar, or reputable partners, and with use of contracts. In the case of Case D trust was relatively low and measures seemed to have been taken to ensure the mandate of the consortium was well bounded.

As has been reported above, the consortium was the sole provincial collaborative arena in which the post-secondary institutions participated. Without a strong history of working together there was apprehension regarding the consortium. This apprehension was evident in the wording of the MOU, which in a four page document twice reiterated that all activities of the consortium would be in the context of “respecting each partner’s separate mandate, roles and responsibilities” (P28). Institutions had been insistent that respect for their institutional autonomy was enshrined in the MOU (D1). This concern for institutional autonomy and apparent fear that the consortium could grow into a powerful body continued throughout the consortium’s history (D1). As was noted in the 2005 review, “key informants raised a cautionary flag about expanding the funding and/or mandate of the [Case D] office” (P125). The renewed MOU, which the 2005 review was intended to guide, was never developed, in part because of lack of agreement regarding the bounds of the consortium. There

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was a sense that it could grow too powerful and threaten institutional autonomy, i.e., behave opportunistically (D1, D2).

In summary, without a history of collaboration members utilized contractual constraints to ensure that the government and the consortium did not engage in opportunistic behaviour.

Power. Within the Huxham model power is categorized into: power used for self gain (over), power used for mutual gain (to), or power used for others (for). The tension to be managed was the urge to use power for self gain rather than for mutual gain, or for those the consortium serves. In the case of Case D, power seemed to create a stalemate that contributed to the dissolution of the consortium.

The three main parties in the consortium were the government, the institutions, and the consortium management, each with their own base of power. Using the power taxonomy presented by Northouse (2010) six bases of power are available: referent (like-ability), expert, legitimate, reward, coercive (punishment) and information. The power bases of the three parties are described using the Northouse taxonomy before applying the Huxham model for analysis.

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Government's most significant power bases in relation to Case D were reward, legitimate and coercive power. It could, and did, financially reward institutions for creating online courses. However, government did not exercise its legitimate power to mandate institutions to create online courses. As well, government did not use its coercive (punishment) power to force institutions to create online courses. Put colloquially, government chose to only use a carrot rather than a stick. If the consortium and the benefits it was to bring were of high importance to the government, and if it was questionable that the benefits were accruing, then one wonders why the government was not more aggressive in their use of power. The answer may lie with the balance of power held by the institutions.

The institutions' most significant power bases in relation to the consortium were referent, expert and legitimate power. Educational institutions are, for the most part, popular institutions. A 2015 study found 77% of Canadians held positive or very positive impressions of universities (B. Anderson, 2015). This level of referent power may have been even higher in Case D's province because the universities were not just educational institutions, they also served as the tertiary hospitals in the province.

The universities are so big, in a way, and relative to everybody else, and suck up so much of the resources and the oxygen because they are critical players, in, well, to reference the health thing, they are critical players in the provision of health care in the province. So you know, the universities have clout. (D2)

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Given the institutions' referent power the government risked losing popularity if they treated the institutions too shoddily. As well, government probably wanted the institutions' willing participation since the institutions held expert power in relation to developing online courses. If institutions were coerced they may have withheld their expert power. Finally, the enacting legislation of the universities give them legitimate decision making autonomy. This means government may have had to re-write legislation if they wanted to use a stick rather than a carrot to be more prescriptive in the development of online courses.

The third party involved in the consortium was consortium management, which held very little power. What power bases they did have lay in referent and expert power. The MOU made it clear that the consortium managers were to facilitate coordination and did not have decision making authority (P28). What influence managers held was due to the personal and professional respect they held in the sector. However, regardless of the strength of that respect it was unlikely to have been a strong enough power base to influence very foundational and structural issues such as growing beyond being a coordinating body. Such growth was probably what would have been necessary for the consortium to have persisted beyond 2010.

The above provides a profile of the power structure in the province. The next stage of analysis is to apply the Huxham model as to whether the use of

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power contributed to collaborative advantage or collaborative inertia.

Collaborative advantage is gained when power is used for mutual benefit or the benefit of those served versus for self gain. In the case of Case D power was used for all three purposes. As was noted above, those served by the consortium, the students, benefited through access to more online courses.

There was mutual benefit in that institutions enjoyed a minor increase in enrollment and developed capacity for technology enhanced learning.

Government benefited from the perception of serving the rural areas. The consortium management benefited by being employed and growing professionally. Finally, it appears that the balance of power between government and the institutions prevented each of them from utilizing the consortium exclusively for self benefit. Government was constrained from being too heavy handed because of the popularity of the institutions. Institutions could not abuse the funding or it would be cut off. Looking objectively at the balance of power, if one side or the other were to be deemed to have the upper hand it would be the institutions. They did have a great deal of flexibility in how they used the funds provided and, as was noted previously, tended to create courses of interest to early adopter faculty, rather than courses that formed complete programs relevant to the rural areas. A stalemate of sorts existed in that the government did not want to fully exercise its power to get greater collaboration and direction and the institutions did not want to walk away from the consortium since it provided funding. This stalemate may have been a key point in the dissolution of

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the consortium. It may also be that when the consortium was dissolved it was government exerting a form of coercive power since, two years after dissolution and rolling the Case D funds directly into the institutions' budgets, the funding was discontinued (D2).

In summary, power was used by all parties, particularly government and the institutions, for the benefit of those being served and for mutual gain. The government was not willing to forego political capital by exercising power over the popular post-secondary institutions to develop particular courses in order to make the work of Case D of greater benefit to those being served.

Leadership. Following the pattern of the previous chapters this section focuses on the leadership of the consortium management. The tension to be managed in the Huxham model is, on the one hand managing in a collaborative fashion and engaging in collaborative thuggery when needed, and on the other hand avoiding falling into self-serving manipulation. In the case of Case D there was little consortium management could do in the way of collaborative thuggery. Huxham and Vangen (2005) offered examples of collaborative thuggery such as recruiting activity champions, developing and using strong relational networks, influencing agendas and finding ways to exclude unsupportive consortium members. Management was highly constrained in using these tactics.

As discussed above, the consortium MOU clearly delineated decision making authority. It would have been difficult, for example, for consortium

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management to exclude unsupportive consortium members, or influence agendas in any substantive measure. The Executive Director did have strong relational networks, particularly within the world of consortium management and distance education. The ED came to the consortium from another prominent distance education consortium, and brought that reputational capital to the position. He was also well known and respected within the WCET community, which is the main North American distance education consortium management association (P136). The ED was also well respected for the leadership role played in developing the consortium's professional development services (D3). However, it was not these realms of influence which would have been beneficial in influencing a group of senior academic administrators to evolve the consortium beyond a fund distribution mechanism. Perhaps if the consortium had hired someone such as a former senior academic officer who was highly prominent within the province then they may have had sway to influence other administrators to evolve the consortium.

In summary, the consortium management did take a collaborative approach to leadership, but did not have licence or interpersonal capital to influence the evolution of the consortium. Without that evolution, and without any year-over-year changes to the main funding distribution formula, and with institutional capacity for online program development having improved by 2010, there was little reason to sustain the consortium.

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This concludes the analysis of Case D using the Huxham model. Within this section it was shown how the consortia effectively, or less effectively, addressed the tensions between what contributes to collaborative advantage and what leads to collaborative inertia.

Open Systems Theory

The final section of this chapter follows the pattern of the previous chapters and analyzes Case D through the lens of open systems theory. The analysis examines the alignment of the internal and external cultural logics, and the significance that alignment played in the persistence of the consortium. Typically, organizations with greater alignment with the logics of the environment in which they are embedded tend to persist.

Following the methodology of previous chapters, the coding of the internal and external source documents was examined to ascertain alignment. In the case of Case D, because the consortium had effectively been shut down at the time this research was conducted there were fewer internal documents available for analysis than in the other cases studied in this research project. As a result, research depended more heavily on the three interviews than on documents such as consortium annual reports and business plans. There was a great deal of consistency in the information conveyed in these interviews which came from diverse perspectives. As well, a fourth individual was interviewed but it was requested to be “off-the-record.” The fourth interview only provided confirmation

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of information received from other research participants. A particularly rich document was the 2005 review of the plan to improve technology enhanced learning. This review contained information and perspectives from key individuals. Again, it confirmed much of what was conveyed in this research project's interviews.

An examination of the coding showed interesting similarities and departures in values between the internal and external cultural logics. Three of the top four most frequent codes were common to both internal and external logics coding and included: collaboration, innovation and autonomy. It was interesting that both internal and external documents spoke strongly of the need and intent to collaborate. However, research participants were clear that other than in the area of professional development, collaboration was narrowly defined to be cooperation in allocating funds. It would seem that collaboration was an important value and commonly understood, but it was a somewhat impotent version of collaboration which was valued.

The commonly held value of innovation was perhaps the glimmer of hope for the consortium and the one in which it was most successful. All research participants indicated the capacity building which the consortium afforded was its most significant legacy.

There was also internal and external agreement on the valuing of institutional autonomy. It has been discussed above that the institutions enjoyed

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high levels of autonomy and without an alignment with this value it was unlikely the consortium would have launched or persisted for as long as it did. However, as one research participant noted, Case D's alignment with the external logic of autonomy may well have contributed to its dissolution. "It did align so much that it was kind of redundant. You know, a different institutional logic for higher education in the province... would have seen much less autonomy on the part of various institutions" (D2). Essentially, since the consortium aligned with the external logic it remained in a coordinating role; but with funding allocations following existing formulas there was little to coordinate.

It was also interesting to note the codes which did not align between the internal and external logics. The second most frequent code for the consortium was to encourage educational excellence, whereas for the external environment it was to encourage access. This departure between the internal and external logics was also reflected in the 2005 review in which those surveyed from the institutions cited improved educational quality as a top benefit of the technology enhanced learning funding program. This benefit contrasted sharply with the government's "goals of the Plan (which) clearly placed a priority on off-campus students living in rural and northern communities in the province" (P125, p. 61). This contrast also re-enforces the assertion that the post-secondary institutions were less interested in the government's goal of improving access than they were in securing funds to build capacity.

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In summary, there were both significant alignment and misalignments between Case D logics and the external environment logics. Both the alignment and misalignment may have contributed to the persistence trajectory of the consortium.

Conclusion

In this chapter the Case D consortium has been described and analyzed. A concluding summary of that analysis is offered in this chapter section.

The consortium was first described in general terms and then analyzed with the use of three theoretical constructs. The analysis consisted of examining the consortium through the three theoretical lenses as a means to determine if the consortium substantively manifested the various elements of each construct and to highlight key factors in the particular persistence trajectory taken by the consortium. These factors will be discussed and will form the main body of this chapter's conclusion.

Following the pattern of previous chapter the factors influencing persistence for the consortium are listed and then discussed.

Key Factors in Case D's Persistence

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Pre-existing factors:

- Compelling provincial reports to improve access and advance capacity for technology enhanced learning
- Collaboration generally considered best practice in undertaking development of technology enhanced learning, but not as compelling in context of few large institutions
- History of high institutional autonomy and limited collaboration
- Weak to moderate inherent incentive, but strong instrumental incentives for both government and institutions to address access and capacity issues

Design factors:

- Minimal level of collaboration in course development; more in professional development and student support/administration
- Evidence of significant pseudo aims on the part of key consortium members (government seeking the appearance of increasing access, post-secondaries seeking the appearance of collaborating)
- No obvious consortium champion

In reviewing these factors two possible theories emerge. The first is a cynical view that the consortium was largely a sham developed by government

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for political purposes and the post-secondaries acquiesced to obtain funding dollars. The second is a more Pollyanna-ish theory that the consortium design was flawed but inevitable and did, in the end, achieve the desired results. Each of these theories is briefly explored.

The cynical theory follows this logic. As has been noted in this chapter the government at the time of Case D's inception was clinging to power and needed to bolster its support from rural voters. Creating a highly visible entity touted in throne speeches and with the purpose of improving rural access to post-secondary education, Case D would be one tactic for garnering rural support. The post-secondary institutions were complicit in this tactic as it afforded them new funding without surrendering autonomy because the entity was designed to be an impotent shell through which money flowed. No champion emerged and none was put forward so the result was to limit the consortium to what it was intended to be, a money shell. When government changed and the ruling party had a strong rural support base, the shell was no longer needed and the charade could be dispensed with, and funds injected directly into institutions.

The Pollyanna theory follows this logic. The initial vision for Case D arose from considerable review and consultation which called for improved rural access to post-secondary education. To achieve this worthy goal provincial capacity for technology enhanced learning would need to be enhanced using what was considered the best practice of the day, a collaborative approach. These

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antecedent conditions inevitably led to the formation of a distance education consortium, but with an initial time limited mandate to “jump start” activity in this emerging area. Using a consortium approach was perhaps contrary to the provincial context which included a few large institutions and a history of high institutional autonomy. However, the consortium was wisely designed to accommodate post-secondaries’ historical autonomy by giving institutions high flexibility in how funds were used, particularly in the area of course development. This “let 1,000 flowers bloom” approach to course development, while not developing strategic, coherent online programs, did reflect good change management principles by enabling early adopters and giving them high discretion so as to let creative new endeavours emerge. It also served as a catalyst for the development of capacity and a beginning inventory of online courses. As capacity developed, institutions could be weaned off targeted funding and as they began to invest their own funds in developing online courses they would, by necessity, begin to think more strategically about which courses and programs would best serve their students.

The two theories both have evidence to support them; it is a matter of how the evidence is interpreted. Therefore, it may well be that the truth lies somewhere in between the two theories. There was probably a mix of motives in the rationale for the consortium. There was probably a mix of wisdom, naivety and self-interest in the design of the consortium. There were probably some aspirations for a champion to emerge but some lack of vigour in ensuring that

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was the case. Finally, the decision to dissolve the consortium may have been based on both political and economic opportunism, and cost/benefit rationale.

On the whole, the consortium created a lot of courses and built capacity, which were key goals in the initial vision for the consortium. Achieving these goals, in some measure, created a base upon which the provincial post-secondaries could build. It is unfortunate that the consortium was treated as an “all or nothing” entity. There were aspects of the consortium that could have been treated as time limited and catalytic in nature, and others that could have been treated as ongoing in nature and supported long term. For example, the professional development activities were positive and were not continued after provincial support was withdrawn. These could have been continued at minimal cost. In summary, there were many gains from the consortium and as one research participant concluded, “the worst that happened is we squandered a good name” (D2).

Chapter VII – DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

In his classic qualitative research methodology handbook Wolcott (2009) counsels researchers writing their conclusions to not deter from case study's primary value: a thick description of a case or cases. "Do not abandon a detailed case study in a last ditch effort to achieve a grand finale. *It is not necessary to push a canoe into the sunset at the end of every presentation*" (Wolcott, 2009, p. 114). Similarly, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) identify the thick case descriptions as the primary value of case studies, even in explanatory research.

While not wishing to "push a canoe into the sunset," in this chapter several observations are made which arise from a comparison of the single case studies: a metatriangulation of observations. As well, this chapter contains descriptions of research limitations and quality, and suggestions regarding future implications for research, theory and practice. The observations are a response to the primary research question and several of the seven subordinate questions.

Discussion

The primary research question is, "What factors influence persistence of four Canadian higher distance education consortia?" Five of the seven subordinate questions relate to single case analysis and were substantively addressed in the three preceding chapters in which the individual cases were

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presented. The five single case questions had two foci: alignment with external cultural logics, and internal persistence factors. Single case, external alignment is first summarized from preceding chapters and then commonalities identified. Then, single case, internal factors are summarized and again, commonalities identified. The discussion of commonalities forms the bulk of the chapter. Finally, suggestions are offered for future higher distance education consortia management research, theory and practice. The chapter begins with a review of the research questions relating to single cases.

Alignment with External Cultural Logics. As noted previously, a key aspect of this research project is to apply an element of Open Systems Theory to the study of higher distance education consortia. The element under study is an assertion that organizations which tend to persist also tend to align internal organizational cultural logics with the cultural logics of the external environment in which they are embedded. How the four consortia, individually, align with the cultural logics in which they are embedded has largely been addressed in the previous single case analysis chapters. The previous single case analyses are summarized in a chart below and are organized by research questions that relate to the single cases. The chart is an adaptation of the thematic analysis suggested by Stake (2006) for cross-case comparison. The chart provides a good overview of whether the various cases confirm or disconfirm the assertion that alignment leads to persistence. The summary of confirming and

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disconfirming cases, and the reasons for the confirmation and disconfirmation, is the primary focus of this chapter section and addresses the cross-case research question “To what extent, if at all, are external factors which influence consortium persistence common to multiple consortia?” The summary chart follows.

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Research Question	Case A		Case C		Case B		Case D	
1. What are the cultural logics of the educational environment in which the cases are embedded?	<u>External</u> Access Collaboration Innovation Accountability	<u>Internal</u> Collaboration Innovation Efficiency Excellence	<u>External</u> Access Collaboration Excellence Accountability /Efficiency	<u>Internal</u> Access Accountability Collaboration Efficiency	<u>External</u> Access Collaboration Excellence Accountability /Efficiency	<u>Internal</u> Access Collaboration Accountability Efficiency	<u>External</u> Collaboration Access Innovation Autonomy	<u>Internal</u> Collaboration Excellence Innovation Autonomy
2. How well do consortia operations align with the cultural logics of the education environment in which they are embedded?	Consortium adheres to logics of collaborative change facilitation and seamlessly accommodates logics of the education environment.		High levels of alignment between consortium and cultural logics.		High levels of alignment between consortium and cultural logics.		High levels of alignment between consortium and cultural logics	
3. To what extent, if any, does consortium operational alignment, or misalignment, with cultural logics influence its persistence?	Less an issue of alignment/misalignment than accommodation to alleviate potential points of tension.		Contrary to Open Systems Theory, the consortium's alignment with the external cultural logics reduced persistence as an autonomous entity, although its primary functions persisted within its subsuming entity.		Consortium's alignment with cultural logics is explanatory of its persistence, although differences regarding logics of autonomy and collaboration may have contributed to ongoing trust and power issues.		Consortium's alignment with cultural logics may have both contributed to, and detracted from, persistence. Satisfying calls for collaboration and innovation fostered persistence. However, high respect for autonomy may have meant collaborative advantage not achieved and possibly contributed to cessation.	

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The three research questions addressed in the above chart lead to a summative question, research question number five, “To what extent, if at all, are external factors which influence consortium persistence common to multiple consortia?” The commonality of factors is next discussed in the context of the Open Systems Theory premise under study.

The Open Systems Theory premise under study in this research project is that organizations which persist tend to align with the cultural logics of their external environment. As demonstrated in the summary chart above, this premise has not been supported. There are indications that alignment with the cultural logics of the external environment is an important consideration, but that other conditions and factors should also be considered. These conditions include: do the nature of the logics lend themselves to collaboration and if not can they be accommodated, are the logics similar between organizational levels and types; is alignment inherent or instrumental. Other external factors unrelated to alignment with external cultural logics but also influencing consortium persistence include the context changes and jurisdictional structure. Each of these conditions and factors will be discussed.

Nature of Logics. The first condition to be considered regarding alignment is whether the logics are conducive to consortia activity. The premise within Open Systems Theory is that alignment between an organization’s internal cultural logics and the external environment’s cultural logics tends to enhance persistence. However, this theory has been developed through the study of single entities, not collaborative, multi-

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member entities (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). In the case of collaborative entities, the logics of the external environment may be antithetical to collaborative ventures or aspects of collaborative ventures. Two examples are offered from this study in which alignment between organizational logics and cultural logics may have reduced consortium persistence, and one example is offered in which lack of alignment was not a persistence factor.

In the province in which Case C and B were located a regional consortium, Case C, was subsumed by a jurisdiction-wide consortium, Case B. The rationale for the merger was, in part, that if a few institutions collaborating is good, then many institutions collaborating is better. Therefore, in the case of Case C, aligning the organization's internal cultural logic with an external environment cultural logic which valued collaboration detracted from the consortium's persistence as an autonomous entity. However, this does not mean that being subsumed by the larger consortium was negative. Lack of persistence may indicate the consortium's goals had been achieved, not that it had failed. In the case of Case C, it had been a catalyst for change in its region and, while it had weaknesses, the strengths it offered to the province could be better leveraged within the context of a larger consortium. In essence, Case C may have functioned as something of a "proof of concept" within the province. Therefore, the alignment of the consortium with the external cultural logics could, in this case, be considered a success and that persistence was a matter of form, i.e., the essential function of Case C persisted within the bounds of Case B.

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In Case D, alignment with the external cultural logic of respecting institutional autonomy may have constrained the consortium's ability to realize its full potential. For example, rather than allowing institutions relative autonomy in selecting courses for development the province could have limited funding to programs which addressed educational needs in rural and remote communities. Greater provincial direction may have resulted in the development of courses which offered students opportunities to complete a full program at a distance. Instead, institutions exercised autonomy and determined which courses could be developed with seemingly little regard for enhancing student program completion, or rural needs, but rather on an ad hoc course-by-course basis driven by internal priorities. Therefore, the consortium's alignment with the external cultural logics of autonomy inhibited achievement of one of the consortium's primary founding goals - to efficiently bring meaningful post-secondary programming at a distance to rural and remote communities. Not achieving this goal probably contributed to its lack of persistence and is another example in which a cultural logic may not be compatible with a consortium.

In contrast to the two cases above in which alignment with cultural logics contributed to a lack of persistence, in Case A, the consortium did not strongly align with the external environment's cultural logics and yet, in contradiction to Open Systems Theory, the consortium persisted. This persistence was probably due to an alignment with the cultural logics of its professional environment, that of a collaborative change facilitator, but with clear accommodation of the educational environment's cultural logics. It accommodated the cultural logics by identifying and mitigating potential

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tensions between the consortium's organizational logics and the educational environment's cultural logics. For example, structures and processes which were familiar to academics were implemented. This accommodation helped overcome trust issues and allowed the consortium to advance its collaboration agenda, or in other words, fostered consortium persistence.

In response to the research question "To what extent, if at all, are external factors which influence consortia persistence common to multiple consortia?" it would seem that alignment between organizational logics and the external environment's cultural logics is an important factor since misalignment was observed to contribute to decreased persistence. However, alignment with logics which are significantly limiting or contrary to the logics of consortia may be detrimental to a consortium's persistence. In these situations it may be advisable to identify where tensions exist between the logics of the external environment and the consortium, and seek accommodation rather than alignment.

Logics Across Stakeholder Groups. The second condition to be considered regarding alignment of internal and external cultural logics is whether logics are similar across consortium stakeholder groups. In each of the cases it was found that support for the consortium varied within its own stakeholders. For example, in all cases there was strong support from Teaching and Learning professionals, even when the presidents of the same institutions were not supporting the consortium. This varying

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level of support suggests that the different stakeholder groups may hold different cultural logics and that a consortium may align with some groups' logics but not others.

This concept of varying cultural logics will be discussed in greater detail, some possible logics groups identified and the competing logics represented by these groups. First some examples of groups with differing cultural logics are presented. Those in Teaching and Learning centers held values such as improving student access and online pedagogy, and felt working collaboratively with peers at other institutions fostered this improvement (D3, B4, C3, A5). There was enthusiasm for their respective consortia within this stakeholder group, and regret at the closure, or lack of full use of the consortium. The logics of this group aligned well with those of the consortia. While it would require a re-coding of documents to confirm, it seemed evident based on a manual review of existing codes that when this stakeholder group was being referenced or self-referencing, the logics such as access, educational excellence, innovation and collaboration were highly prevalent. It could be said that this group possessed "educational logics." This is consistent with Amason's (2007) findings related to implementing distance education policy; there is less resistance to implementing policy when it directly affects students. It is feasible that Teaching and Learning professionals viewed the benefits of distance education consortia as directly affecting students so were quite supportive of consortia.

Conversely, institutional executives had mixed levels of support for the consortia. This may be due to the varied and sometimes competing priorities with which

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executives must contend, such as acquiring funding, generating enrollment and containing costs (A2, A3, B4, C2, D2). If consortia were not able to deliver the benefits this group was seeking, then there was limited support. Again, a cursory review of the coding revealed this group aligning with logics such as accountability, efficiency and access (especially as it related to increasing enrollment). It could be said that this group possessed “market logics.” Case A was very conscious of not treading on these logics and never got between institutions and their brand. Both Case B and C were started with an emphasis on access (educational logics) but over time it was clear that where market logics were not being satisfied, support from executives declined. Case D provided funds that were used by institutions to, largely, develop alternate delivery of existing courses which were enrolled in by on-campus students rather than remote and rural students. Developing online sections of these courses addressed issues of space constraints and possibly student recruitment, i.e., largely market logics (D2). When these market logics could be satisfied without the overburden of a consortium the executives were quick to agree to its dissolution, much to the disappointment of the Teaching and Learning professionals (D3). This inability of executives to constrain competitive drives was also inferred in other research into distance education consortia (Johnson, 2005).

Finally, those from government departments provided mixed levels of support for distance education consortia. Like post-secondary executives, this stakeholder group contended with competing priorities such as political agendas, cost containment and intense public scrutiny (A3, B1, B4, D1, D2). A review of the relevant coding aligned this

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group with logics such as access, accountability and instrumentality (i.e., education leading to employment and economic growth). It could be said that this group possessed “political logics.” Similar to the market logics of institutional executives, when political logics were not being satisfied there was a waning of support for a consortium.

In conclusion, a response to the research question “To what extent, if at all, are external factors which influence consortia persistence common to multiple consortia?” is that alignment is important but may need to be more nuanced than an alignment with a broad set of logics. Rather, consortia may be advised to align operations with one stakeholder group’s logics, and, as discussed in an earlier section, accommodate the logics of other stakeholder groups.

Delving into recent developments in organizational studies reveals that the above conclusion regarding multiple logics is an emerging theoretical and research paradigm. A review of recent literature shows emerging support among Open Systems researchers and theorists for the concept that different, and possibly competing, logics exist within a sector and within organizations. Indeed one research group asserts that “understanding heterogeneity in how multiple logics manifest within organizations is critical because it has significant implications for predicting outcomes” (Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 365). As well, Thornton *et al.* (2012) build on previous work in the area (Friedland & Alford, 1991) to form a matrix in which various categories of analysis, such as sources of legitimacy, authority, and means of control, are examined across social institutions (institutional orders) such as family, religion, and business. A benefit of this

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cross-institutional perspective has been to identify the multiple roles played by individuals, groups, and organizations across multiple social institutions and the influence of, sometimes, competing logics of differing social institutions. To deal with competing logics some logics are only “loosely coupled,” or in other words only adhered to at a very superficial level. In the case of this research project there were numerous instances of some groups or organizations only loosely coupling to espoused logics, such as collaboration, largely for instrumental reasons. This leads to the third condition to be considered when assessing alignment with external environmental logics: the role of inherent and instrumental motivations.

Inherent versus Instrumental Motivations. Alignment between consortium logics and the external environment’s cultural logics may be for both inherent and instrumental reasons. As was noted in the single case studies some organizations only participated in a consortium for instrumental reasons, such as to appease political masters, or to access funding. In recognition of this, Case A operated its projects as opt-in, with declining levels of funding over time. By structuring participation and resourcing in this fashion, institutions which did not anticipate inherent value in a project were unlikely to only participate for purely instrumental reasons. In other words, the institutions would not “loosely couple” themselves to the logics of a project. Conversely, founding champions of Case B pressured all institutions to participate in the consortium and as a result were dealing with several institutions being only “loosely coupled” to the consortium, with resulting power and trust issues. Similar findings were reflected in Towney’s (2002) research on single entity organizations: “coercive pressure results in

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procedural compliance, a mechanical process of implementation focusing on external needs and requirements, to ensure legitimacy, but a lack of embeddedness” (p. 175).

Therefore, while instrumental motivation may be needed to launch initiatives, such as Case A’s use of seed money, and to effectively reduce innovation risk, the balance between inherent and instrumental motivations needs to shift over time to inherent motivations in order for a consortium to persist.

This concludes this chapter section in which a cross-case comparison has been made of consortium alignment with external logics. It has been concluded that this research did not support the Open Systems theory that alignment is positively associated with persistence. Instead, there is indication that other conditions and factors should also be considered, including whether: the nature of the logics lend themselves to collaboration and if not can they be accommodated, the logics are similar between organizational levels and types, alignment is inherent or instrumental. Other external factors, beside alignment, will now be considered.

Internal and External Persistence Factors. In addition to examining alignment with cultural logics this research project also examined other factors, both external and internal, which contributed to consortia persistence and were common to the four consortia under study. These factors, as they pertained to single cases, were identified in the chapters describing the single cases. In this section, the commonalities are summarized. Specifically, two research questions address these internal and external factors:

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- To what extent, if at all, do other external factors, aside from consortium alignment with cultural logics, influence consortium persistence?
- To what extent, if at all, are internal factors which influence consortium persistence common to multiple consortia?

External Factors. The research question regarding other external factors is first addressed. The first observation regarding other external factors is the ability to adapt to change. An examination of the external environment of the four cases reveals two key commonalities: changing governmental priorities and changing technological environments. While all four consortia experienced these changes, the impact on persistence varied depending on a consortium's flexibility and its reaction to these changes. For example, while two consortia experienced changes to the provincial governing party, which changed some of the respective provinces' post-secondary priorities, the impact on persistence was dissimilar. In Case A, for example, the consortium reacted to provincial decentralization of post-secondary education by assisting colleges turned into universities to transition in areas such as research. Conversely, in Case D, the new government reduced emphasis on rural and remote access: this change was not responded to and the consortium was closed. Similarly, with a change in technology some consortia responded to the changes while others did not to the same degree. For example, Case C continued its emphasis on hub-and-spoke synchronous distance education while other consortia were adopting newer technologies that facilitated the more flexible many-to-many asynchronous approach to distance education. So, it appears that less important than the actual external factors

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was a consortium's ability to adapt to changing factors in the external environment. As discussed in the individual case chapters, a consortium's ability to change was influenced by its structure, mandate, support, and attention to the environment. In large part, these are design factors. A consortium designed as an enabling, facilitating entity was less bound by rigid structure or mandate and hence more able to adapt to changing political priorities or technological shifts.

A second observation regarding other external factors is that best practice is not always best practice. During the general time period in which most of the consortia under study were formed, it was assumed that working collaboratively via a consortium was a best practice in developing and delivering higher distance education. In contrast to this practice, however, Case A would not facilitate projects with fewer than three institutions. In other words, when few institutions were involved it was assumed there was no need for the administrative overhead of a collaborative entity. Instead, institutions simply worked out relatively simple partnership arrangements. If this principle of avoiding consortia administrative overhead were applied in Case D's province it is doubtful Case D would have been initiated, because of the few institutions involved. Therefore, understanding that best practices should be contextually evaluated is a second observation regarding external factors influencing consortium persistence.

In conclusion, beyond consortia alignment with external cultural logics, it was observed that it may be beneficial for consortia structures and processes to be highly flexible, and that best practice be critically assessed for contextual appropriateness.

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Internal Factors. The final section in this study's cross-case analysis is a brief overview of common internal consortia characteristics which may have contributed to consortia persistence. Similar to the previous section, a modification of Stake's (2006) thematic analysis is used to identify internal commonalities and differences between the cases. Again, commonalities and differences between cases are summarized in table form as a means of triangulating findings. Consortia characteristics are triangulated using the elements of the Amey and the Huxham theoretical frameworks which were employed in the single case analysis chapters. The following table summarizes the findings.

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Amey/Huxham	Case A	Case B	Case C	Case D
Antecedent Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -stable government priorities that emphasized access and decentralization -a history of collaboration among postsecondary institutions -emerging interest in enabling technologies for distance education -growing discontent with the government agency charged with providing distance education in the province. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 21% cuts in the 1993-96 period - government increasingly activist in the administration of post-secondary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - higher education is diverse, decentralized, innovative and affluent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - multiple reports call for increased access and greater collaboration
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -new government prioritizes cost saving without losing ground in edTech & collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provincial Campus announced -emphasis on systemic collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 21% cuts - atmosphere of collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collaboration viewed as best practice - political motivation to serve rural electorate - institutional motivation to access monies
Motivation/Aims & Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - respect institutional autonomy - formal strategy to launch initiatives with mix of instrumental & inherent incentives; gradually weaning off instrumental incentives - ensure resonant value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve access - demonstrate collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pool resources for efficiency and improved program access - unified voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - operational cooperation, strategic autonomy - low inherent, high instrumental aims -governmental holds pseudo aims

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Amey/Huxham	Case A	Case B	Case C	Case D
Champion/Power & Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establish and leverage social capital - respected people who value both collaboration and outcomes - power in facilitation only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong champion, secondary champion - over use of power? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - small group, long history, respected initial peer - turnover: new directors share less enthusiasm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no champion - government and some operational levels supportive - minimal power used
Partnership Framework/Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - representative not representational governance - consortium only plays facilitative role - familiar structures & processes used - trust was reputationally based. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - central service provider rather than partnership hub or communal project - non-voluntary membership led to ambiguous commitment - trust issues were settled contractually (i.e., via policy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high trust, low power struggle - participating institutions held complementary resources & benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decisions largely made above or below consortium level (i.e., at government level or at institutional departmental level) - shallow commitment for varying reasons (large institutions only needed money, small did not have time) - trust via contractual constraints in MOU
Outcomes & Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relevant and targeted accountability reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high quality reports - shaming backfired - did not prove value proposition, especially in capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gradual decline of feedback - changing desired outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provided input measures only - no formula change so no need for consortium

In the single case chapters the two theoretical frameworks used for analysis, the Amey model and the Huxham model, are largely confirmed as being applicable in the Canadian higher distance education consortium context. However, some caveats regarding certain framework elements are also evident. In particular, observations regarding project champions, leadership, decision making, technology, and consortium life cycles are made and presented in this chapter section.

Champions. As was confirmed in the three single case chapters the presence of consortium champion(s) contributes to consortium persistence and conversely the absence of a champion detracts from consortium persistence. The caveat is that there seems to be a need to nuance both the level and degree of influence of a champion. In Case A, the key champions were at a governance level and were respected peers to those functioning at that level. Similarly, in Case B and C the primary champions were at the governance level. Conversely, in Case D the primary champion was at the consortium level and was viewed as an effective manager but did not hold sufficient social capital in the academic arena to sway senior post-secondary executives to do more than cooperate in fund allocation. Ensuring a champion is from the same level as those one wishes to influence seems an important caveat. Similarly, the degree of influence may be a factor. As discussed in Case B, the over use of a champion's influence to "strong arm" all institutions into participating may have

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contributed to the ongoing power and trust issues. Therefore, while the need for a champion was confirmed in this study, there are indications that the champion needs to be at an appropriate level, and exert an appropriate degree of influence which demonstrates collaboration.

Leadership. The ongoing leadership of a collaborative venture requires a specific skill set and an ability to use the available power effectively. Typically, leaders make use of a combination of expert, referential (relational), authority (positional) or coercive power (Northouse, 2015). In the case of the consortia under study there were examples of strong leadership which contributed to their persistence. In Case A, the consortium executive director was recruited for the position on the basis of their vision and collaborative approach to leadership. That equated to holding expertise and referential power. This use of expertise and especially referential power was also evident in Case B where the executive director was portrayed as having “an innate sense of what is a collaboration” (B4). In other words, high referential power. Similarly, the executive director was portrayed as having a strong vision for distance education, or expertise power. In both cases, the executive directors of the consortium with the greatest persistence held and used expert and referential power. Typically, consortium managers have relatively limited authority or coercive power. So, the ability to gain and use expert and referential power is critical to impactful leadership of a consortium.

Decision Making. Similar to the need to nuance the understanding of a champion and the use of leadership power, there needs to be a nuancing of collaborative decision making. In the Huxham model it was noted that a balance was needed between being collaborative and “just getting on with it” through the application of collaborative thuggery. Part of this balance entails placing appropriate decision making at appropriate levels. In Case D, key governance decisions such as launching the consortium and closing the consortium were made at a level above the consortium itself. As well, key decisions on what courses to develop were made at lower levels: specifically, at the institutions. Little actual decision making was made at the consortium board level itself. Conversely, in Case A the decision making structure placed system level decision making at the board level and operational decisions at an operational level. Similarly, in Case C operational decisions were made at the board level but this was standard practice for the small institutions participating in the consortium. Therefore, getting the right decisions made at the right level, appropriate to the practice of those around the decision making table is an important consideration in decision making.

Related to appropriate decision making is the decision whether to launch a collaborative entity in the first place. As Huxham and Vangen (2005) advocate, it is best to avoid the overburden of collaboration and to only engage in collaboration when organizations can achieve something

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together which they could not achieve apart. Therefore, critically evaluating the option to collaborate is important rather than simply accepting it as best practice. The fact that four similar consortia emerged in adjacent jurisdictions at approximately the same time with very similar mandates indicates that there may have been a lack of critical evaluation of the merits of collaboration. In Case D, collaboration was overtly described as best practice even though of the jurisdictions studied in this project it was the jurisdiction in which collaboration was least suited. A conclusion, particularly for practitioners, is that it is important to critically assess the nuances of their environment before accepting a best practice *carte blanche*.

Technology. In the era under study, the mid-1990's to 2012, there was an explosion of technology which facilitated new educational possibilities. New markets could be reached, and online educational development complexity and costs dropped dramatically. However, at the start of this era the costs and complexity were still relatively high. Institutions viewed a consortium approach to addressing this new era as a means to reduce costs, distribute risk and consolidate expertise (A2, B1, D4). As well, government saw a consortium approach as a means to reduce redundant funding of institutional learning curves in the area of distance education. However, as time went on the perceived immanent threats of being left behind in the emerging educational technology

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advances, and the associated distance education bonanza, dissipated. Consequently, the need for institutions to band together was less imperative. Instead, individual institutions had the capacity to develop and deliver their own distance education courses without the support, and overhead, of a consortium.

Perhaps the greatest lesson is the need to life cycle a consortium when the main impetus for it is to overcome deficits in technology and expertise. It is predictable that these deficits will be overcome as normal technological diffusion takes place. This life cycling of consortia is the next section addressed.

Life Cycle. Finally, as noted above, consortium collaborative advantage is gained when organizations can do things together they could not do individually. If this is a criterion for consortia formation and persistence then the collaborative advantage needs to be assessed on the probable life cycle of the collaborative advantage. For example, as noted in the above section on Technology, in all of the cases studied in this project, part of the motivation, to varying degrees, for institutions working together was to overcome a lack of expertise in online education. The expertise deficit included a lack of both technological and pedagogical expertise in the area of online education. If overcoming an expertise deficit was a primary motivation, either explicit or hidden, for joining a distance

education consortium then it should have been anticipated that this motivation would diminish over time as institutions and the consortium gathered and shared knowledge. Similarly, when the motivation for launching a consortium was to demonstrate inter-institutional collaboration to a government, such as in Case C and D, then it can be expected that this motivation will decrease with changes in government priorities. Therefore, it may have been prudent to plan for a limited life cycle consortium when a significant motivation was largely related to a time limited factor such as expertise deficiency or a government priority. This life cycle planning approach would have been especially applicable when the lack of expertise was related to technology because of the consistent trend in technology toward accessibility through reduced user interface complexity.

In conclusion, in this chapter section it was observed that the two theoretical frameworks used to examine consortia internal environments, Amey model and Huxham model, were largely confirmed. However, certain framework elements were also observed to hold some nuances in the higher distance education context. In particular, observations regarding project champions, decision making, and consortium life cycles were made and presented in this chapter section.

Research Limitations and Quality

In this chapter section, research limitations are discussed, followed by measures taken in this research project to insure quality. For the most part, limitations of this research project are the general limitations of multiple case study methodology. These limitations lie in the generalizability of the findings, and potential investigator bias or lack of sensitivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Case study methodology is sometimes critiqued as lacking in generalizability because of the largely descriptive nature and limited number of cases under study. However, as George and Bennett (2004) point out, this is to misinterpret the nature of case study and place an expectation on the methodology related to the strengths of very different methodologies such as experimentation. In contrast to asserting general findings, this research project described the cases and the findings which emerge from them. As well, commonalities and differences between the cases were identified and implications of these commonalities and differences were discussed. The observations made regarding these commonalities and differences are presented as potential considerations, particularly for practitioners. However, the observations are not asserted as universal truths regarding consortia but rather considerations. This level of assertion regarding the observations may not satisfy readers accustomed to reading experiment-based research and the more definitive conclusions often forthcoming from that research. However, it appropriately directs readers to points of interest and consideration without constraining or

overshadowing their own views and insights which emerge from the case studies. This balanced level of assertion is appropriate to case study research and allows for appropriate reader application to new contexts and possible generalization.

As well, investigator bias was addressed through a variety of means, including, self reflection, use of a second coder, discussion with knowledgeable others, participant validation, and comparison with relevant literature. Throughout the process of the research project a researcher journal was maintained and frequently reviewed to assess for bias. As mentioned in the methodology section, a representative sample of source data coding was recoded by a trained qualitative researcher and a high correlation of coding was achieved. Throughout the analysis phase of the research project tentative findings were discussed with colleagues who are senior academics in the field, as well as with the dissertation supervisor and committee. All interview transcripts were reviewed by the respective interviewees and affirmed to be representative of their comments. Finally, where possible, unexpected findings were compared with extant research literature to see if there was confirming research. In total, these measures have minimized investigator bias.

Measures to ensure research quality have also been taken.

According to Yin (2009) case study research has four quality indicators:

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construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. Each of these indicators is discussed.

Construct validity is the use of appropriate operational measures in the research design. In the case of this study three measures were incorporated to ensure construct validity. The first was the use of multiple sources of evidence, or data triangulation. The second was the use of a second coder, or investigator triangulation. The third was the use of three theoretical frameworks in the analysis of the data, or theory triangulation.

Internal validity is the identification of consistent pattern of causal relations. Internal validity is not highly relevant to descriptive research projects but is relevant to explanatory research. This research project has aspects of both descriptive and explanatory research. To ensure the internal validity of the explanatory aspect of this research the four cases were analysed using three theoretical frameworks. This analytical methodology is a form of both pattern matching and an examination of rival explanations. Both of these techniques enhanced internal validity.

External validity is the generalizability of the research. Research is considered to be valid when findings are consistently evident in cases external to those studied in the research project. Future research will confirm, or disconfirm findings from this research and reveal its external validity. In this research project replication logic was employed through the

examination of multiple cases which were representative of different forms of persistence. Use of multiple, representative cases improved external validity.

Finally, research reliability exists when the operations of a study can be repeated. In the case of this research project all source material has been retained in both original and coded form, interview transcripts were verified by interviewees, and high correlation between first and second coder indicates subsequent coding would probably reliably reproduce the same findings. In conclusion, reasonable measures have been taken to mitigate the research limitations and ensure research quality of this project. In the next, and final, chapter section implications for research, theory and practice are suggested.

Implications for Research, Theory and Practice

In this chapter section, implications for research, theory and practice are suggested. The implications for research include exploration of cultural logic heterogeneity in higher education stakeholder groups, and exploring greater cross-discipline fertilization. The implications for theory include developing greater nuancing of theory, particularly in relation to heterogeneity, contextualization and temporality. Finally, implications for practice arising from this research have largely been embedded throughout the single case chapters and the cross-case analysis sections of this

chapter. Some of the key practitioner implications include: balancing inherent and instrumental aims, differentiating between aligning with logics and accommodating logics, and appropriately contextualizing best practices. In the remainder of this chapter section these various implications are expanded.

Research. Two important areas for future research identified in the course of this research project include exploration of cultural logic heterogeneity in higher education stakeholder groups, and exploring greater cross-discipline fertilization. The most pressing questions to arise from this research project is the role of differing logics between higher education consortia stakeholder groups. There is emerging literature which indicates that different stakeholder groups within single entities hold different cultural logics and that organizational change needs to accommodate this heterogeneity of logics (Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 365). An indication from this research project is that heterogeneity of logics might play an important role in higher distance education consortia. It would be very helpful to practitioners to have a greater sense of what are the differing stakeholder groups, what are their logics, and possible structures and processes to accommodate these differing logics.

The second area of research that might be helpful is greater exploration of cross-disciplinary theories which are applicable to the higher

distance education consortium context. In preparation for this research project the literature search focused on higher education consortia. However, almost at the conclusion of this search a citation trail was found which led into the very rich pool of inter-organizational relations literature within the broader discipline of organizational studies. Only two mentions of this literature had previously been found in the dozens of articles, books, theses and dissertations surveyed within the higher education literature. It was disappointing to realize that most researchers within higher education had not availed themselves of this research and if they had “crossed the fence” into organizational studies literature they would have found a more mature and robust theoretical and research resource. Therefore, it is recommended that future research include exploration of current organizational studies literature and that conformational research of relevant organizational theory be conducted.

Theory. Theory building in the field of higher distance education consortia management, just as in the broader field of inter-organizational relations, is difficult due to the complex, context-specific, and constantly evolving nature of consortia. As Huxham and Vangen (2005) noted it is difficult to develop a parsimonious inter-organizational relations theory; this is why they developed a rather complex thematic model. The implication for theory building in this field is to contribute to theory without building

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models so unwieldy and complex as to be inaccessible and/or inapplicable, nor to be so overly simplified as to not be truly representative of the environment. This may not be attainable.

Most of the theory in inter-organizational relations has been life-cycle based (Gray, 1989; Ring et al., 2008). While life-cycle models are common, such as the Amey model used extensively in this research project, and provide novice consortia managers with a general understanding of consortia development, they do present a false sense of a linear progression (Huxham, 2003). The thematic model developed by Huxham and Vangen (2005) gives greater breadth and depth to inter-organizational relations theory and is particularly helpful to practitioners as a tool for assessing to which theme they should currently be attending. However, as was observed in this research project, there are a number of nuances that are particular to higher education which need to be researched and incorporated into the thematic model if the theory is to be of assistance to higher education consortia practitioners. This means that already complex theories such as the Huxham model will get more complex as they are made context-specific.

Despite a thematic model being complex, it appears static and therefore does little to help practitioners to predict what aspect of consortia management they can anticipate needing to address next. This lack of

prediction was intentional by Huxham and Vangen (2005) so as to avoid an oversimplification of a complex environment. However, there do seem to be predictable phases of consortium development, such as presented in the Amey life-cycle model, so some sort of temporal guide as to typical consortium progression would be helpful.

In summary, the challenge for theory building in higher education consortia management is to build theory which is sufficiently complex, and context and developmentally specific. To satisfy these requirements might mean developing new ways of representing concepts, such as use of an ecosystem metaphor.

Practice. The implications for practice which emerge from this research project are largely embedded in the analysis sections of both the single case chapters and this chapter's cross-case comparison. For the most part, this research project affirms the theoretical models used with some caveats related to the particular context of Canadian higher distance education consortia. These caveats include issues such as:

- understanding heterogeneity of the environment
- accommodating multiple logics
- assessing contextual appropriateness of best practices
- assessing the potential for collaborative advantage in a specific context

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- evaluating appropriate champions
- designing flexible and familiar decision-making structures and processes.

Similar to theory building in this field, consortia management is complex. While working within a consortium is often frustrating and results in collaborative inertia rather than collaborative advantage, “when it works well you feel inspired... you can feel the collaborative energy” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 3). Hopefully, this research will assist those engaging in collaborative activity to experience that collaborative energy.

Summary Recommendations. In summarizing the learning from this research project it may be helpful to provide what seem to be key recommendations for extending meaningful persistence. These recommendations revolve around the concepts of collaborative advantage, alignment and accommodation.

As noted throughout this document collaborative advantage is defined as being able to do together what organizations cannot do apart. This concept was articulated by research participants using various terms, such as seeking resonant value, seeking mutual benefit, developing common goals, etc. However, also as noted in this document, collaborative advantage is sometimes inherent, sometime instrumental or both. The recommendation regarding collaborative advantage is that for meaningful

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persistence organizations need to be seeking inherent advantage in the mid- to long-term. In the short-term there may need to be instrumental incentives to minimize start-up risk, but if organizations are only participating in a collaborative venture for instrumental advantage then meaningful persistence is unlikely. Once the incentivizing factors are removed then the consortium does not have the foundation upon which to persist.

It should also be noted that collaborative advantage takes many forms. As noted earlier in this chapter there are multiple logics within the post-secondary field, including possibly political logics, market logics, and education logics. All of these logics may have its own set of collaborative advantage being sought, and those advantages may be inherent or instrumental. The recommendation is to recognize which type of advantage is being sought and ensure inherent advantage is primary. This will be expanded upon in the following recommendations regarding alignment and accommodation.

A major research objection of this project was to investigate whether aligning consortium values with cultural logics was a significant persistence factor. It was reported that alignment with higher education cultural logics was not a factor, but, that very deliberately accommodated the logics of higher education was important to persistence. This balance of alignment

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and accommodation is an important recommendation and impacts all facets of consortium design and operation. Several facets will be examined with recommendations, including leadership, structures and processes.

As discussed earlier it is recommended that leadership be at an appropriate level and exert an appropriate degree of “collaborative thuggery.” This recommendation is essentially one of alignment and accommodation. For example, if a consortium exists to provide collaborative advantage in the area of marketing logics, such as expanding geographic markets or improving access, then those in leadership should align with the collaborative advantage being sought. This alignment needs to be both in terms of expertise and with which group they have referential power. For example, a consortium executive director could come from a business background and have a track record of market expansion. However, they would need to be able to accommodate the unique vocabulary of post-secondary education. Whereas in business they may be accustomed to speaking of increasing market share, they may need to speak in terms of improving post-secondary participation rates or decreasing accessibility barriers. As well, as discussed earlier, leaders need to align with the primary logic group. Again, if a consortium exists largely for marketing logics, which is the logics typically held by senior managers, then consortium leadership should resonant or align with that group if they are to have referential power. As discussed, consortium

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leaders typically need to rely on expertise and referential power since they do not have authority or coercive power. So, perhaps an ideal candidate for a consortium executive director, when the consortium seeks marketing collaborative advantage, would be a former senior post-secondary executive who comes from within the marketing discipline or has successfully overseen student recruitment. To summarize, leadership needs to align and accommodate with the collaborative advantage for which the consortium was formed.

Similar to leadership, it is recommended that structures and processes align and accommodate the collaborative advantage being sought. For example, in Case A the consortium was a collaborative change agent. As such the internal structures and processes needed to be flexible, as seen in Case A's matrix structure and collaborative decision making. However, when interfacing with the post-secondary environment its structures and processes accommodated those of that environment at both the governance and operational level. Therefore, the recommendation is to align internal structures and processes with an appropriate model that reflects the advantages of the consortium's purpose, but also accommodates the structures and processes of the post-secondary environment. For example, if a consortium is formed to federate jurisdiction wide processes such as transcript transfer between institutions then the collaborative advantage being sought is largely efficiency. Therefore, the

consortium may align its structure and processes with other efficiency oriented organizations such as business. However, within post-secondary institutions there is a great deal of committee based oversight in matters of academic administration such as the content of transcripts. So, the consortium should expect to accommodate this in the structures and processes adopted in its interface with the consortium member organizations.

Another aspect to this recommendation to align and accommodate relates to the expected life cycle of the consortium. As noted earlier, when a consortium exists to overcome technological deficiencies relating to emerging technologies, then the expected lifecycle of the consortium should align with the quite predictable process of technology diffusion. In other words, the consortium should be designed to have a time limited life cycle.

Therefore, the key recommendations arising from this study are to ensure a strong understanding of the collaborative advantage being sought, both in its nature and which stakeholders hold logics associated with the advantage. As well, consortium designers should ensure they align their leadership, structures and processes, and life cycle with the collaborative advantage sought, while at the same time accommodating the higher education logics more generally.

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In this concluding chapter observations were made regarding consortia management which arose from a cross case comparison of the four single cases studied. As well, observations were made regarding the research project itself, including the research limitations and quality. Finally, several implications for research, theory and practice were suggested along with recommendations for consortium persistence.

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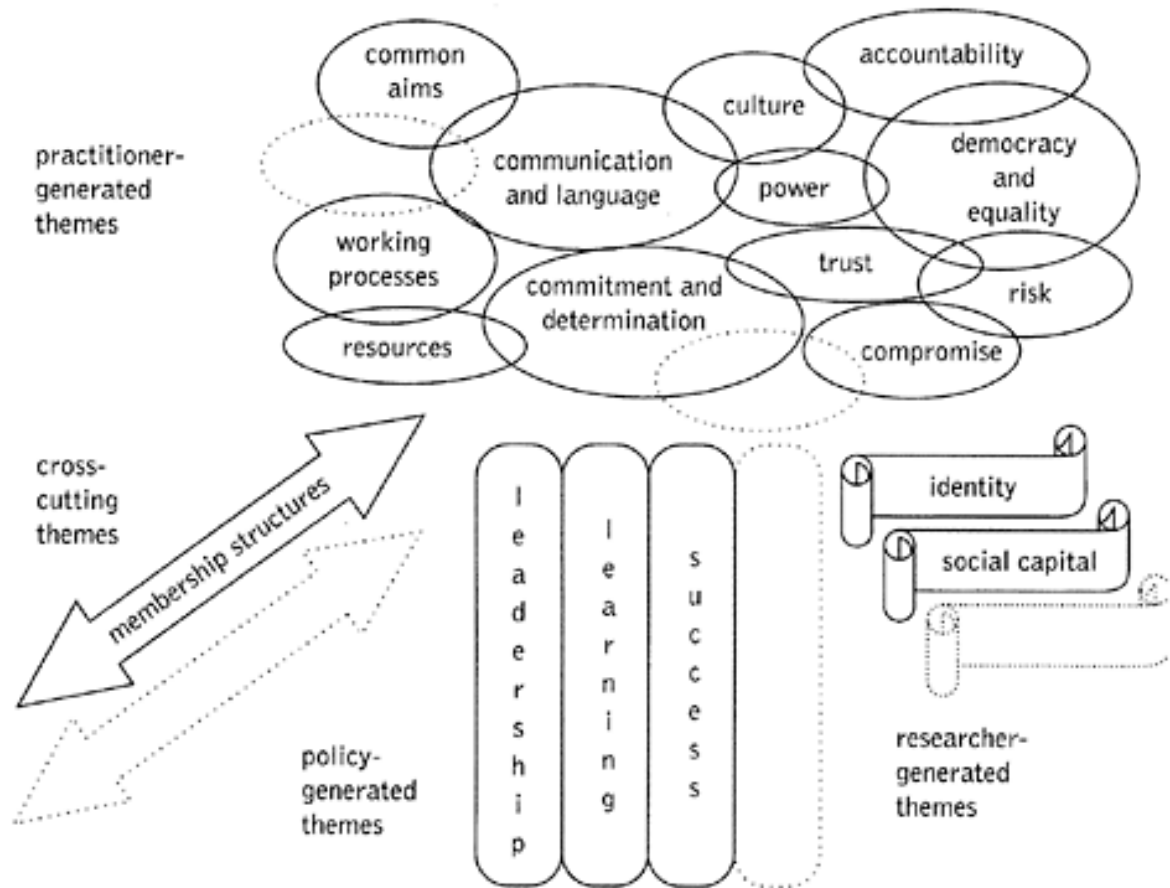
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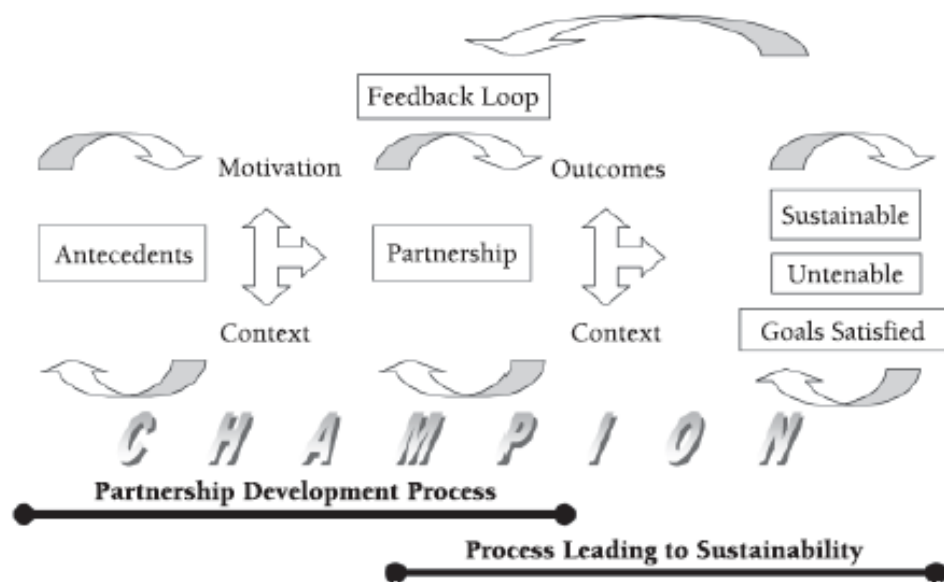
APPENDIX 1: Huxham & Vangen Model



Source: Huxham, C., & Vangen, S. (2005). *Managing to collaborate: The theory and practice of collaborative advantage*. Abingdon, OX: Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from <http://0-lib.myilibrary.com.aupac.lib.athabascau.ca/Browse/open.asp?ID=28996&loc=iv>

APPENDIX 2: Amey, Eddy & Ozaki Model

Figure 1.1. Partnership Development Model.



Source: Amey, M. J., Eddy, P. L., & Ozaki, C. C. (2007). Demands for partnership and collaboration in higher education: A model. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2007(139), 5-14.
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APPENDIX 3: Data Capture, Data Storage & Interview Scripts

DATA CAPTURE Data capture entailed conduction semi-structured interviews with knowledgeable individuals and document collection helpful in understanding the cultural logics (i.e., the values, norms, and myths) of the external educational environments of the consortia under study and/or helpful in understanding the managerial practices of the consortia under study.

Open-ended Interviews: 30 to 90-minute participant interviews were conducted either in-person or via telephone. Interviews were captured through digital audio recording, and written interviewer notes.

Document Review: documents were collected electronically, either from the participants or from public sources..Typical documents collected included: public sector annual plans, reports and public statements, media stories, and association journals, consortia annual plans, reports and public statements, media stories.

DATA STORAGE

Digital Files: Digital audio files and digital documents were transferred to the investigator's computer and deleted from the capture

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device. The computer was secured logically through password and physically in a secure environment (locked, private office) when not in use. Computer back-ups to a local external hard drive were completed weekly and the drive stored in the principal investigator's personal fireproof safe. Doubly encrypted copies were stored in Dropbox. Both the production and back-up data was secure, anonymous, and confidential.

Unique identifiers of interview participants was replaced by coded identifiers prior to data analysis. A list linking codes to individuals was maintained in a password protected document stored on an external storage device secured in the investigator's safe. Participants are not identified within the dissertation

Only the principal investigator (and should he die, his executor) has access to the computer, safe and safety deposit box being used for data storage.

INTERVIEW SCRIPTS

The following section identifies questions used in the course of the research interviews. The questions do not include the standard identifying and trust building questions such as: “What is your name and occupation?” “How are you today?”

The primary research question explored, “What factors influence persistence in four Canadian higher distance education consortia?” In Yin’s (2009) five levels of case study questions this is a Level Three question which focuses on identifying patterns across the cases. To answer this question it is necessary to answer Level Two questions which focus on single cases, and Level One questions which focus on individual perceptions of a single case. Interview questions were generally Level One questions and the responses were used by the investigator to answer Level Two questions.

Two questioning foci were maintained. One to ascertain external environment cultural logics and the other to ascertain internal consortia operations and logics. To ascertain external cultural logics document review was relied upon similar to approaches taken in other investigations of environmental logics (Reay & Hinings, 2005; Thornton, 2001; Thornton

& Ocasio, 1999). Some knowledgeable individuals were also interviewed to provide greater depth by providing context to the examined documents. The research question related to the external environment cultural logics is “What were the cultural logics of the educational environment in which the cases were embedded?” Again, this is a Level Three question which requires answers to Level Two and One questions as in the following table.

Level	Question	Asked of...
Level Three Question	What are the cultural logics of the educational environment in which the cases are embedded?	Investigator
Level Two Question	What are the cultural logics of the educational environment in which a particular case is embedded?	Investigator and Respondent
Level One Questions	<p>1. What changes do you recall as most significant in the period xxxx to yyyy in higher education in your region? (examples: policy, funding, mandates, structures)</p> <p>2. Which institutions did well in this period? What indicated they were “doing well?” What did they do that facilitated this advancement?</p> <p>3. What influenced the changes within the jurisdiction? Who, or what office, was the</p>	Respondent

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	<p>principle influence in the changes? What animated the changes?</p> <p>4. Were there any negative outcomes from these changes to various stakeholders? (example, government, students, faculty, public.)</p>	
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The questions served as a conversation guide “for purposefully animated participants to construct versions of reality interactionally rather than merely purvey data” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001, p. 14) and as such the interviews were rigidly scripted, although similar questions were asked of individuals in similar positions to triangulate responses. The bulk of the interview focused upon the third Level One question regarding influences to draw forth respondents’ interpretation of the environment (Warren, 2001); in this study, the values, norms, and myths which comprised cultural logics.

To ascertain internal consortia operations and logics questions related to internal and external factors were asked. Again, Level Three questions required supporting Level Two and One questions.

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Level	Question	Asked of...
Level Three Question	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do consortia operations align with the cultural logics of the education environment in which they are embedded? 2. What, if any, external factors, aside from consortia alignment with cultural logics, influence consortia persistence? 3. What, if any, internal factors influence consortia persistence? 4. Were factors common between cases? 	Investigator
Level Two Question	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do the consortium operations of a particular case align with the cultural logics of the education environment in which it is embedded? 2. What, if any, external factors, aside from consortium alignment with cultural logics, influence consortium persistence in a particular case? 3. What, if any, internal factors influence consortium persistence? 	Investigator and Respondent

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<p>Level One</p> <p>Questions:</p> <p>Seek to address the four areas of consortia: organization, relations, context (especially in relation to cultural logics) and processes.</p>	<p>1. What were the advantages of consortium xxxx at its inception? Did these evolve over time?</p> <p>2. What were the decision-making processes at consortium xxx? Who were the key decision-makers?</p> <p>3. What were the communication mechanisms at consortium xxx? (medium, frequency, location) How well did these mechanisms work? What alternatives were considered?</p> <p>4. What was the tone of the inter-personal relations you experienced in your involvement with consortium xxx?</p> <p>5. How were financial relationships determined? What was the perception of these relationships?</p> <p>6. What was the most successful endeavor of consortium xxx? How did you know it was successful?</p> <p>7. What surprised you most about how the consortium operated?</p>	<p>Respondent</p>
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Consortia Persistence

	<p>8. What was the most popular “tribal story” among consortium insiders (i.e., extraordinary measures, classic circumstances)</p> <p>9. Were there familiar sayings at meetings or in day-to-day operations?</p> <p>10. When decision-making was deadlocked, what would tip the scales one way or another?</p>	
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APPENDIX 4: Participant Sample, Recruitment & Protocol

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT SAMPLE

Experts were identified who could reasonably be expected to be, or who are known to be, familiar with the higher education institutional logics of the jurisdictions in which the case consortia are located and/or the consortium under study. The participant sampling emerged as the research progressed (Swanson & Holton III, 2005) and included senior government officials, senior institutional administrators and senior consortia administrators. Identification was through peer recommendation and investigator judgment. 15 individuals were interviewed, with three providing information on multiple consortia.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Participation was by fully informed consent. Research participants were provided with the recruitment form below, and were required to complete the consent form below.



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Factors Influencing Persistence in Higher Education Distance Education

Consortia

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is in partial fulfillment of a doctoral program at Athabasca University and is intended to identify factors which influence the persistence of distance education consortia. This portion of the study examines the broader educational context of a consortium under study. You have been asked to participate due to your insights into the context of a consortium under study. Participating in this phase of the research does not preclude you from, or oblige you to, further phases of the research.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Sign a consent form.
- Participate in a 30-45 minute open-ended interview either in-person or by telephone. The subject of the interview will be your understanding of the organizational processes associated with a higher education distance education consortia with which you may have familiarity.
- The interview will be recorded and transcribed with identifying information removed. Within one-month of the interview the transcript will be sent to you and

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- you will be asked to briefly review the transcription and comment on its accuracy.
- You may be asked to participate in non-obligatory follow-up interview for clarification.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There should be minimal risks to you through this study however, if, you experience discomfort such as while discussing a memory of an unpleasant circumstance, or if you have job security concerns due to relating organization-related information, you may choose to not respond to a question or to discontinue participation in the study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

It is anticipated that this study will benefit the education sector in the form of improved higher education management; however, it is not expected that this study will have direct benefit to you as a participant in this study.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no payment for participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.

Identifying information such as name or organization will be removed from transcripts and will not be referred to within the study without permission.

All data will be stored on a password protected computer kept in a locked physical location. Data back-up will be stored on portable storage devices secured in locked,

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fireproof safe or a bank safety deposit box. Only the principal investigator will have access to these devices. All data will be securely destroyed seven years after the research is complete.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. This study is being conducted with the knowledge and consent of the organizations being researched. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study prior to the data analysis commencing. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board.

Questions regarding this study may be directed to the principal investigator;
Gordon Preston at gord.preston@gmail.com

Alternate version in cases where organizational consent was unavailable:

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There should be minimal risks to you through this study however, if, you experience discomfort such as while discussing a memory of an unpleasant circumstance, or if you have job security concerns due to relating organization-related information, you may choose to not respond to a question or to discontinue participation in the study. This study is being conducted without the consent of the organizations being researched, either because they no longer exist, or have chosen to not offer their consent

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. This study is being conducted without the consent of the organizations being researched, either because they no longer exist, or have chosen to not offer their consent. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study prior to the data analysis commencing. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Factors Influencing Persistence in Higher Education Distance Education

Consortia – Research Participants

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Gordon Preston, a doctoral student in the Centre of Distance Education at Athabasca University. This study is in partial fulfillment of the doctoral program in distance education.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Dr. Patrick Fahy, who is the study supervisor. He may be reached at patf@athabascau.ca or 1-866-514-6234

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is intended to identify factors which influence the persistence of distance education consortia. This portion of the study examines the broader educational context of a consortium under study. You have been asked to participate due to insights into the values and attitudes prevalent in higher education.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Consortia Persistence

- Agree to this consent form through signature or through return, identifiable email.
- Participate in a 30-45 minute open-ended interview either in-person or by telephone. The subject of the interview will be your impression of the values and attitudes within higher education in your region of the country over recent history.
- The interview will be recorded and transcribed with identifying information removed. Within one-month of the interview the transcript will be sent to you and you will be asked to briefly review the transcription and comment on its accuracy.
- You may be asked to participate in non-obligatory follow-up interview for clarification.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There should be minimal risks to you through this study, however, if, you experience discomfort such as while discussing a memory of an unpleasant circumstance, or if you have job security concerns due to relating organization-related information, you may choose to not respond to a question or to discontinue participation in the study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

It is anticipated that this study will benefit the education sector in the form of improved higher education management; however, it is not expected that this study will have direct benefit to you as a participant in this study.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no payment for participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.

Identifying information such as name or organization will be removed from transcripts and will not be referred to within the study without written permission.

All data will be stored on a password protected computer kept in a locked physical

Consortia Persistence

location. Data back-up will be stored on portable storage devices secured in locked, fireproof safe or a bank safety deposit box. Only the principal investigator will have access to these devices. All data will be securely destroyed seven years after the research is complete.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. This study is being conducted with the knowledge and consent of the organizations being researched. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study prior to the data analysis commencing. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Research Ethics Administrator by e-mail to rebsec@athabascau.ca or by telephone at 1-780-675-6718 or Toll Free: 1-800-788-9041 ext. 6718.

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SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I have read the information provided for the study “Factors Influencing Persistence in Higher Education Distance Education Consortia – Research Participants” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant (please print)

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Participant or Legal Representative

Date

[The name and signature of the legal representative is ONLY necessary if the participant is not competent to consent. If the participant is competent, please do not include these options.]

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

Name of Witness (please print)

Signature of Witness

Date

Consortia Persistence

Note: if emailing your consent please scan a signed copy of this form and return it to gord.preston@gmail.com. If mailing the form please send to Gord Preston, Box 2875 Stony Plain, AB T7Z 1Y4.

Alternate version in cases where organizational consent was unavailable.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There should be minimal risks to you through this study however, if, you experience discomfort such as while discussing a memory of an unpleasant circumstance, or if you have job security concerns due to relating organization-related information, you may choose to not respond to a question or to discontinue participation in the study. This study is being conducted without the consent of the organizations being researched, either because they no longer exist, or have chosen to not offer their consent

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. This study is being conducted without the consent of the organizations being researched, either because they no longer exist, or have chosen to not offer their consent. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study prior to the data analysis commencing. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I have read the information provided for the study “Multilevel Factors Influencing Persistence Heterogeneity in Higher Education Distance Education Consortia – Phase II Research Participants” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant (please print)

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Participant or Legal Representative

Date

[The name and signature of the legal representative is ONLY necessary if the participant is not competent to consent. If the participant is competent, please do not include these options.]

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SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

Name of Witness (please print)

Signature of Witness

Date

Note: if emailing your consent please scan a signed copy of this form and return it to gord.preston@gmail.com. If mailing the form please send to Gord Preston, Box 2875 Stony Plain, AB T7Z 1Y4.

APPENDIX 5: Athabasca University Research Ethics

Approval



MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 15, 2012
TO: Gordon T. Preston
COPY: Dr. Patrick Fahy (Research Supervisor)
Janice Green, Secretary, Research Ethics Board
Dr. Simon Nuttgens, Chair, Research Ethics Board
FROM: Dr. Sherri Melrose, Acting Chair, Research Ethics Board
SUBJECT: **Ethics Proposal #11-75 “Multilevel Factors Influencing**

Persistence in Higher Education Distance Education Consortia”

Thank you for your revised application submitted on March 13, arising from the “Unable to decide” result dated February 15, 2012. Your cooperation in revising and furnishing additional information requested was greatly appreciated.

On behalf of the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (AU REB), I reviewed the resubmission, and am pleased to advise that this project has been granted **FULL APPROVAL** on ethical grounds.

For file purposes only (further review not required), please provide copies of actual signed institutional support documentation, as and when available.

The approval for this study “as presented” is **valid from the date of this memo for a period of 12 months**. If necessary extension of approval can be requested by completing and submitting an ‘Interim’ Ethics Progress Report one month prior to expiry of the existing approval.

A **Final Ethics Progress Report** (form) is to be submitted when the research project is completed. Progress reporting forms are available online at <http://www.athabascau.ca/research/ethics/>.

As you progress with implementation of the proposal, if you need to make any changes or modifications please forward this information to the Research Ethics Board as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact rebsec@athabascau.ca

APPENDIX 6: Codes and Code Results

This appendix provides a summary of the coding methodology and coding results. In total, 136 documents were reviewed and 91 were coded resulting in over 1,900 coded quotes. Uncoded documents were reviewed for information and confirmation of general coding trends.

Coding structure was developed through three iterations of coding key sample documents and resulted in 14 code families. 12 of the code families were descriptive of either the document, such as year of publication, or the source, such as an interviewee's role or the jurisdiction. Two code families related to the logics: one internal and one external. Below are the results of the logic codings.

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CONSORTIA CODING	CASE A	CASE B	CASE C	CASE D	TOTALS:
Access	9	47	51	9	116
Accountability	9	27	18	4	58
Advocacy	1	9	7	0	17
Autonomy	11	5	4	9	29
Collaboration	46	20	27	28	121
Efficiency	36	18	17	4	75
Excellence	21	14	14	13	62
Innovation	41	13	15	12	81
TOTALS:	174	153	153	79	559
PROVINCIAL CODING	CASE A	CASE B	CASE C	CASE D	TOTALS:
Access	134	132	127	95	488
Accountability	72	40	38	40	190
Autonomy	42	6	5	47	100
Collaboration	82	72	69	102	325
Efficiency	51	20	18	28	117
Excellence	58	46	46	29	179
Innovation	81	31	24	49	185
TOTALS:	520	347	327	390	1584