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An Interorganizational Collaboration to Implement Educational Technology

Innovation: Decision-maker Perspectives

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Abstract

An Interorganizational Collaboration to Implement Educational Technology Innovation:
Decision-maker Perspectives

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Educational decision-makers face a number of challenges as they attempt to meet

social needs caused by advances in technology, new instructional delivery modes,

changes in learner demographics, industry's need for just-in-time, anywhere learning, and

globalization. One way decision-makers try to meet these challenges is through

collaborative endeavours. This study investigated an interorganizational collaboration to

identify the conditions and systemic factors that optimize effective implementation of

educational technology innovation. The specific forms of the educational technology

considered here are those that use broadband network telecommunications. The

investigation sought the perspectives of 14 senior level decision-makers, from

educational institutions, government agencies, and the information and communication

technology industry, involved in such a collaboration.

A qualitative case study gathered evidence through semi-structured, open-ended

interviews, a profile questionnaire, and analysis of archival documents related to the

collaboration. Major themes that emerged from grounded theory procedures were

compared with themes found in the literature to develop an holistic framework of a

collaboration practice. Six conditions are considered necessary; collaborative philosophy,

collaborative leadership, collaborative community, trust, dialogue, and a sense of

'we-ness'. Seven systemic factors (communication, setting and institutionalizing goals,

membership, resources, assessing, monitoring, and reflecting) are identified as

influencing collaboration. These conditions and factors have varying relevance at different phases in a collaboration's life cycle. The underlying premise of collaborative philosophy and its dynamic relationship to collaborative leadership and collaborative community extends the literature on collaboration. A new model, An Optimal Practice of Collaboration, offers practitioners and policy makers a guide to implement collaboration, is presented.

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A special thanks to my father who appreciated the importance of education and who would have been tickled to see me earn this degree.

There is nothing that cannot be accomplished by people of good will working together in a common cause.
T.A.F. (1970)

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Chapter 1 Overview of the Study

The world of collaboration. It is a world in which it is possible to feel inspired. Almost anything is, in principle, possible through collaboration because you are not limited by your own resources and expertise. You can, in principle, achieve whatever visions you may have by tapping into resources and expertise of others.

Huxham and Vangen, 2005

The Societal Problem

Decision-makers in educational institutions and governmental agencies face a growing number of challenges as they attempt to meet the social needs of today's knowledge-based economy. These challenges are caused by continuous advances in information and communication technologies; new modes of instructional delivery; changes in learner demographics; industry demands for just-in-time learning; and globalization. Interorganizational collaboration is one attempt to meet these challenges.

Increasingly interorganizational collaborations are forming between educational institutions, businesses, industry, and government agencies as ways to (a) reduce costs while increasing learner access and ensuring quality learning, (b) increase competitive advantage and, (c) meet political pressures. The Open Learning and Information Network (OLIN) in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada was one example of a cross-sector interorganizational collaboration established to implement open and distance learning using emerging technologies pan-provincially.

One of the greatest challenges for senior level decision-makers lies in successful formation and sustainability of collaborative endeavours. Because collaborative arrangements are multifaceted, complex processes that effect change in organizational cultures, decision-makers need to understand the conditions and factors necessary to

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optimise effective implementation of innovation if they are to accrue the benefits such innovations yield.

This study explored the experiences of 14 senior level decision-makers who were active participants in OLIN to identify the necessary conditions and other systemic factors for effective implementation of an educational technology innovation.

Rationale for the Study

Since the mid-1990s, the idea of many organizations collaborating in an effort to meet their shared goals has become more widespread. Interorganizational collaborations exist among education, business, and industry and occur at local, national, and international levels. Some are short-term, project-based ventures that exist with a set timeframe, specific tasks, and set budgets; other educational collaborations are long-term consortiums or joint ventures involving the establishment of new organizational entities. These new entities have independent financial status, separate operational arrangements and jointly developed structures, mutually agreed upon goals, and shared responsibilities.

Interorganizational collaboration in education is prompted by (a) advancements in information and communication technologies; (b) governments' strategic plans for innovation, human resource development, and economic and social development and growth, (c) and educational reform. These developments are the impetus for educational institutions, communication networks, and governments to rethink how to achieve their goals and to meet the goals of the community they serve.

Many senior administrators view collaboration as the answer to declining financial resources, access to expertise, a way to increase local and international

competition (Bates 2000; Elmuti & Kathawala, 2001; Spekman, Isabella, & MacAvoy, 2000; Evans & Nation, 1996) and a response to political pressure (Neil, 1981).

Literature from management and organizational development fields suggests there are necessary characteristics that must exist for corporate collaborations to be successful. They include trust, communications, alliance spirit, shared vision (Spekman, Isabella & MacAvoy, 2000), a sense of urgency to collaborate, a team of committed people, and a supportive infrastructure (Kotter, 1996). Most research studies in the education field, in addition, emphasize factors to sustain the cooperation and commitment of collaborative partners (Polkinghorn, 1998), structural and interpersonal factors that influenced the development of interdependence among partners (McKendall, 1998), and success factors for program delivery in international collaborations (Chan & Mills, 2000).

Problem Statement

There is little research in the field of open and distance learning that investigates, interorganizational collaboration in education from a decision-maker's perspective. This study comes at a time when there is a growing interest in collaborations among institutions of higher education and among public and private sector organizations. If decision-makers plan to enter into collaborations, they should be aware of what conditions and factors are most necessary for success, what will be expected of them as individual participants and as representative of their organizations, what processes are involved in collaborating and what beliefs about collaborating they must bring with them to the table. The problem here is to identify and explain these factors to facilitate practical transfer and to stimulate further research.

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the conditions and systemic factors necessary to implement educational technology innovation from the perspective of seniorlevel decision-makers who participated in an interorganizational collaboration. The research was guided by the following six questions:

1. What do decision-makers understand collaboration to mean? To what extent do they share a common understanding?

2. What is the purpose of decision-makers' participation in the collaboration?

3. What do decision-makers perceive to be the benefits of collaboration?

4. What do decision-makers perceive to be the challenges of collaboration?

5. What factors do decision-makers perceive to be important in the implementation of an educational technology innovation?

6. What improvements/new directions/advice could be offered to decision-makers for other future collaborations?

The collaboration chosen to study involved decision-makers from public and private sectors representing education, government, business and industry who recognized a need for change. The results of this study contribute to research on provincial policy implementation in open and distance learning and contribute to a better understanding of cross-sector interorganizational collaboration. This study's findings are potentially transferable to many types of educational collaborations, especially those that use emerging technologies to deliver open and distance learning.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in six chapters. Chapter 2 situates interorganizational collaboration in the literature of leadership, implementation of innovation and collaboration. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research methodology of case study and grounded theory used to interpret data, explains the data collection and analysis process, issues of trustworthiness, and delimitations and limitations to the study. Chapters 4 and 5 present the research findings organized around themes that emerged from the interview questions. Chapter 4, The Contextual Framework and the Lived Story, presents the case and the historical context as gleaned from relevant documents (government agreements and reports) and the participants' lived stories while in the collaboration. Chapter 5, Reflecting on the Collaborative Experience, describes decision-makers' understanding of collaboration, its importance in the education system, their reasons for participating, and what they saw as its benefits and challenges. The chapter ends with changes the participants' recognized as necessary for a successful collaboration to exist. Chapter 6 is a discussion of what happened, integrating the literature, and describing lessons learned. And finally, a new conceptual model of interorganizational collaboration that extends the existing work in this field is presented. The appendices are included, Appendix A contains the interview instruments and a researcher's journal from for post-interview notes, Appendix B contains the confirmation letter, scheduled interview time, and consent form, Appendix C contains the Glossary of Terms.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The way forward is paradoxically to look not ahead, but to look around.
Brown and Duguid, 2000

Interorganizational collaboration, as commonly practiced and reported in the literature, can be: partnerships, joint ventures, networks, consortia, alliances, trade associations, and interlocking directorates (Barringer & Harrison, 2000). A literature review reveals interorganizational collaboration is spread across multiple fields and disciplines. Collaborations in anthropology, business, economics, education, engineering, public policy, politics and management, sciences, and sociology have contributed to a better understanding of this complex phenomenon (Arredondo, 1998; Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Collaboration models have been developed from several theoretical bases including resource dependence theories, institutional theory, social network analysis, transaction cost economics, and critical management studies (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Interorganizational collaboration in education has grown significantly in the past decade as evidenced in educational publications and conference proceedings. The focus of these ventures is on creating increased educational opportunities, enhancing access to educational programs and courses and to improving student support (Smith 2003).

Understanding Interorganizational Collaboration

The many perspectives and definitions of collaboration exist with no one accepted definition. Huxham (1996) offer a broad understanding of collaboration which describes a relational aspect:

Collaboration is taken to imply a very positive form of working in association with others for some form of mutual benefit. . . . At a minimum this means that it

is concerned with situations in which individuals in one organization work with individuals in another. At a maximum, it implies many complete organizations working in harmony (p. 1).

Gray (1989) defines collaboration as a process to allow groups to go beyond their own capability, "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (p. 5).Wood and Gray (1991) expand this definition to answered who, how, and for what purpose. For them, collaboration takes place when, "a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide to act on issues related to that domain" (p. 146).

The term 'collaboration' is often used interchangeably with 'co-operation' and 'coordination'. But cooperation is best considered as the most informal relationship with out any common mission, structure, or joint planning. Organizations remain independent, take no risk, and retain total authority (Mattessich, Close & Monsey, 2001). Coordination relationships are more formally aligned with compatibility of their organizational missions (ibid, 2001). Collaboration is a durable and pervasive relationship with commitment to a common mission, the structure determines authority, risk is greater, and it involves well defined communication channels (ibid, 2001). Winer and Ray (1994) illustrate cooperation, coordination, and collaboration lie on a continuum of intensity with cooperation at the lower intensity and collaboration at the higher intensity (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration
(Adapted from Winer and Ray, 1994, p. 22)

Cooperation	Coordination	Collaboration
lower intensity ⟶ higher intensity		
Shorter-term, informal relationships	Longer-term effort around a project or task	More durable and pervasive relationships
Shared information only	Some planning and division of roles	New structure with commitment to common goals
Separate goals, resources, and structures	Some shared resources, rewards, and risks	All partners contribute resources and share rewards and leadership

Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey (2001) build on Winer and Ray's work:

Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into

by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes

a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and

shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and shared

resources and rewards (p. 59).

Gray (1989), in her groundbreaking book on collaboration, recognized that

although cooperation and coordination may occur in the early process of collaboration,

collaboration represents a longer-term integrated process "through which parties who see

different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for

solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (p. 5).

Factors Influencing Collaboration

Mattessich et al. (2001) performed two major literature reviews related to

collaboration to identify factors that influence collaborative success. Twenty success

factors were identified as influencing the success of collaborations formed by nonprofit

organizations. government agencies. and other organizations. These factors are grouped

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into six categories; environment, membership characteristics, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources (p. 7). Table 2.2 presents the factors in each category.

Table 2.2: Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration.
(Adapted from Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey, 2001, pp. 12-28)

Environment	Membership Characteristics	Process and Structure	Communication	Purpose	Resources
History of collaboration	Mutual respect, understanding, and trust	Members share a stake in process and outcomes	Open and frequent communication	Concrete, attainable goals and objectives	Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time
Collaborative group seen as legitimate leader in community	Appropriate cross section of members	Multiple layers of participation	Established informal relationships and communication links	Shared vision	Skilled leadership
Favourable political and social climate	Members see collaboration in their self-interests	Flexibility		Unique purpose	
	Partner ability to compromise	Development of clear goals and policy guidelines			
		Adaptability			
		Appropriate pace of development			

Chrislip and Larson (1994) examined fifty-two community initiatives to identify factors that must be present for successful collaboration. The categories, similar to Mattessich et al. describe what they call the five dimensions of collaboration: context, structure, members, process, and results (see Table 2.3).

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Table 2.3: Factors for Collaboration to Succeed.
(Adapted from Chrislip and Larson, 1994, pp. 52-54)

Category	Description
Context	Good timing and clear needs
Structure	Strong stakeholder groups
Members	Broad-base involvement Commitment and/or involvement of high level, visible leaders An ability to overcome mistrust and skepticism
Process	A credible and openness of process Support or acquiescence of "established" authorities or powers Strong leadership of the process
Results	Interim successes A shift to broader concerns

Huxham and Vangen (2005) extensive research on collaboration developed a theory of collaborative advantage. This theory, constructed around 18 themes, is based on issues they found in collaborative practice. These themes overlay each other with issues underlying each theme cross-related with issues underlying others. All themes may be relevant at any stage in a collaboration life. Themes include: learning, common aims, identity, membership structures, communication and language, culture, accountability, working processes, compromise, power, trust, social capital, risk, resources, commitment and determination, leadership, and democracy and equality (p. 12). These themes show the complexity of collaboration.

Perraton (2004) who describes international experiences in open and distance learning, points out that at all education levels, most open and distance learning systems are built upon collaboration. While he suggests collaborations are difficult, Perraton offers five guidelines for effective cooperation:

1. there need to be clear goals and a clear statement of purpose.

2. there need to be significant roles for administrative and academic staff in member institutions.

3. there needs to be a governance and funding structure that fits the purpose.

4. members of a partnership need to see that they have complementary roles and that there are benefits to all.

5. effective partnerships are likely to see a commitment of resources from all partners (p. 31).

Trends Supporting Interorganizational Collaboration

Economic, social, and political reasons encourage educational collaborations. The most important economic reasons are to share costs, to fight off perceived competition for students, to avoid unnecessary duplication within the system, and to enter global marketplaces (Bates, 2000, 2001). Political reasons exist mainly to attract funding opportunities and to capitalize on partners' knowledge of, and reputations in, local markets (Rumble & Latchem, 2004). Pressures to collaborate with other educational institutions and with private sector businesses come from governments' strategic planning and innovative strategies. Federal and local governments recognize the potential of information and communication technologies to stimulate national economic policy and the development and implementation of provincial technology infrastructure building policies. Social reasons are related to economic and political factors. A knowledge-based society creates a sense of urgency for its members to become lifelong learners. Pressures from changes in the workforce, and learner demands for more flexibility in how, when, and where learning occurs, cause concern for educational institutions in how to meet

these needs and maintain quality instruction. Educational technology adoption and interorganizational collaboration used together are considered viable options.

Educational institutions pursuing collaborative activities with similar institutions, and with business and government agencies, do so for a variety of reasons, ranging from national and state organizations developing standards that call for collaboration between the academy and the field; acquisition and utilization of resources through shared efforts (Boyter, Gates, Schroth, Vornberg, & Thompson, 1999); the creation and support of schools that model new directions in education (Gladstone & Jacobsen, 1999); introduction of technology across a school curriculum (Sheppard and Brown, 1998); development of distance education programs for community-based and state-wide organizations (Glowacki-Dudka, 1999); establishment of state-wide teacher professional development in the use of technologies in the classroom (Polkinghorn, 1998); and, creation of international partnership for distance education course development and delivery (Perraton, 2004; Bates 2000).

Several single case studies provide useful insights into interorganizational collaboration. Smith (2003) investigated a collaborative arrangement between two educational institutions and a federal government department for the purposes of developing and delivering a program in distance learning format. He identified key elements for the sustainability of successful collaborative relationships and presented a framework for analysing and understanding interorganizational collaboration.

Berg (2002) examined conditions, processes, and consequences of the evolution of a state-wide educational technology alliance. This alliance was formed between higher

educational institutions for the purposes of delivering teacher professional development in the use of technology in the classroom.

Roche (2000) integrated and synthesized research in the field of collaboration and organizational learning to advance the theoretical thinking and practical applications of the information. She offered a framework for organizational learning to occur in a collaboration.

Although there is little research around interorganizational collaboration in open and distance learning, case studies report such approaches are very promising and posit that successful collaborations can make a difference to the quality of education (Moran & Mugridge, 1993) and can produce collaborative advantage (Bates, 2000; Katz, 1999).

International Context

International agencies, such as the World Bank, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), influence the operations of universities by encouraging them to form partnerships with other educational institutions to deliver programs to meet market needs. The OECD recommends its Member States re-examine the roles and responsibilities of the public and private sectors in development of education and training. "The sheer cost, scale and complexity of e-learning make collaborations all but inevitable" (Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development, 2001, p. 3).

Educational institutions worldwide are researching and developing innovative approaches to support open and distance learning such as between universities in a consortium to deliver university-level programs in a virtual learning environment. Colleges are also collaborating with universities and other colleges to utilize each

organization's expertise to develop and deliver new programs. In the United States of America, state-wide collaborations between universities are established to share resources, expertise, and research with postsecondary and K-12 educational institutions. Examples are, the Western Governor's University with 19 western and mid-western states as Board members and 25 leading business partners and the National Technology University, a degree awarding consortium of 26 universities, offers post-graduate courses. Interorganizational collaborations are also created to design, implement, and disseminate model technology initiatives that help teacher's integrate educational technologies into content areas (Berg, 2002). Other international examples include multiple organizations partnering to deliver programs and services. Universitas21, a consortium of twenty-one research universities in thirteen countries, entered into partnership with Thomson Publishing, an education publisher and provider, to create U21Global an online 'e-university' (Bates, 2000; Latchem & Hanna, 2001; Universitas21 web site [www.universitas21.com]). Scottish Knowledge, a global higher education consortium of 14 universities, and India's National Open School, a system of regional centres to serve educational drop outs and provide alternative secondary and vocational education (Rumble & Latchem, 2004, p. 126-127), are other examples.

Canadian Context

Canada's Innovation Strategy (2002) was the culmination of Canada's national government's efforts towards development of open and distance learning plans and policies that affect both private and public sector groups. Issued more than half-way through OLIN's life span. it reflected government's emphasis on shifting society from resource-based to knowledge-based. Through national forums. advisory committees. and

consultations (national and global), the Canadian government attempts to align the expertise of business, academia, and provincial and local governments in "actions that are complimentary and targeted, seeking partnerships to pursue our objective of a more innovative country" (Industry Canada 2002, p. 14).

Federal government plans are implemented through various venues such as Canada Foundation for Innovation, Canada Research Chairs, Technology Partnerships, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Genome Canada, and two Industry Canada agencies, SchoolNet and Canarie All these agencies require partnerships between public and private sector groups as part of their funding and support criteria. For example, SchoolNet connects Canadian schools (K-12) and libraries to the Internet through a partnership with provincial and territorial governments, the educational community and the private sector. The Canadian Network for the Advancement of Research, Industry and Education Inc. (CANARIE) is an industry-managed consortium of private and public-sector members created in 1993 to stimulate the development of the information highway through federal government and private sector collaborations (Haughey & Roberts, 1996). CANARIE grew to include educational institutions and it developed the nation's first links to the Internet. As a partner, CANARIE supports programs that promote the evolution of an information-based economy and society (Industry Canada, 1994). CANARIE-funded projects require partnerships to share financial assistance to develop new ways of providing learning.

Social and economic changes brought about by the rapid growth and expansion of information and communication technologies (ICTs). government restructuring. and globalization are reflected in our education systems (Canadian Federal Government.

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2001, 2002; Conference Board of Canada, 2000). Shifting to a knowledge-based economy brings expectations and pressures to bear on formal education systems to deliver relevant, current, and industry-related education and training (Roberts, Keough, & Pacey, 2001) often through collaboration. Consortia, which may be seen as virtual universities or colleges sharing online courses from different universities (Bates 2005), exist such as the Canadian Virtual University, which is a consortium of 13 Canadian universities offering over 250 programs.

Provincial Context

Canadian provincial governments, constitutionally, have sole responsibility for education in Canada. In the late 1980s, early 1990s, the thinking that technologies could assist business and education to meet their needs saw several broadly based consortia established with the financial support of the federal government. Haughey and Roberts (1996) argue that the federal government's commitment to technology in education and partnerships with the private sector and provincial ministries of education are designed to stimulate Canada's national economic policy. Provincial governments also recognized the importance of new technologies in education. Collaborations between institutions of higher education to implement programs in a distant education format were supported by provincial governments. Such collaborative ventures include the Open Learning Institute (OLI) and the Open Learning Agency (OLA) in British Columbia, Athabasca University in Alberta and Contact North/Contact Nord in Northern Ontario. Network consortia such as TeleEducation New Brunswick, CANAL in Quebec, Manitoba Educational Research and Learning Information Network (MERLIN), and the Open Learning and Information

Network (OLTN) in Newfoundland and Labrador were supported by national efforts to provide access to learning opportunities.

Throughout the 20th century many influences changed how education was perceived, recognized, designed, and provided. In Canada, federal and provincial governments saw a link between education and economic growth and development. Distance education and emerging technologies were seen as a means of increasing quality learning opportunities for communities that would be most disadvantaged. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the provincial government's strategic economic plan, Change and Challenge: A Strategic Economic Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador (1992) and the report on education, Our Children Our Future: The Report of the Royal Commission on Education into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary and Secondary Education (1992), recognized the need for and importance of lifelong learning to sustain rural communities. Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador governments saw lifelong learning as a way to maintain economic advantage, to compete globally, and as an impetus for funding education in the province. The concept of 'open and distance learning' was recognized as a viable option.

Issues in Open and Distance Education Collaborations

The literature indicates there are four issues in open and distance education; policy, structure, leadership, and collaboration.

Roberts, Keough, and Pacey (2001) describe policy-related issues for open and distance education practitioners and policy developers. They state how important it is to assess the appropriateness of organizational structures. "Today, as many colleagues

would argue, advances in digital networks create a need for new organizational structures that can function effectively in a globally networked society" (p. 35).

Daniel (1999) points out that if educational institutions want to provide intellectually powerful and cost-effective open learning they must first get right the working practices that underpin today's modern industrial and service economy, namely, division of labour, specialization, teamwork, and project management. Hall (1998) examines these new institutional structures from a leadership perspective. He claims, as collaborations develop and networking expands, the university evolves towards a 'meta-university'. Bold and creative leadership is needed to manage and evaluate these emerging new structures, driven by what he calls "networking" technology.

Collaborations among public and private sector groups are encouraged to build a 'knowledge society', create economies of scale, create synergies that will allow greater opportunity for lifelong learning, and for Canada to participate in a globally networked society. However, collaborations are considered complex in nature because of the difficulty in managing two or more different organizational cultures (Kanter, 1989; Spekman, Forbes, Isabella, & MacAvoy, 1998) and because they are difficult to create and maintain (Moran & Myringer, 1999; Barringer & Harrison, 2000). Smith (2000), in examining how to sustain collaborative relationships among educational institutions, identified areas where difficulty with interorganizational collaboration exist: "selecting appropriate stakeholders who share the same vision; balancing power relationships between stakeholders (which often become the focus of attention); negotiating the organizational and operational structures and procedures to be adopted by the new entity;

and establishing lines of communication to help build trust between staff from different organizations" (p. 3).

Eddy's (2003) study of interorganizational collaborations found that many educational organizations collaborate, only to find that reality does not always meet expectation. Studies by Bergquist, Betwee, and Meuel (1995) show a high failure rate, about one in three failing outright or restructured because of partners withdrawing. Perry and Rumble (1987), in examining collaborative arrangements in the distance learning field, agree that "while the idea of consortia is deserving, in practice they seldom work" (p. 117). Bates (2001), in his discussion of a successful e-learning consortium, states the major reason there are few really successful collaborations is because a change of culture within organizations is needed, "one from fierce competitiveness to one of trust and goodwill between the partner organizations" (p. 62).

Moran and Mugridge (1993) concluded, from their seminal work on international collaborations in distance education, there were three requirements necessary for success in any collaborative venture (a) willingness by the partners to accommodate others' different institutional cultures and practices, (b) building sustained relationships based on personal trust and shared values (typically champions in each university who are in a position to negotiate and coordinate the arrangements), and (c) all partners perceiving the mutuality of the benefits.

Despite such a failure rate and other collaborative difficulties, there is still a strong pressure for organizations to enter into collaboration. What will decision-makers need to be aware of to ensure successful and sustainable collaborative arrangements? What guidelines or frameworks for such ventures exist to assist decision-makers? What

systemic factors will help decision-makers to effectively implement an educational

technology innovation that will be beneficial to all the actors?

Chapter 3 Methodology

> Everyone in a complex system has a slightly different interpretation. The more interpretations we gather, the easier it becomes to gain a sense of the whole.
>
> Margaret J. Wheatley

This study's main research question focused on the conditions and systemic factors necessary for effective interorganizational collaboration to support the implementation of an educational technology innovation. These conditions and factors were examined through the views expressed by senior level decision-makers involved in a collaborative endeavour, the Open Learning and Information Network (OLIN), which operated in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador between 1995 and 2004. The research used a qualitative approach, given the nature of the phenomenon, with an initial framework that allowed for an emergent design. This chapter gives an overview of the research design and steps taken to collect and analyse data, the approach used to ensure trustworthiness, a description of the study's delimitation and limitations and its ethical considerations.

Research Design

Qualitative research takes a discovery-oriented approach in a natural environment. This study makes use of the qualitative research paradigm because it is extremely useful when seeking to better understand human phenomena through the meaning that individuals assign to their experiences (Creswell, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam, 1988). This study followed these general characteristics of a qualitative approach: it was context specific, took an heuristic view of the phenomenon, occurred in a manner that reduced the intrusiveness of the researcher, focused on the lived experiences of the

participants involved rather than looking for an absolute truth, developed rich

descriptions, not prescriptions, and it worked towards an interpretation of that detail

(Merriam, 1998; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998; Strauss, 1987; Strauss &

Corbin, 1998).

This qualitative study used a case study approach to seek an holistic description

and interpretation (Merriam, 1988) and to provide insight into or refinement of theory

(Stake, 1998; Stake, 1995) of interorganizational collaboration. Stake (1995) defines a

case study as the "study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to

understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). It is described as "an

exploration of a 'bounded system' or case (or multiple cases) over time, through detailed,

in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context"

(Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Case studies are chosen because, 'researchers are interested in

insight, discovery, and interpretations rather than hypothesis testing' (Merriam, 1988,

p. 10).

A case study design is used where the relationship between the phenomenon and

the context is not clear or fully explored (Yin, 1994), when the researcher has little or no

control over events (Merriam, 1988), and when there is a desire to gain in-depth

understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. Merriam (1998) points out

that insights gleaned from case studies can "directly influence policy, practice and future

research" (p. 19). Studies of interorganizational collaborations in educational settings

during the 1980s and 1990s were based on case study research. Gray and Wood (1991)

state that case studies were used to illuminate the theoretical and practical importance of

collaborations and to increase awareness of the complexity of developing and sustaining collaborative relationships.

A single case was chosen to investigate interorganizational collaboration because, by concentrating on a single entity, the significant factors and characteristics of the phenomenon can be discovered (Merriam, 1988). Wolcott (1992) supports this view and argues that studies of multiple cases lessens the attention the researcher is able to give to any one of them and may weaken rather than strengthen a case study. Case study research on interorganizational collaborations continues to be the preferred research design and is widely accepted in this field (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Gary & Wood, 1991; Arredondo, 1998; Smith, 2003).

Qualitative case studies rely a great deal on data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents. Qualitative data consists of "detailed descriptions of situations, events, and people, interactions, and observed behaviours; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts; and use of excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories" (Patton, 1990, p. 22). In qualitative research the triad of collection, analysis, and interpretation is ongoing and ends when theoretical saturation is achieved.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using several sources: semi-structured interviews; a profile questionnaire; archival documents pertaining to the collaborative entity (contract agreement, annual reports, evaluation reports, meeting minutes, and government policy documents) and other documents. These documents provided a description of the events

that led to the establishment of OLIN, its structure, and information on key incidents which contributed directly to the case study.

Data were collected primarily from fourteen interviews; thirteen took place over a three month period (October 2005 to December 2005) with one interview conducted two months later (February 2006). Participants were initially contacted by phone or e-mail. This initial contact explained the purpose of the study; invited them to be interviewed; explained their participation in the study was confidential; and gave them the approximate length of time required to conduct the interview.

Once they agreed to participate, an e-mail was sent thanking them for their participation and an attachment containing three documents: a Letter of Introduction to the study, a consent form (for audio recording in face-to-face interview or e-mail interview), and a copy of the interview guide (see Appendix A). Everyone contacted agreed to participate in the study with the majority replying by e-mail with their agreement to be interviewed and indicating convenient dates, times, and places to conduct the interview. Prior to conducting the in-person interview, an overview of the study was reviewed with participants and they signed a statement of consent. Each interview concluded with the question, "Is there anything else you would like to add before we end this interview?"

Thirteen interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by a qualified transcriber and one interview was conducted by e-mail and stored as one interview document. The interview duration ranged from 40 minutes to 90 minutes with most taking about one hour. Each transcript was validated for accuracy by listening to the original recording and comparing it to the transcribed interview document. Transcripts

were e-mailed to each participant asking them to confirm accuracy, add comments, and approve.

A reflective journal was kept during the interview phase as were field notes related to new ideas, key points, and the overall interview. Key incidents or issues were discussed with subsequent participants. There were several follow up e-mail discussions with some participants to clarify information from the interviews or document analyses.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data, drawing conclusions about its meaning (Marshall & Rossman 1999; Creswell, 1994). Strauss and Corbin (1998), consistent with this assumption of qualitative methodology, recognize it is not entirely possible for the researcher to remain objective and they point out that bringing the researcher's disciplinary and research experience into an analysis enhances the creative aspects of analysis rather than drives it. Creswell (1994) makes it clear that the researcher's personal interpretations are always present in qualitative data analysis which makes it necessary for the researcher to acknowledge biases, values, and interests.

My role in this study was influenced by my work experience as a project manager and instructional designer inside the collaboration. This position provided me with a familiarity and sensitivity to the structure, functions, and processes of the organization but with little communication with the decision-makers interviewed. To uncover and make explicit any assumptions and beliefs I held about the collaborative entity, the interview guide was administered to me by a colleague before the interviews were conducted.

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Selection of Participants

Purposeful sampling (Creswell, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1985) was used to select key participants for semi-structured interviews. Participant selection was based on three criteria: (1) role as senior level decision-maker in OLIN, (2) role as senior level decision-maker in their organizations, and, (3) representative of one of the multiple sectors involved in the collaboration.

The decision to use elite interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) was to gather the insights they could provide from their leadership positions in their organizations, their involvement in other collaborative endeavours, and their ability to view interorganizational collaboration from an holistic perspective. As senior level decision-makers, they could contribute to an understanding of collaboration and to the evolving theory of interorganizational collaboration. Initially, eight decision-makers from the sectors involved in the collaboration were identified from documents listing advisory board members and members of government agencies. Another six were identified using the snowball sampling strategy in which participants were asked to recommend other senior level decision-makers they felt would be valuable to this study (Patton, 1990).

Participant Profiles

Fourteen senior level decision-makers interviewed for this study represented the three sectors involved in the collaboration, government, business, and education (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Number of Decision-makers by Organization and Sector

Sector	Organization (Number of Participants)
The Collaborative Entity	Open Learning and Information Network (1)
Government	Federal Government (2) Provincial Government (Departments Responsible for Post-secondary Education and Policy) (3)
Post-Secondary Institutions	University (2) College (2)
Business/Industry	Non-for-profit Corporation for IT Sector (2) Information and Communication Network Companies (2)

There were five females and nine males each participating at different periods over the collaboration's life cycle (see Table 3.2). Their involvement in the collaboration ranged over the ten year period. Four decision-makers were involved between one and three years; six between four and six years, and four decision-makers between seven and ten years. The majority of participants were involved for five years or more (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.2: Decision-makers in Planning and/or Implementation Phases

Decision-Makers														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Planning Phase	X			X		X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Implementation Phase	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X

Table 3.3: Decision-makers' Years in OLIN

Decision-Makers														
Number of Years	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1-3					X			X		X		X		
4- 6		X	X				X		X		X			X
7-10	X			X		X							X	

When interviewed, most decision-makers were retired from the organizational positions they held while in the collaboration. Some were working in similar positions while others were consultants. Three were in the same position and one held a different position in the same organization. Two decision-makers were in information technology (IT) industry, one in a different position with a new private cable system company and the other in a new position in the same private telecommunications company. The number of years in their current positions ranged from less than one year to eighteen years.

Decision-makers' education levels included both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Two decision-makers held bachelor degrees (computer science and engineering). Seven decision-makers held master degrees (three in Business Administration, one in Arts (political science) and three in Education). Of those who held master degrees, five held bachelors degrees in Science, two in Education and one in vocational education. Five held doctoral degrees (one in geology, one in philosophy, and three in education).

Data Analysis

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe data analysis simply as "a process for 'making sense' of the field data" (p. 202). The data were analyzed using techniques and strategies of grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1998) take grounded theory to mean taking data

that is systematically collected and analyzed through the research process to build theory. They recognize the congruence of data collection, analysis, and eventual theory. Grounded theory is considered to be particularly appropriate when little is known about a topic and there are few existing theories to explain particular phenomena (Hutchinson, 1988; Charmaz, 2002). Grounded theory is a general methodology that uses constant comparison to combine data analysis with data collection to build theory, provide rigor, and minimize researcher biases and assumptions (Strauss & Corbin 1990; 1998). Grounded theory procedures and techniques were well suited to this study as it offered a qualitative means to discover and conceptualize the phenomenon of interorganizational collaboration from the perspectives of those who were engaged (Hutchinson, 1988).

Data analysis in qualitative studies does not have a distinct beginning and end, rather it takes an iterative process with previous steps repeated before moving forward. Creswell (1998) refers to this process as a "data analysis spiral" (p. 143). Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that from the initial data collection:

> The qualitative analyst is beginning to decide what things mean – is noting
>
> regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and
>
> p -positions. The competent researcher holds these conclusions lightly,
>
> maintaining openness and skepticism, but the conclusions are still there, inchoate
>
> and vague at first, then increasingly explicit and grounded (p. 17).

In this study, data were examined in .nediately after each interview by noting first impressions of the interview, how the interview began and ended, key terms. themes, significant incidents and identifying anything that needed clarification. Key incidents that arose in an interview were discussed with subsequent participants. There were follow-up

discussions by e-mail with participants to clarify interview information and ideas that stood out as important and any repeated themes. Once the interviews were transcribed and checked for correctness, each was read, by the researcher, in its entirety looking for themes, interesting ideas, incidents, and a general sense of what was being said by the participant and considering the interview notes. Where there were similar ideas expressed between participants it was noted on the transcripts and a memo was written. Open coding procedures were used to conceptualize and categorize the data by making comparisons and asking questions of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Because there was no *a priori* framework created, preliminary categories to guide this initial coding stage were created from the list of interview questions Tables were created in Microsoft Word for each question with the data for that question. The data were examined sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph and given a conceptual code. These concept codes were compared for similarities and differences with similar concepts clustered to form more powerful and abstract categories.

The categories that emerged from open coding procedures were entered in NVivo7, a Qualitative Data Analysis Software for Research Professionals (QSR). A clean copy of the all the transcripts were also placed in NVivo7 where they were recoded to the categories. This procedure confirmed categories and allowed new categories to emerge. The data were then put "back together in new ways by making new connections between a category and its subcategories" (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p. 97). Using NVivo7 software allowed for specific and random searches of words, phrases or terms from transcripts, documents, memos, and field notes, and to sort data according to categories. The use of visual representations of new ideas, connections between categories and between

categories and subcategories were graphically displayed using the software. Once the categories were developed into themes they were discussed with participants and experts who had experiences in developing and working in collaborations. Comments received expanded the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon and confirmed the researcher's interpretation of the data. Being immersed in the research data, comparing concepts, reviewing impressions, and reflecting upon the data, contributed to this researcher's understanding of interorganizational collaboration held by senior level decision-makers in this study.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative studies there are many ways to address issues of validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) address the concerns about trustworthiness of a qualitative study under four major criteria, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each will be discussed to show how trustworthiness was created in this investigation.

Credibility

Credibility considers the consistency of the findings which reflect the participants' stories and preserve the holistic situation (Guba, 1981). Strategies used to increase credibility in this study and reduce bias include: triangulation of the data (interviews with multiple sector decision-makers, documents, post interview notes, memos, and reflective journal) and member checks to confirm whether participant's realities are represented appropriately in the researcher's interpretation of their interviews and allow the opportunity for them to correct or clarify information. Continual alertness to this researcher's biases through self-reflection increased the credibility of the study.

Credibility was also increased by a cross checking data analyses coding by a colleague not associated with the study. Concerning the model, a draft developed during the early data analysis was put aside and compared with the final model for similarities and differences. The final model was presented to some participants and others involved in collaborative endeavours for their review and suggested changes.

Transferability

A qualitative study's transferability depends on whether sufficient information exists to enable readers to judge the applicability of findings to other settings. Transferability in this study is evidenced by rich, thick descriptions of participants' experiences. However, transferability of a model can only be truly determined by the reader. As Marshall and Rossman (1999) explain, "Here the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context rests more with the researcher who would make that transfer than with the original researcher" (p. 193).

Dependability

Making sure results are consistent with the data collected, the use of grounded theory procedures allows researchers to monitor and replicate the steps taken during the inquiry process. Repeated readings of the interview transcripts accompanied by simultaneous listening to the audio recordings assured accuracy of interview transcripts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out how determining reliability in qualitative research is problematic and therefore receives little attention by researchers. They offer one explanation. "Since there can be no validity without reliability (and thus no credibility without dependability), a demonstration of the former during the research process will be acknowledged sufficient to establish the latter" (p. 316).

Confirmability

The assumption made by researchers using the qualitative paradigm is that multiple perspectives of reality exist and because the world view is a "function of personal interaction and perception, it cannot be measured objectively" (Merriam, 1988, p. 17). Confirmability of the findings is based on the researcher's requirement for reasonable analysis of the data, that is the degree to which "data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the [researcher] and are not simply figments of the imagination..." (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). To satisfy these criteria the interview transcripts and this researcher's interpretations were sent to participants for review.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was delimited by the information provided by 14 senior level decision-makers who were members in the interorganizational collaboration.

Patton (2002) points out, "There are no perfect research designs. There are always trade offs" (p. 162). Limitations of this study revolve around three factors (a) the collaboration ended in 2004, (b) deaths of two of the three original champions of the collaboration, and (c) this researcher's role as a project manager and instructional designer from 1996 - 2002 (demonstration projects testing e-learning instructional designs and technology connectivity in the rural areas; courses redesigned for web-based delivery; public and private sector professional development in distance learning instruction. design. and technical administration; and international distance learning design workshops). Although OLIN was not in existence at the time of this study. its cessation did not influence participants' understandings of the collaboration. The benefits

of participant reflection may well, in fact, provide a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

While two of the initiating champions for the collaboration were not part of the study, one remaining champion and the other decision-makers who participated were involved in the planning, design, and implementation stages of the collaborative entity.

Ethical Considerations

Procedures outlined by Concordia University's Ethical Review committee were carried out as stipulated. Each decision-maker was contacted individually outlining the scope of the study and requesting their participation. A written permission was obtained from each participant before the study began. For those who agreed to participate, an interview time was scheduled that was convenient for them. The majority of decision-makers requested a preview of the interview guide. All participants were provided with an outline of the general aims of the research study and they were informed about how the study would proceed and how the results would be used. Participation was voluntary and all participants had the right to remove themselves from the study at any time. Participants were assured of confidentially of their identity and responses (see Appendix B).

It's never enough just to tell people about some new insight.
Rather, you have to get them to experience it in a way
that evokes its power and possibility. Instead of pouring
knowledge into people's heads, you need to help them grind
a new set of eyeglasses so they can see the world in a new way.

John Sealy Brown

This chapter is divided into two sections, The Contextual Framework and the

Decision-makers story: Remembering the Beginning. The Contextual Framework

describes the context that provided impetus for the creation of the interorganizational

collaboration, the Open Learning and Information Network (OLIN) and the

collaboration's mandate, structure, and governance. Data for this section was uncovered

from government documents, the governing agreement, and various reports. The

Decision-makers story: Remembering the Beginning presents the voices of 14 senior

level decision-makers as they describe their understanding of the circumstances leading

to the collaboration, the goals of the collaboration, and influences that affected

accomplishing those goals.

Section I: The Contextual Framework

Context
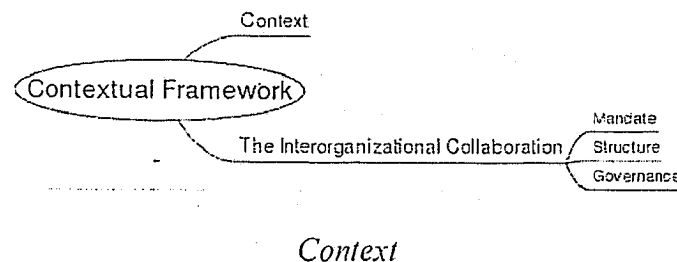
Distance education in Newfoundland and Labrador was first practiced in the early

1960s by Memorial University of Newfoundland's Division of Part Time Studies. Since

1975, the province has provided access to central resources for residents of rural

communities. At that time a climate of collaboration existed between the Telemedicine Centre and the Division of Educational Technology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. These agencies worked together to develop education programs and technology platforms for effective delivery of both education and health services to remote areas. In 1988, these agencies established the Telemedicine and Educational Technology Resources Agency (TETRA) network. Their mandate was primarily focused on health professionals but included distance education elements. The network allowed more programming opportunities and increased flexibility in schedules and site choices. Regional and provincial hospitals, public colleges, university campuses, and high schools regularly used the network. At the same time, by using distance education approaches and technologies, the Department of Education began offering an advanced high school curriculum to students who would not otherwise obtain these courses. The community college and a number of private training institutions also used distance education opportunities to address the needs of learners who could not study in traditional settings.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, new technological developments led to two new directions in technology application: (a) advances in telecommunications infrastructure (satellites and digital technologies) which enhanced delivery of distance education programs and (b) the overall convergence of infrastructure and equipment/hardware with software and information technologies. These innovations led to the development of five provincial application networks used to deliver open and distance learning, Telemedicine/TETRA (1979), N-L Net (1981), Enterprise Network Inc. (1985), STEM~Net (1987). and the Public Libraries Network (1991). All these activities,

application networks, and educational agencies shared similar philosophies and mandates regarding access to resources.

Provincial public policy documents from the late 1980s to the early 1990s refer to building partnerships throughout the education system. Cost effectiveness was considered crucial to the school system and distance learning delivery modes were viewed as a way to achieve cost effectiveness of educational programs (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1992). A Royal Commission of Inquiry, *Our Children our Future* (1992) into programs and services in the education system, further endorsed the use of distance learning technologies and recommended a Provincial Advisory Committee on Distance Education and a School of Distance Education and Technology be established.

In 1994, the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador agreed to establish committees of ministers to manage the issues affecting the Newfoundland economy. The Newfoundland and Labrador economy changed significantly with natural resource exploitation industries unable to provide sufficient employment to support many communities. A federal/provincial task force, set up by the Privy Council Office in Ottawa and the Executive Council of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, established several joint working committees. These committees analysed the province's economy and recommended ways to overcome obstacles to long-term growth (Government of Canada and Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1996/97, p. iii). The recommendations were the basis of the Canada/Newfoundland Agreement on Economic Renewal.

The Canada/Newfoundland Agreement on Economic Renewal, referred to as Economic Renewal Agreement (ERA), was in effect between 1996/97 and 2000/01. The

ERA goals were to "increase opportunities for economic development in Newfoundland and, specifically, to enhance growth of earned incomes and employment opportunities in the province" (Government of Canada and Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1996, p. 3). The Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency (ACOA), the federal government agency responsible for economic development in eastern Canada, oversaw implementation of ERA programs.

The Interorganizational Collaboration

In 1994, senior level decision-makers in educational institutions, government departments and leading-edge technology companies formed a focus group to address the generally recognized issues of overlap in support services and physical infrastructures among their agencies. The Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency (ACOA) Secretariat facilitated this focus group to explore the possibility of an open learning agency that would coordinate stakeholder activities in open and distance learning, provincially and internationally. The resulting open learning agency was to be a catalyst for change and to help improve economic development opportunities through educational endeavours.

The ACOA Secretariat formed three stakeholder groups, Policy, Technical, and Products and Services. These groups planned the implementation of the new agency over the following year, determining the feasibility, structure, mandate, and focus for what eventually became the Open Learning and Information Network (OLIN).

Mandate

OLIN was a provincial network of content and service providers who were committed to the delivery of learning opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador using emerging technologies. Its primary focus was to provide greater access to learning

opportunities through collaborations and partnerships with agencies and individuals committed to an equitable distribution of provincial resources. It was built on the concept of a "network of networks" – value added physical networks, organizational networks, and people networks. It was to improve access to learning opportunities by:

- facilitating open and flexible provision of education and training;

- supporting the learning and related needs of the partners and their clients;

- developing, adapting and co-ordinating delivery of new learning materials, methods, products, and services;

- fostering development of innovative methods of instruction for learning;

- providing access to global information sources to support learning; and,

- fostering international partnerships in open and distance learning (Open Learning and Information Network, 1997, p. 4).

To operationalize this mandate, OLIN focused on three objectives:

1. To facilitate partnerships among existing public sector distance education and related information delivery agencies to encourage:

   - the joint development, and where possible, delivery of courses or programs which incorporate new media, and,

   - the development of a shared provincial network that would use digital technology and new media tools wherever cost effectively possible.

2. To encourage public-private sector partnerships in the development of open and distance learning resources to be used both provincially and internationally.

3. To raise the provincial awareness of open and distance education and its

   benefits both educationally and economically (ibid, p. 4-5).

The mandate was implemented under the ERA. OLIN received funding under the

Post Secondary Distance Education and New Media Learning ($11.2 million) segment of

the Advanced Technology fund. Three key elements of this component were:

1. Network Integration and Technical Upgrades: The existing provincial

   application networks were to be consolidated and integrated in order to

   promote economies of scale both in telecommunications purchases and in

   network administration. In doing so this would ensure a level of internet

   access to all the province's communities . . ." (Government of Canada and

   Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1996, p. 17).

2. Operationalize Open Learning Model: The purpose of the Open Learning and

   Information Network (OLIN) concept and model, developed and endorsed by

   its stakeholders, was to create a more open learning environment through

   collaboration. This was carried out through stakeholders negotiating their

   commitments of services and resources. OLIN received funding to

   operationalize as a strong coordinating agency with power to develop the new

   media learning sector's potential (ibid p. 17).

3. Catalyst Program for Development and Delivery: This program focused on

   developing the new media learning sector's competitive capacity by providing

   training for practitioners in the best practices in instructional design and

   delivery. supporting development and implementation of pilot projects that

   would develop organization's capacity and contribute directly to economic

renewal, creating a fund to support commercialization and export of new media learning products and services provincially, and a fund to support national and international cooperation in distance education and new media learning (ibid p. 17).

A two-tiered management design was implemented to oversee ERA programs. An implementation committee was assigned to each component of the Agreement (aquaculture, tourism and advanced technology) and the overall management of the fund came under an umbrella Management Committee co-chaired by ACOA and Intergovernmental Affairs, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The programs and initiatives were pre-determined during the planning and negotiation of the Agreement. The agreement objectives included performance targets against which achievement of objectives were to be measured.

Structure

In 1995, OLIN was created and funded, initially for two years under the federal/provincial Human Resource Development Agreement (HRDA). In 1997 it was funded under the Economic Renewal Cooperation Agreement (ERA), the Advanced Technology program, Post-secondary New Media Learning Section, which provided five years of funding (Canada/Newfoundland Agreement on Economic Renewal, 1996, p. 9).

OLIN was created to provide a focus for collaborative efforts in distance education. It operated as an arm's length agency of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), a policy arm of the Newfoundland and Labrador Government Department of Education. The university provided an in-kind contribution to the initiative by managing OLIN's finances and providing housing. The policy and procedures of the university

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governed OLIN and the University Comptroller approved OLIN's activities, thereby

meeting the university's financial compliance regulations.

The following description of the governance and acco intabilities of OLIN comes

from official documents – minutes of Advisory Board meetings, Report to the Council on

Higher Education, ERA Management Committee Reports, and interviews. Participants

confirmed the organizational chart (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: OLIN Organizational Chart

```
                    Minister of Education
                           |
                 Council of Higher Education
                           |
                        ( OLIN )
     ERA                                    Advisory
  Management                                 Board
  Committee              Working
                          Groups
     Products                                International
   and Services        Technology
```
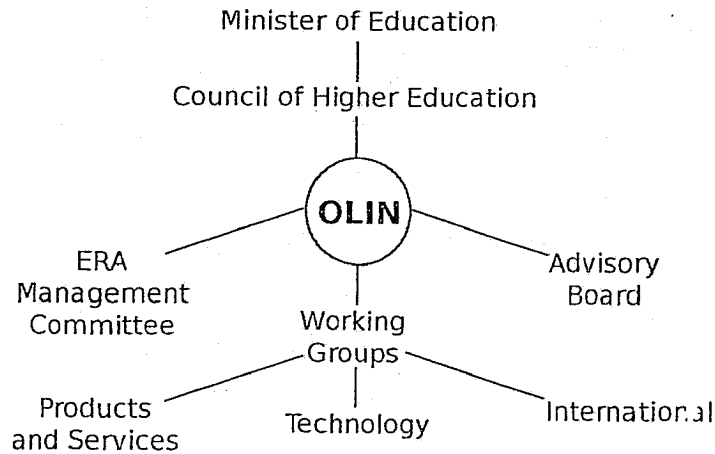
Governance

OLIN was an agency of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and, because of

CHE's cross-sectoral responsibilities, it was seen as the best vehicle to review reports

from and provide direction to OLIN. The CHE consisted of senior level executives, from

the university, college, school boards, and the provincial education department.

Generally, formal reporting to this main group was annually, but on a more frequent

basis. OLIN reported to the smaller Working Group of the Council which consisted of a

college Director of Programs, the Assistant Deputy Minister Education, and a university Vice President (Academic).

OLIN also reported to an Advisory Board. Its purpose was to ensure OLIN evolved in ways that supported the aims of stakeholders and complemented other provincial initiatives. Initially, the advisory board consisted of senior representatives from the major stakeholders – ACOA, Industry Canada, Department of Education, university, college, school broads, telecommunications businesses, and the provincial IT Secretariat. They represented OLIN and reported back to their respective organizations. In later years, the advisory board included only government (federal and provincial), college, and university representation because a new network strategy, the Health Education Regional Optical Network (HERON), was being developed. It was perceived industry partners who might bid on proposals would be in conflict and not able to bid if they were on the advisory board.

A management committee with representatives from the provincial and federal governments oversaw ERA projects, of which the Post-secondary New Media Learning Projects were specific to OLIN. OLIN's activities were defined by individual project proposals submitted to and funded by the ERA, and signed off by the Management Committee. With the committee's approval, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the federal and provincial government officials and the proponent, CHE, with OLIN as the implementing party as indicated in the agreement. The money was sent to the university in the name of OLIN. Quarterly reports were provided to the ERA Management Committee according to the performance indicators set by the Management Committee.

OLIN consisted of an executive director, two secretarial supports, one instructional designer/project manager, and seconded staff from partner organizations. OLIN had three planning groups, products and services, technical network, and international, made up of directors and assistant directors, senior managers of programs and technology, and managers from the private IT sector.

Summary

OLIN reported to a provincial policy group whose mandate was to provide policy for collaboration projects in the educational system. An advisory board consisting of stakeholder groups was to ensure goals were representative of the stakeholders and to complement all institutions of similar interest. Accountability was to the CHE, policy group, and the ERA Management Committee. OLIN also had a working group consisting of middle managers from the partner organizations to guide meeting OLIN goals.
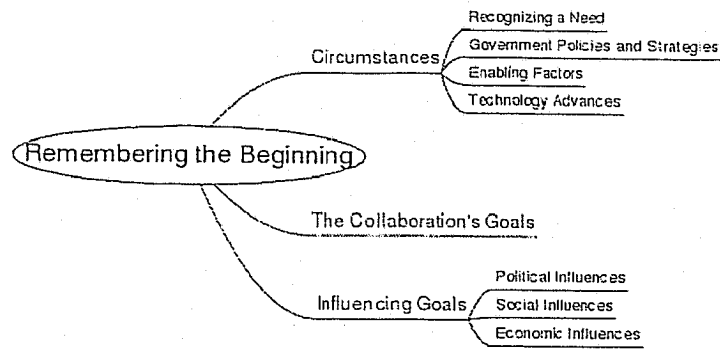
Decision-makers were asked about the circumstance under which the collaboration was created, the goals that were to be achieved and influences on achieving the goals. These three themes provide a framework to present the case study from the decision-makers perspectives.

Circumstances

Participants described many events that helped to create the collaboration. These events are presented as four categories: (a) recognizing a need, (b) government policy and strategies, (c) enabling factors, and (d) advances in technology. Directors in open and distance learning agencies realized it was important for their groups to work together. Federal and provincial government policies and strategies were set in place as catalysts for social and economic growth. There were enabling factors such as economic challenges, federal government support, senior level decision-makers in education and private sectors who supported the idea of information technology and groups collaborating, financial support from both levels of government and the timing to initiate a new approach to learning using the new advances in technology. The new technologies

were promoted by the federal government as a way to create a knowledge society through collaboration with industry, academia, and governments.

Recognizing a Need

The notion of collaboration was prevalent in many areas. Delivering open and distance learning collaboratively to rural communities in the province was a well established practice where the "players knew each other [and] shared goals with little competition because of the structure of the group." A university director's group who had been working in the distance learning field for some time, knew there were reasons to collaborate. They realized they were working in the same areas, the same communities, implementing technology with limited resources, and seeking funds from the same funding sources:

> There was a recognition on many fronts including, those amongst us who were directors of these individual agencies, that there was a fair amount of overlap, particularly from the perspective of the implementation of technology in the various communities in which we all served. There had been a couple of volleys of people trying to work together before OLIN . . . to look at ways where we could decrease our operating costs by collaboration and also to maybe be more collaborative in some aspects of programming.

Government Policies and Strategies

Both provincial and federal government policies and strategies supported using distance learning and information technologies for economic development. At the provincial level, policies related to open and distance learning, based on information and

communication technologies, were in place in the early 1990s. One decision-maker reflected on the events related to information technology:

At that particular time there was a lot of interest nationally in information technology. I mean this was the early nineties.... there was a lot going on around information technology and at the time as well the provincial government had formed the IT Secretariat and so there was a provincial strategy around information technology.

In 1994, an Information Technology (IT) Secretariat, funded through the federal/provincial government Canada/Newfoundland Agreement on Economic Renewal, provided a framework to develop the IT sector and utilize information technology to assist with economic diversification and development. Its main purpose was for stakeholders to "cooperate, collaborate and consolidate resources to achieve the vision of a strong, vibrant knowledge-based economy that creates new jobs, generates wealth and improves the quality of life for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians" (Information Technology Secretariat, p. 2).

A policy group, the Council on Higher Education (CHE), made up of the provincial Department of Education, the university, and the college was created to provide advice on province-wide policy and planning issues in education. It was created in 1995 when the government recognized the importance to collaborate and coordinate across educational sectors (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1998). One decision-maker's understanding of the council was "something that came about as a result of the need to collaborate." Another decision-maker who was a member of this council agreed and pointed out this was the feeling by senior level decision-makers in the

educational sector, "we felt the need to talk to one another, have some channelling, to influence government and provide feedback and recommend policy." Another decision-maker faced with the many groups of people working on institutional collaboration on many levels said, "the OLIN piece was able to be nurtured under that particular group of people [the Council on Higher Education]."

Federal government policies identified education and information technology as catalysts for economic growth and development. One decision-maker clarified the focus of the federal government, "They saw the education piece, although really someone would debate it was a social policy, as an underpinning of the economic policy." A decision-maker from the federal government agency explained OLIN was created because of their interest in using information technology (IT) as an economic strategy with the education sector:

> We wanted to look at IT and not just IT in an urban context . . . but also IT as an enabler to see what could be done to transform the rural economy. . . . A consultant company was hired to . . . develop a vision for all of this and what emerged from that was the [provincial] IT Strategy . . . . OLIN was one expression of that.

Enabling Factors

Several reasons were cited by decision-makers for creating an open learning initiative. They included economic challenges, local champions, federal government support, recent advances in technology, and the timing was seen as right.

Economic challenges. In the early 1990s the province lived through a crisis in the fisheries which contributed to provincial economic distress. A decision-maker remembers:

> Throughout the nineties in this province we had a succession of fishery failures
>
> and the federal government accepted responsibility for most of this. And each
>
> time the fishery sort of failed there would be some sort of response in terms of
>
> economic development and diversification . . . what emerged . . . was something
>
> called the Economic Renewal Agreement.

This agreement provided the funding for initiatives to "grow the economy" especially in the information technology sector, and became the prime source of funding for OLIN.

Champions. Decision-makers spoke of senior level decision-makers from the university, college, provincial Department of Education, and the federal government agency responsible for economic growth and development as the main champions for the creation of OLIN. The decision-makers from the education system were already working together in many activities and the federal government agency was instrumental in bringing the initial planning groups together. Decision-makers remembered:

> The [senior university official] really sort of shifted into a more technology
>
> minded 'sure we'll do something with the schools, we have a Faculty of Education
>
> so we can support STEM~Net, you know we can support these kinds of things.'

[An official from ACOA] was really playing a role in the beginning as . . . a

facilitator trying to bring some interested parties together and the initial meeting

I'm thinking of probably actually predated OLIN *per se.*

when [senior university official] was appointed he had this vision of an open

learning network . . . he had a notion of what role OLIN could play, how this

province could become a player in a national e-learning and international

e-learning market.

But in terms of the partnership of OLIN and the partners that made up OLIN, my

best recollection is that it was promoted by the Director and she found certainly

some receptivity in some people at the university, the Vice President in particular

and the Assistant Deputy Minister of the day.

A decision-maker spoke about how one champion approached the federal

government to support information technology:

One of the Assistant Deputy Ministers in the Department of Education was

successful in getting some money from the federal government to advance the

cause of information technology in the province and I think out of that came this

notion that we should have a collaborative provincial network comprised of the

learning institutions, the health care sector, the secondary institutions, schools and

government, some aspects of government services.

Federal Government Support. Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA),

the federal government agency responsible for economic growth and development, was

eager for groups to collaborate. In the past, ACOA funded network groups to enable change in distance learning agencies and it advocated "for collaboration among the networks they previously funded." One decision-maker who was involved in the beginning stages pointed out ACOA was the key agency involved in bringing the initial planning groups together to see "what can we do together if we were able to look at some more collaborative pieces." The federal government had a history of supporting groups involved in using technology to deliver education and professional development for K-12 teachers and were interested in trying to create a provincial agency that would provide a "kind of seamless educational distance organization" as well as meet their "needs for more workplace and literacy [learning] and all of those kinds of things that would, you know, generally bolster the economic perspective of some of the communities." Another decision-maker supported this view:

> [ACOA] had over the years put significant money into these networks and now they needed them to kick into gear here and help out with, you know, what could they bring to the table to make them better at addressing some of these other issues, and at the same time, obviously addressing their own. So they were quite interested at the time.

Access to federal money for the initiative was guided by a federal/provincial Economic Renewal Agreement – on a federal government (80%) and a provincial government (20%) contributed basis.

Timing. Decision-makers said the early 1990s brought much interest on the national and provincial scenes in the use of advanced technologies for economic development. There were new technologies, such as the Internet, available funding, and a

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"favourable political climate" with provincial and federal government strategies supporting information technology. It was during a period in which the federal government through its agency, Industry Canada, created organizations like CANARIE. One decision-maker pointed out, "At that particular time there was a lot of interest nationally in information technology. I mean this was the early nineties, right? There was a lot going on around information technology . . . there was a provincial strategy around information technology."

Technology Advances

In the early 1990s there were great advances in technology which allowed increased access to rural communities and more interactive approaches to the delivery of courses and programs:

I think what people wanted out of [OLIN] was a no-boundary, geography-less access to networks. In other words, whatever kind of network you needed to run the application you were looking for you could have it independent of where you were in the province.

Another decision-maker remembered technology was identified as an opportunity area for the province:

Globally, the Internet was becoming established and the World Wide Web was getting going and suddenly people, everyone wanted to be on the front-end of the bandwagon in terms of this great new multi-billion dollar opportunity which was distributed learning using the Internet.

These advances also gave the potential to increase access to educational programs internationally. thus increasing economic growth.

Summary

The original mandate of OLIN was to look for synergies among the various players and to build on these synergies to encourage collaboration. There was a favourable political environment on provincial and federal levels towards the use of new technologies and towards similar groups working together to be more effective and efficient in education and economic development. Funding was available from both governments and the educational institutions were interested in working with the new technologies to increase educational opportunities. One decision-maker sums up the context for creating the interorganizational collaboration, "There was some leadership that had a provincial context to it and there was institutional interest and then the funding helped to bring it together."

The Collabora .on's Goals

OLIN was created following a year of planning by stakeholders and two years before implementation of the 1997 Economic Renewal Cooperation Agreement (ERA). It was funded to oversee activities related to post-secondary distance education and new media learning in three broad areas: technology, product and services, and international commercialization. What decision-makers perceived to be goals and what influences affected goal accomplishment is presented in this section. One decision-maker remembered how the goals evolved:

> I think we were just all sort of working through, you know, here we are, we have a major focus on content repurposing for online delivery. We have major issues in terms of the infrastructure and how could we deliver this to some of our constituents . . . in the rural area of this province.

Another decision-maker described the 'thinking of the day' around change and innovation, "from my perspective [OLIN] was just one attempt to do things in that area [information technology], to encourage collaboration, to develop some content, to find maybe some more cost efficient ways to making that happen." Another decision-maker spoke about how a collaborative environment underpinned the goals:

> We were to collaborate and therefore get better networking out there. We were to collaborate on programs and use them as an economic push into the international environment, we were to do international activities and use that as a focus . . . for people to collaborate on programs.

All decision-makers recognized a primary goal was to build a single provincial application network. One decision-maker said the goal was to "build this transparent architecture and network across the province" which another decision-maker felt "would have been kind of an equal access to educational opportunities for all students in this province."

The second and third goals decision-makers identified were interconnected. The second goal, development of products and services, decision-makers saw as the redesign of "traditional" post-secondary distance learning and face-to-face programs to include new media learning technologies for online delivery. Those programs were selected by the public institutions' deans and directors based on a market analysis. Training services in instructional technology and multimedia design and development were developed as the partner's designers acquired new skills from training provided through the collaboration. The third goal was to take redesigned educational programs. along with partners' newly acquired skills. to international markets. A decision-maker recalled.

"Another whole part was the international side, marketing internationally and selling our skills in this province to an international marketplace for distributed learning . . ." and "to engage in international commerce with those products and to help educate people within the province concerning the modes and opportunities of distance education."

All decision-makers recognized a broader goal was to facilitate a collaborative environment among all stakeholders (public/public and public/private sectors) in order to "capitalize on joint strengths and opportunities." This goal had an economic underpinning:

> [OLIN] tried to facilitate the interactions between all the different parties that needed to be there in order to produce an open learning network . . . so it had that piece of it. At the same time too, there was a portion of it that looked at the economic benefits of the collaboration so that you would bring together all the folks that you needed in order to have a better educational service offering in this province. And then you had the opportunity to take that and seek whatever commercial benefit there could be from that as well.

Other decision-makers recognized the economic underpinning of these goals was to "make better use of scarce resources", "reduce duplication and redundancy", and in the case of international markets, "stimulate growth in the [IT] sector." Some decision-makers saw OLIN as creating a 'brand' or acting as a 'gateway' to international markets for the province's distance learning groups. Thus creating, as one decision-maker said, 'a capacity' in exporting the province's post-secondary educational products and services. One decision-maker placed all OLIN's goals at "a pretty high-level."

All decision-makers in this study agreed the goals were not fully achieved, however, there were, as one decision-maker claimed, "degrees of success." Influences decision-makers saw as affecting the goals were political, social, and economic.

Political Influences

One decision-maker pointed out that in the formative stages there was a politically favourable climate at both the national and provincial levels to implement technology innovation through collaborative relationships. However, over time, there were problems with support from the provincial government. Decision-maker's commented, "[there were] bureaucratic reasons in the [provincial] government that precluded the [application] network thing ever getting done", "[the application network] needed embracing by the provincial government to make that happen", "[one minister] just didn't have this kind of vision and he had the potential to stop it . . .", and "a lot of organizations . . . a lot of factions . . . we have great difficulty getting everyone to act in concert."

Several decision-makers felt there was "a role for legislative cooperation" by the provincial government to be applied in order for organizations to realize the importance of collaborative relationships. One decision-maker felt that if collaboration were to be successful, "a framework of expectation and a framework of leadership . . . in the legislature or within the government . . . would create the environment to be successful."

Social Influences

The cultures of stakeholder organizations were different. The university was autonomous while the college came under the provincial government's purview.

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Decision-makers commented that, "[the university] was a partner [and it] was insistent upon the university brand being visible throughout the whole thing.", "[there was] the challenge to break down institutional barriers", and "institutional barriers seemed to prevent [collaboration] from happening." Having educational institutions working together, one decision-maker recognized the effect different organizations' environments can have:

> two different environments with two different approaches to how they do things. The university appears to be more independent in terms of how it does things. The intellectual property is very different . . . the instructors own the content at the university whereas at the college the instructors don't own the content, it belongs to the college. So that in itself creates difficulties in terms of how you would work together.

In addition to institutional differences, there were also barriers between the private sector groups. One decision-maker said, "There were industrial players who had their own interests . . . who pulled in different directions and in the absence of any unanimity amongst the other institutions made it difficult to come to a conclusion." Governments also have differences in their mode of operating. One decision-maker recognized the difference between the "two orders of government" and another pointed out the federal government has no jurisdiction in provincial educational matters, ". . . being the federal government, because it's not really our area of jurisdiction . . . we had no legislative lever we can't force any of this stuff to happen."

Economic Influences

Decision-makers spoke of economic influences that affected goal development and achievement. The economic focus was to reduce duplication and share resources to advance the province economically. Many application networks existed in the province, funded in part by governments which required a concerted effort from partner organizations to come to agreement on the single provincial application network. One reason for creating OLIN was what it could contribute to economic development through distance education and, as one decision-maker pointed out, the need to connect rural parts of the province was the "framework within which OLIN operated and was understood." This was also the reason for entering international markets, "what's learned in that, in the course of satisfying needs abroad, can be applied to domestic ones." The availability of funding from both governments provided the impetus to create OLIN and set a mandate and goals. However this funding was also seen as an obstacle to achieve relevant goals. One decision-maker felt the funding criteria seemed to direct OLIN's activities, "instead of being driven by our goals [as set by an Advisory Board] often times we seemed to be going where the money was or where the money was available."

Summary

All decision-makers understood the goals of the collaborative endeavour to be three broad areas (a) provincial learning application network, (b) educational programs and services, and (c) commercialization of post-secondary institutions programs internationally. They recognized these goals were not fully achieved, that political, social, and economic influences affected goal development and achievement. Organizational

culture, availability of funding, the criteria for funding, and the divergent interests by the provincial government were cited.

Chapter 5 Reflecting on the Collaborative Experience

It's the group sound that's important, even when you're playing a solo.
Oscar Peterson

This chapter has four sections which describe the decision-makers' reflections about being in OLIN and responses to the six guiding research questions. Section I Coming to the OLIN Table presents decision-makers' roles and goals for participating in the collaboration, their understanding of the meaning of collaboration, their perception of the importance of collaboration in the education system, and their reason for participating in this collaborative initiative. Section II presents what decision-makers saw as benefits of the collaboration, Section III describes what decision-makers perceived to be the challenges for the collaboration, and, Section IV offers decision-makers' guidelines for implementing educational technology through collaboration. Responses to the six guiding research questions concludes this chapter.

Section I Coming to the OLIN Table
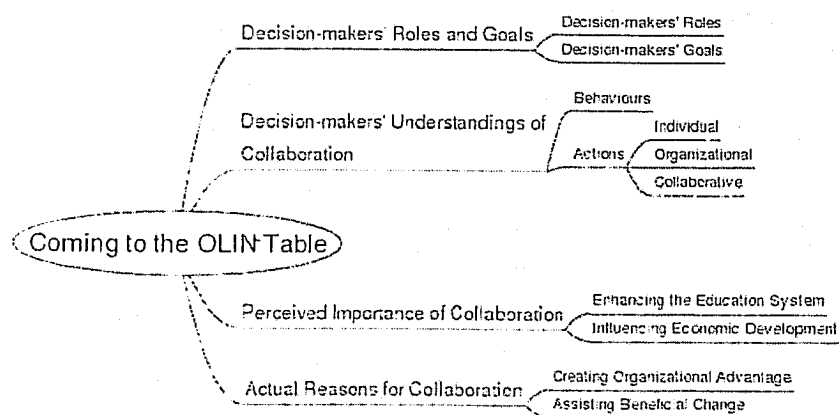
Decision-makers' Roles and Goals
- Decision-makers' Roles
- Decision-makers' Goals

Decision-makers' Understandings of Collaboration
- Behaviours
- Individual
- Actions
- Organizational
- Collaborative

Coming to the OLIN Table

Perceived Importance of Collaboration
- Enhancing the Education System
- Influencing Economic Development

Actual Reasons for Collaboration
- Creating Organizational Advantage
- Assisting Benefic al Change

Decision-makers were asked to describe how they saw their role in the collaboration and what their goals, personal or representative of their organization, were while involved in the collaboration.

Decision-makers' Roles

The majority of decision-makers described their role in terms of the tasks they performed in the collaboration: liaison supporter, funder, guide, policy provider, leader, partner, member of the reporting agency, director, facilitator, funding monitor, and member of advisory board. Two people used the title of the position they held in the collaboration, executive director and chair.

One decision-maker served two consecutive roles, initially as liaison between the reporting agency and OLIN's executive director and later as chair of the advisory board. As a senior university official, he was also a member of the reporting agency allowing him to "represent [OLIN] when questions arose that needed attention." As chair of the advisory board, because the reporting agency "wished to have more direct influence", his responsibilities were to meet with the director and staff "from time-to-time in order to make sure that we were working in genuine collaboration."

A decision-maker, whose organization was a provincial secretariat for information technology industry development. saw his organization's role as a partner working towards achieving the distance learning part of its mandate. "[The] IT Secretariat had a number of different thrusts to what it did . . . so distributed learning was just one of many pursuits . . ." A decision-maker from the same organization saw his role as supportive

because his "interactions with [OLIN] were specific projects" related to distance education.

A decision-maker from a federal government agency viewed his role, from an organization perspective, as two-fold; "a source of financing" and provider of a "sort of high-end policy, sort of guidance." He saw his role as leading "by providing some funding" and by sitting on the advisory board he showed his commitment to the initiative.

One decision-maker held two positions over the duration of the collaboration, as provincial government assistant deputy minister and as a senior college official. As assistant deputy minister, and therefore a member of the reporting agency, this decision-maker's role was facilitative with the post-secondary institutions, "helping to facilitate the partnership, bringing the partners together." As senior college official, it was a leadership role to "provide the leadership for the college involvement in [OLIN] and the partnership that was [OLIN]." Another assistant deputy minister said he represented his department and was in a "monitoring role . . . . bringing the perspective as funding agent."

One decision-maker who participated in the formative stage saw his role as a supporter, he "arranged for the university to house it and support it to a degree." A decision-maker perceived her role on the advisory board from an economic development perspective, to provide "overview guidance and input." Another decision-maker involved in the formative stage had a dual role, as a senior college official who was keen to be involved in distance education initiatives as they were "trying to develop distance learning capabilities" and as a supporter of distance education on a provincial level. "we

recognized that in rural communities the technology had a role to play and especially in improving access and involvement in the base of the clients that we served."

Decision-makers' Goals

Participant goals fit into four general types; personal, organizational, collaborative, and systemic. Personal goals related to policy and collaboration; they were "to expand my horizons in the policy end in distance education"; "I just wanted to be part of creating a better infrastructure and networking potential for the education sector"; "to just get people to think about having common networks and common ways of sort of disseminating information."

Decision-makers organizational goals were expressed in terms of the benefits to their organization. Goals articulated included, "our interests were self-serving, we were a fledgling operation . . . wanting to be part of whatever became of the provincial scene"; "I was bringing the perspective as funding agent and as the [provincial] government representative"; "to give us [our institution] . . . capacity for distance delivery"; and "to explore [whether there are] business opportunities, revenue generating opportunities that will emerge from this."

Some decision-makers combined organizational and collaborational goals when describing how their organization's strengths could complement others in the collaboration, "facilitate OLIN's work and the overall structure of its mandate and to determine what elements of that work might be of benefit to the university and encourage those"; "to use the relationship with OLIN to further the goals of [my organization]. In a broader sense. "to see everyone got more business. enhance and build reputation of the province in distributed learning"; and. "I looked at OLIN as an implementation partner

in some of the initiatives that we had on the take. Our role was industry development. OLIN was to sort of be a bridge between industry and academia . . . . we were sort of a complementary agency."

Other decision-makers held organizational and system goals in that participating in the collaboration was a way to advance their organization' and increase the province's reputation, "to use the relationship to further [my organization's] job of seeing the IT sector grow faster", "to advance ICT applications in education and other public services in a pan-provincial context", and "to enhance and build a reputation of this province as an area of distributed learning expertise." This decision-maker wanted to see everyone in provincial distance learning "get more business."

Other decision-makers described their goals as a systems level change agent, "my personal goals were more organizational, institutional in terms of breaking down some of these barriers that existed within the university, within the province"; "how to increase collaboration, the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts"; "to come together a little bit and showing a unified front or face to the world as distributive learning experts"; and "if there was a capacity to bring it all together then you could actually have a more efficient delivery, better service."

Summary

Participants in this study came from OLIN, government departments and agencies (federal and provincial), post-secondary institutions, a provincial IT secretariat and private sector information and communication technology companies. Decision-makers saw their role in the collaboration from the perspective of their former positions. They saw themselves as liaison. supporter. financial supporter. guide. policy maker. leader.

member of the reporting agency, executive director, director, facilitator, and chair and member of advisory board. Their goals ranged from personal, related to policy and creating collaboration, to organizational in terms of benefits to their organization as well as to the collaboration, to a systems perspective, a pan-provincial context to enhance reputation in distance learning locally and globally, and creating change provincially through stakeholders working together.

Decision-makers' Understandings of Collaboration

Decision-makers, when asked what characteristics they associated with collaboration, categorized them as the behaviours and actions of persons representing their organizations, the partner organizations, and those that would take place only within the collaborative entity. Some decision-makers gave a general description, "it has to be truly collaboration and not people building their own empires" and "to collaborate on something would imply that two people or a group of people have some common goal that they're all interested in achieving." Another decision-maker described a collaboration as having four interdependent elements: goals, partner capacity, interest, and benefits.

> You need the capacity to define clear objectives. You then need to determine whether or not the partner organizations have the capacity to contribute to those objectives. And further, whether those partners have a natural interest in taking part in a particular project. Unless there's something in it for both entities, or all entities, then it is going to fail. There won't be an incentive to do the work necessary to get the job done.

Two categories, behaviours and actions, emerged from decision-makers'
responses to this question. Behaviours consists of individual traits people must bring to a
collaboration. The second category, actions, is divided into three sub categories,
individual, organizational, and collaboration.

Behaviours

The individual behaviours decision-makers identified as necessary in a
collaboration were open mindedness, motivation, and trust. These behaviours suggest a
new mind set, one that moves from an individual focus to working together.

Open minded. Decision-makers said partners must come to a collaboration with
an open mind and a willingness to change. They must be able to compromise on
self-interests and appreciate other's expectations and interests. In general,
decision-makers agreed that being open minded would broaden their views, allowing
them to see the larger picture more clearly and make necessary adjustments:

> I think the key characteristic of making a collaboration work is the ability of
>
> people to come to the table with an open mind, with knowing what they really
>
> hold dear to themselves that's going to be something that they can't change, don't
>
> want to change, is really kind of the core of their business . . . and everything else
>
> could be improved by working with someone else, by changing or modifying . . .
>
> it's that give and take, the being able to negotiate around some of the things that
>
> you do.

One decision-maker remembered, in the early stages of OLIN, stakeholders were
open to new ways operating:

I think that, particularly at the early stages, people were interested in the change, you know, they could see that all the technology platforms could have done with improvements. They were willing to try out things together, they were willing to pass a certain amount of their activity over to others.

Being Motivated. Decision-makers pointed out people involved in a collaboration need to have a strong rationale and a natural interest for participating or their involvement will fade, "I would say mutual interests for one thing."; "the 'what's in it for me' part I think is important."; and "There's got to be some win-win about the whole situation."

A decision-maker saw pooling of resources as a motivator for stakeholders to stay involved and committed:

Collaboration means being willing to pool resources, both financial and human, because in order to truly collaborate I think all parties should have something at risk, you know. There has to be a reason to stay awake at night and worry about the thing a little bit.

Trusting. Decision-makers saw trust developing when people come to a collaboration with an open mind and are open about their reasons for participating. One decision-maker stated clearly, "there certainly needs to be a level of trust, mutual respect . . . those kinds of interpersonal dynamics." Another decision-maker explained the importance of trust in a working relationship, "I think trust is very, very important . . . This element of trust and negotiating in good faith are two very, very important things in keeping your eye on the goal of why you're collaborating and who it's intending to serve."

Actions

Actions decision-makers identified relate to what individuals should do, what the partner organizations should do, and the actions that should occur in the collaboration. They recognized compromise and commitment as actions individuals should practice in a collaboration. Partner organizations need to include collaboration goals into their strategic plans, be flexible as the collaboration evolves and be ready to renegotiate their needs. Within the collaboration stakeholders need to identify and mutually agree to goals, actively participate in creating relationships, and have open communications.

Individual

Compromise. One decision-maker looked at what could be achieved on a macro level if there were some give and take, "I think if you truly want to collaborate you do have to be prepared to compromise and give up some things in order to make the larger picture come together in a way which serves the whole." Another indicated it was necessary for individuals to compromise on personal and organizational interests, "there has to be a willingness to compromise on . . . your own self-interest and organizational interest, at least slightly."

Commitment. Several decision-makers stressed that members of a collaboration must place their personal agendas aside to meet the goals of the collaboration and remain committed to the collaboration for the long-term. One decision-maker spoke about what happens when commitment is missing:

> I think people who are at the table should be honest about the reasons that they're there and sometimes. many times unfortunately. the partners . . . at the table they're not really interested in the partnership. they're there to protect their turf

and their primary goal for being there is to make sure that their piece of the universe is well protected and they know what's going on and that they can be actively working to discredit or to ensure that it doesn't move forward.

Organizational

Flexibility and Adaptability. Decision-makers recognized organizations have to be flexible in their own mandates and be willing to cooperate with the activities of the collaboration. Decision-makers realized "there is a certain round of a long range planning or strategic planning that goes on in all institutions that collaboration needs to be included in it"; "a willingness to compromise on your own mandate. . . . You might have to park your organization's ego at the door a little bit"; and "There are elements of flexibility . . . you may have to change some of the ways your organization operates."

Collaborative

Mutually identifying and agreeing to goals. Within the collaborative relationship, the action most cited by participants was "working together towards a common goal." To achieve this, decision-makers pointed out, requires the collaboration be grounded in trust, where goals can be shared and members work cooperatively to achieve common goals. Expressions heard such as, "we need to be all on the same page"; and "everybody sort of understanding where it needs to go independent of what they necessarily might want to get out of it personally." The term that came to mind for one decision-maker was 'teamwork', "It involves a group of people, organizations working jointly and sharing challenges and maybe dividing work up so that more can be accomplished rather than the individuals working separately."

Creating Relationships. Decision-makers recognized to work together involves having "trust and mutual respect", where all partners are engaged at the beginning and they can see "a win-win for everyone", there is "good communications" and "a clear appreciation of the expectations of all of your partner companies before you get into a collaboration." Decision-makers said members need to understand aims of the collaboration, be able to identify mutual interests and be able to see opportunities to advance their own interests:

> I think there has to be a mutual understanding of what the collaboration is about and that needs to be very, very well understood and the interest of the participating partners . . . have to be served in some way or another so they have to be able to advance what it is they want to do, so it's kind of a non-threatening environment.

Decision-makers realized that if a collaboration is to have an important effect, all potential stakeholders should be involved from the beginning:

> Collaboration . . . is meaningful involvement of the partners as opposed to two or three or four people put their heads together, come up with a concept, then shop it around, after it's been well developed. . . . So I think in a true collaborative relationship . . . the perspective partners, would be brought in at the beginning . . . new opportunities spring up but having involvement and input into the shaping of the partnership and the collaborative relationship from the outset is important in any collaboration.

Another decision-maker felt that if people involved in the initiative had something at risk, they would be more attentive to the collaboration and make efforts to see that the goals were achieved. This decision-maker described true collaboration as:

> sort of finding the common ground . . . having a common vision, a common goal for what can be achieved even if that's not initially available, at least there's a willingness to commit to enough time for a common vision to emerge.

Communicating. Decision-makers recognized the importance of ongoing, open communication in order to identify goals and allow for dialogue:

> You start from the definition of the project. You talk to potential partners and if you can identify the mutual interest . . . then it's a matter of coming to a formal agreement which is the easiest part of the process. The important part is the discussion that shows different interests that they want to come together in a common cause.

Summary

Decision-maker's views of collaboration refer to behaviours individuals must have, the actions individuals must take, the actions partner organizations must be able to perform, and the actions that members must carry out while in the collaboration.

Individuals need to come to a collaboration with an open mind, willing to make changes, to compromise on self-interests, and be appreciative of partner's expectations and interests. They must have a strong reason for participating in the collaboration and be willing to commit for the long-term to allow a common vision to emerge. Decision-makers recognize there needs to be a level of trust and it is developed by people being open minded, honest about their reasons for participating and showing respect for

all partners. Individuals must be willing to compromise on what is important to them in order to achieve the goals and they must remain committed to the collaboration for the long-term. Partner organizations need to be flexible and adaptable in their planning in order to include the activities of the collaboration. Actions within the collaboration relate to members being engaged from the beginning in the process of goal setting, and providing resources, financial and human. Within the collaboration good working relationships develop based on members behaviours and actions and on their understanding of the purpose of the collaboration. Communication and dialogue within the collaboration helps ensure understanding of the collaboration and that members must practice open dialogue.

Perceived Importance of Collaborating

Decision-makers all agreed collaboration was important to an educational system. One decision-maker, who saw himself as living and working outside the education system, felt collaboration was "critically important" because he saw the education system as "chronically under-funded" and thought that an education system working with different groups would provide the needed resources, "if you can bring some extra resources to bear it just makes the whole thing [education] that much more relevant, creative, stimulating [for learners]."

Another decision-maker also saw the importance of working with different groups and spoke about the need to have collaboration between educational institutions and private information technology organizations, "it strikes me that with the pedagogy, the educational piece of it, the technology piece of it, and the technology piece is the

software and the hard technology, you need the industry participants, so, I would say that collaboration is really important."

One decision-maker saw collaboration as "more important in the education system than most other systems." However, two decision-makers took a broader perspective. One said, "[it is] no less or no more important than any other system, I suspect. I think collaboration is important in many walks of life including education." The second decision-maker pointed out that, "collaboration is important in everything. It's hard to think of an area where collaboration isn't important."

Although all decision-makers agreed collaboration was important, two decision-makers cautioned that collaboration should not be taken for granted, "one must always test to see if the collaboration is real or whether it's just something that [the funder] wants to see on a grant proposal." The other decision-maker emphasized there should be a business approach, "at the fundamental core of any collaborative relationship or partnership must be a real business opportunity that can be measured as you move toward it." Another decision-maker took a similar cautionary view. Although he saw collaboration as "extremely important", he believed collaboration between the education and industry sectors should happen "only where it makes sense."

To further understand how important collaboration is in the education system, decision-makers were asked why they thought it was important. From the interviews decision-makers saw collaboration as providing an enhanced education system and strategies for economic development.

Decision-makers suggested that if collaboration existed among all levels in the education system, there would be a rich education system that created a community of learners where there would be better learning experiences by increasing access to learning, and making effective use of existing resources. Descriptions of these dimensions of an enhanced education system offered by decision-makers follow.

Community of Learners. One decision-maker took the view that education and collaboration went hand-in-hand, "education by its very nature should be a collaborative effort. Education, formal or informal, should be about community and a community of learners." This decision-maker thought having an education system that resembled a community of learners rather than one that was fragmented, compartmentalized into K-12, college, and university was important for learners and there needed to be, "bridges built between the various silos of the education system . . . there would be some seamless transition for learners from one sector, one silo to the next." Another decision-maker agreed and added, "there has to be some link that holds the whole span of education together."

Increasing Partner Potential. Looking at collaboration to build capacity among partners, one decision-maker from the industry sector explained that "collaboration facilitates achievement of goals not reachable by individual partners. It maximizes the capabilities of partners." A decision-maker, expressing the university's perspective, claimed collaboration was "critical" for the all of the education system:

> In the province we have several major players, the university, the college, the
>
> K-12 system . . . and the Department of Education which oversees all of the parts

in one way or other. The university depends fundamentally on a good product emerging from the high schools. The university stands to benefit from collaborative activities with the college, so that if these connections are defective in the long-term, education in the province suffers.

Another decision-maker spoke about collaboration between the two post-secondary institutions as a way to increase in enrolment, "I think they could boost student enrolment . . . [in] both [educational] organizations, they could have . . . a richer kind of enrolment because you could look at a bigger young adult and adult base by collaborating."

Learning Experiences. Some participants felt if po: secondary institutions worked together to combine their resources students would have a richer learning experiences. A decision-maker pointed out, "I think we could have a much enhanced system and a much more interesting system by breaking out of the mould that we're in, of having everything, for instance, that relates to the university being done from within the university." Another decision-maker gave an example where his organization collaborated with the school system and economic development agencies to make the curriculum more relevant to learners:

we've done some other things . . . to look at regional economic development in the school system. . . . we've worked with regional economic development boards . . . and the Department of Education and :+ school boards to develop content and programming where students can see examples . . . from their community . . . rather than looking at case material that was developed [elsewhere]. So you made the economy a living. relevant thing to the kids.

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Access to Learning. One decision-maker from the IT industry saw collaborating as a way to provide all groups in the province access to technology service:

The reality is we have a pretty diversely situated population in the province and half of them are in this region. We don't have any issue providing any level of service to this region but once we get past that, it becomes a struggle . . . without at least a certain level of collaboration you can never get to the point where you can affect or provide the same kind of service to everybody else.

Another decision-maker saw how increasing learner access to various educational institutions through distance education technologies would offer more opportunity to learners, "I think that we could be more at a distance. In getting more out into those communities [because of the technology]. . . . [and] kids would be better prepared. . . . [and] we could do a lot more on workplace [learning]."

One decision-maker looked at the K-12 system from a department of education perspective, with a view to managing resources. He recognized collaboration was necessary because the system can't afford duplication:

You know, we've consolidated school boards, for example, in this Province twice in a ten year period. We went from 27 to 10 Anglophone boards and then from 10 to 4 Anglophone boards. . . . So in those kinds of situations we need to be collaborative, we can't afford to be duplicating activities . . . the kinds of things we do as a department . . . is about collaboration. . . . so that we don't have people out doing different kinds of activities, with a different agenda.

A decision-maker agreed and added that collaboration in education would be more efficient in terms of eliminating "unnecessary duplication of effort, time, and resources."

Influencing Economic Development

The second theme, influencing economic development, related to seeing collaboration working at the provincial (macro) level. One decision-maker recognized that collaborating was very important to the province's survival, "Well it's key to it . . . . being a very small province like this with very limited resources, a very small number of people in a big geography. If you don't collaborate, you're nothing." Another believed the idea of working together would contribute to developing the economy, "collaboration in that sense is key to economic growth, it's key to . . . innovative economics, research, and development."

<center>*Summary*</center>

All decision-makers agreed that collaboration is important to the education system. Some equated it to a community of learners where the independent, fragmented parts of the system are linked, providing a seamless transition for learners. Others saw collaboration as a way to increase learner access through distance learning technologies. Several decision-makers recognized that under funded education systems can benefit from collaboration by having access to extra resources by eliminating duplication, and therefore adding to economic growth and development. Collaboration helps partners to increase their capacity in terms of achieving their goals and having a less fragmented education system.

Actual Reason for Collaborating

Participants were asked what were their main reasons for participating in the initiative. Decision-makers involved at the policy level saw the initiative as an opportunity to advance social and economic development. Others realized the pan-provincial benefits the initiative could bring through working together. One decision-maker summarized it, "if we want to make headway as a province . . . we are going to have to work in collaboration as a province." Some decision-makers realized working together helped create advantages for organizations and others recognized that the initiative was a strategy for change in which they wanted to participate. Two themes emerged from the interviews, creating organizational advantage and assisting with beneficial change.

Creating Organizational Advantage

Several decision-makers spoke about advantages this initiative held from an organizational perspective in terms of sharing resources, meeting mandates in distance education and information technology, and strengthening their business interests. One original member saw eliminating redundancies of resources among the partner organizations and restructuring the money in more creative ways would maximize partner capabilities:

> I had been in the field a long time . . . I knew there was far too much duplication, we were spending *far* too much money and getting *far* too little out of it, so for me it was the whole being better than sum of the parts and getting a much bigger bang for our buck in the various areas. There were four networks and many of them always in the same town, same building. The university and the college

often had programs that were very similar and could benefit from some sort of partnership. So that was the rationale, limited resources, limited fiscal resources, so trying to maximize the benefit of the resources that we had.

Some decision-makers, from the education and industry sectors, recognized being part of OLIN strengthened their positions. One participant from the information and communications industry saw the initiative as an investment:

This was an area of opportunity from a business perspective. It's the engine of our business so . . . to the degree that you engage in activities and help to foster that, even if there's no immediate opportunity, fostering that thirst for productivity was important for the future of our business.

Another decision-maker representing the IT industry saw both organizations working with similar goals and realized collaboration would be beneficial:

[The initiative] paralleled and dove-tailed with some of the goals of the [provincial IT _cretariat]. So it seemed to be a reasonable vehicle to enhance our bang for the buck . . . it was c direction to meet some of the four or five different action items that were related to distributed learning that were on [our] job list.

Although decision-makers agreed on what OLIN could do for their organizations, two decision-makers, one from the public sector the other from the private sector, also saw how their organizations could complement OLIN:

The college evolved to having a fairly strong network . . . strategically located around the [province]. . . . [It had] in some respects potential to provide . . . at

least part of the backbone for a provincial network. It was important that the college be involved.

The industry decision-maker identified with the goals of the initiative and he felt his organization was able to complement the initiative:

We were new to this game, we were bringing some innovation to this industry that it hadn't seen before and for us it was 'let's get involved with OLIN', we think we can do a whole lot for them and you know where they're trying to go is the correct path. The goal that they want to accomplish is a good one.

Assisting with Beneficial Change

The intent of the OLIN initiative was to c. eate pan-provincial change by contributing to social and economic development. Having one of its goals to facilitate collaboration among private and public sector groups indicated how some changes would happen. Achieving the goals through various projects was seen as a way to assist organizations to rethink their way of operating and advance their social and economic positions, and hence, those of the province. A government-based decision-maker saw the initiative as a way to change traditional ways of doing things:

It's to conduct some experiments, to kind of show the way forward, to break down some of these institutional barriers and at the end of the day attract some more capital . . . to try to get organizations to allocate more of their regular budget towards this kind of stuff.

A decision-maker from the education sector realized with the new technologies, open and distance learning was becoming more accessible and an accepted mode of delivery on a global level. This decision-maker wanted his institution to be involved:

It seemed like the right thing to do at the time because there's a great deal of discussion about the importance of distance learning, utilizing technology in education and you know you were a Neanderthal if you didn't get your institution engaged in that process.

Another decision-maker from the education sector saw the initiative as a catalyst for change and wanted to participate:

I think it started the dialogue that at the time we were asked to participate [in] and once we got an idea of what this might be about you certainly wanted to continue to participate. You didn't want the rug pulled our from under you, you wanted to be involved in any initiatives that were going to involve change.

Summary

Decision-makers viewed participating in the OLIN initiative as important for expanding distance education horizons at the policy level, to decreasing duplication and increasing cost efficiencies, by creating organizational advantage and assisting the stakeholder groups in creating new ways of operating in order to advance their social and economic positions. The reasons presented by these decision-makers provide evidence that the need to collaborate by private and public sectors was considered important, it was based on the premise that through collaboration you can do more together than separately.
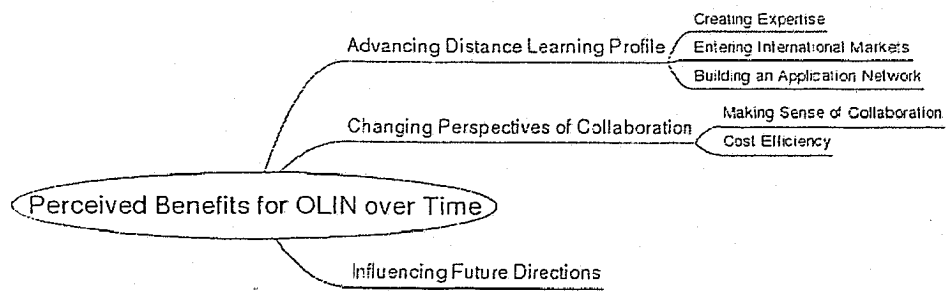
Participants were asked what they were thought were the benefits of OLIN for the province and the partner organizations. Three themes emerged (a) advancing distance learning profile in the province, (b) changing partner's perspectives regarding the concept of collaboration, and (c) influencing future directions for collaboration in the implementation of technology innovation.

Advancing Distance Learning Profile

Decision-makers recognized, through OLIN, distance education and technologies were advanced and that the idea of collaboration continues to exist to some degree:

> OLIN did leave a legacy. We do have a robust distance education system in the province, the university has a good system, the college has a superb system . . . the K-12 system seems to have a good system. K-12 system and the university, at least on the surface, appear to be collaborating.

Decision-makers recognized OLIN advanced distance learning in the province by creating expertise through professional development activities for the stakeholders' distance learning teams; by entering the international marketplace; and focusing activities around building a single provincial application network.

Decision-makers remembered when OLIN began distance education was not a core part of educational institutions, instead it was operated by institutions through continuing education departments, agencies, or centres. The new technologies and infrastructures helped move distance learning in post-secondary institutions from single to dual delivery modes. Developing courses and creating effective multi-media designs meant faculty and design teams needed professional development. A new learning experience afforded faculty and designer/developers an appreciation for each other's expertise. Private sector multimedia companies also benefited from the initiative as they were given the opportunity to work with experienced public sector multimedia designers. Two decision-makers described the benefits of training:

> All of the training that we got in meant there was a skills upgrading right across the province because we were able to bring people in [to deliver training]. And I think we got probably a better mix of faculty and instructional designing, you know, people got a better feel for the two sides of that kind of thing, which over the long period really improved things.

> OLIN did raise awareness of the potential of distributed learning, [it] did open up some markets, [it] did allow people to get work-related training and experience in areas that they wouldn't have otherwise, and basically [it] created a pool of more experienced people that were accessible to see the industry and the whole enterprise grow.

Entering International Markets

OLIN's international marketing plan was still in the early implementation stage when it ended. Stakeholders had partnered in several countries and in many cases still remain partners in those countries. Decision-makers recognized OLIN "opened up some international markets that we really hadn't either considered or been able to break into before" and it created "an international profile for the province." A decision-maker pointed out the private sector multimedia companies also benefited from the international connections that were made:

> There were some groups that were able to capitalize on the international work that we did, like some of the private companies [who] are still working with the World Bank, even though the institutions didn't manage to keep their act together. So that is always good stuff. There are ongoing programs that we designed that are still being offered in Nicaragua and Guatemala.

Building an Application Network

Decision-makers recognized that a single provincial application network was not realized under OLIN, although it helped develop and improve partner network infrastructure, brought awareness of the requirements for a single provincial application network, and it seeded a new provincial effort to bring the concept of a provincial network to fruition.

> It brought people together so that they understood what others were doing. They understood what the barriers were and what the challenges were to implementing a network of that type and causing the level of collaboration that would be required.

I think the focus on the provincial network resulted in a better infrastructure than we had before. It didn't happen overnight and it's still ongoing but it did sort of bring in more federal dollars and we see more broadband network than we did before.

There was a lot of work that went on in [the single provincial application network] area that didn't get implemented at the time, but that started people thinking about it. It did a lot of the ground work and I think we're starting to see people go back to that now. So it didn't come to fruition at the time, but it's now, people are more open to it.

Changing Perspectives of Collaboration

This theme demonstrates the new way people were thinking about and understanding the concept of collaboration. It shows a change in their 'mental model' since it all began. Two categories emerged related to changes in decision-makers view of collaboration. making sense of collaboration and cost efficiency.

Making Sense of Collaboration

Decision-makers said OLIN brought people together and started them thinking about the nature of collaboration and how it could advance their agendas and capabilities. One decision-maker said it began "breaking down the barriers between organizations":

It brought together the key players in the industry . . . you sort of learn what certain people were thinking about. where things could go in education for

instance, how big distance education could be, or what kinds of things that they haven't been able to accomplish that they'd love to be able to do.

I think it raised a profile that got people talking to one another . . . it created the notion that we really needed to be talking more to one another, we needed to be a little more collaborative than we were.

Another decision-maker remembered there were many groups trying to use distance learning technologies in education and OLIN helped to focus the efforts of these groups and bring about a cultural shift:

There were a number of groups who were making efforts in this whole arena. I think OLIN did in fact harness a number of efforts and probably by doing so created some greater momentum, greater awareness . . . of what was required in the education system, it was a real cultural shift. . . . It was effective in focusing the efforts of a number of players and by so doing probably accelerating the cultural change snowball that had to occur.

Another decision-maker spoke about the learning experience gained from being involved in OLIN, "I think it exposed a lot, it was an excellent learning exercise. It was informative around the nature and challenges associated with collaboration. And it probably built a good platform from which to start over, you know, to start anew." Another decision-maker from the industry sector, who recognized OLIN's relationship with the university, commented on mutual benefits for his organization and OLIN:

The benefits of OLIN from our perspective was that we had a partner, a strategic partner within a very large organization who made it a hell of a lot easier for us to

do things that we needed to do. And so they became a facilitator of some of these things and similarly we became a facilitator in a way in terms of dealing with the industry as well . . . because we were working together, I think it made it easier for us to go somewhere else and say, 'Hey look what we're doing here'.

Cost Efficiency

Online course delivery was seen as a way to offer post-secondary learners in remote areas the opportunity to complete their academic pursuits without having to leave home. One decision-maker saw distance learning projects undertaken by OLIN as cost effective, "projects like that I think sort of demonstrated the fact that . . . cost savings can be there, you can deliver these things in remote areas in this province."

Another decision-maker spoke about the feasibility of a provincial application network:

> The most immediate [benefit] for me was the work done that would look at an
>
> holistic or a most cost effective network in the province. . . . There was a lot of
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> work that was done at that time in looking at how it could actually bring
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> educational, economic development users of a network together in order to
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> facilitate the infrastructure that you needed to have it here in a cost efficient way.

Influencing Future Direction

Decision-makers recognized that OLIN informed the next level of effort for future collaborations in international work and was a vehicle for change around a new technology network implemented by the provincial government after OLIN. Decision-makers in the education sector spoke of a post-OLIN White Paper and its

recommendations which they said would provide a "new thrust to get institutions to do a bit more collaboration."

I think for the province [OLIN] was able to showcase the things that were going on in the province. The institutional initiatives as well as the initiatives of OLIN itself, it was able to attract, for example, international business for the education sector and that opened the door for the province . . . in many ways. It was able to lay the groundwork for where we are today.

The [application] network piece, although it is not being done under OLIN, will be done. . . . It will allow the institutions to have better networks, but it will also drive advanced networks into communities. So it will again help the economic situation and businesses will be able to have networks at the same rates as places on the mainland. . . . You know even though [OLIN] didn't survive as an agency, I think it laid some really good track that's still utilized.

I think OLIN was able to help showcase [distance education] provincially, provide a credibility for all of us, even those of us who didn't really understand OLIN. . . . I think we did know that it represented a face for us all . . . and it was able to . . . support the initiatives that we all were involved in.

Decision-makers spoke about how OLIN advanced forward thinking through an evolving process over it's life:

I think because we're a small province, we did have all of these school boards. colleges, not the university certainly. but the health care boards and the like

[on-side], that there was an evolutionary process that had to occur. I think OLIN

... did plant the seeds ... for that concept that OLIN embodied.

It laid the groundwork for where . . . the province is today and when I say the

province I'm thinking particularly government and I think government today is

saying, 'Oh yeah, it makes sense to have a network, a collaborative network that

involves not just education but . . . government itself and its government agencies,

health, education, you know government line departments itself and so on'.

A decision-maker expressed doubt that OLIN's benefits "were very significant":

The overall contribution of OLIN to education in the province, it's never been

clearly determined. I mentioned some dissatisfaction in the Department of

Education and the Council about OLIN's activities, that dissatisfaction is a

reflection of the fact that it's difficult to sum up OLIN's impact. There wasn't, as

far as I know, any comprehensive report on its activities, any concluding report,

any wrap-up. So we don't even know how much money they brought into the

province from the agencies like the World Bank and other funders.

This decision-maker did recognize possible benefits:

There were potential benefits from the contacts that OLIN established with

entities like the World Bank and there was an attempt to solidify those benefits by

turning the OLIN brand over to the university's [brand] to use those contacts in

future endeavours. But, as far as I know, nothing came of that either. Again that's

a function of the lack of coordination between the two higher education bodies.

Summary

Describing benefits, decision-makers provided a retrospective of the changes that took place as a consequence of the OLIN initiative. They saw changes for the institutions in increasing their expertise to develop and deliver educational programs using the new technologies; they realized this initiative opened their institutions to international markets they had not had access to before; and the work over the ten year period on the provincial application network informed another level of effort in this direction. Decision-makers spoke of a post-OLIN White Paper that had as one of its recommendations to see more collaboration between the two higher education institutions. This paper demonstrated that stakeholders' view of collaboration was changing.

Section III Perceived Challenges for OLIN Over Time
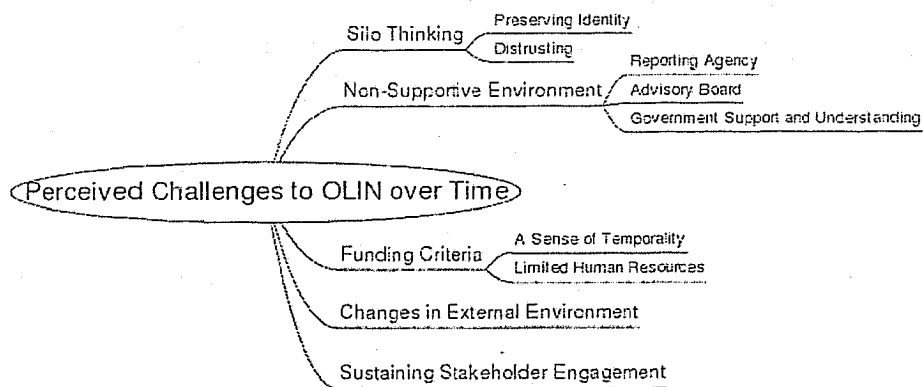
Participants were asked what they were thought were the challenges OLIN faced. Decision-makers identified five themes that hindered the collaboration: (a) silo thinking, (b) non-supportive environment, (c) funding, (d) changes in the external environment, and (e) sustaining stakeholder engagement.

Decision-makers described two silo thinking related disruptive behaviours that negatively impacted the collaboration, preserving identity and distrust.

Preserving Identity

Decision-makers referred to the traditional way of operating by the groups and institutions in OLIN as 'silos' or 'smokestacks' which they saw as a challenge to working together. They saw the university and college as bureaucratic in nature, self-sufficient, independent, committed to maintaining their identities, and protecting their territories. A decision-maker said there were issues associated with "post secondary institutions not necessarily wanting to be represented through OLIN, but having their own kind of presence and their own identity and their own branding". This thinking made change difficult, slow, and it maintained an inward (institutional) focus. As one decision-maker pointed out, "what OLIN was intended to be was not necessarily shared by all the people around the table", even though, initially, this vision was created by the stakeholders themselves. One decision-maker who participated in the latter phase spoke about how trying to maintain one's identity resulted in different visions:

> Well, the challenges in post secondary education, there are lots of chiefs. And you know, each institution was trying to carve its own identity and I think even within institutions . . . we had schools and faculties wanting to do their own international work. We had the college wanting to do its own international work. You had notions of [application] networks of how we could create an educational network that were not necessarily shared by all. You know. there were different visions.

Educational institutions and provincial government self-interests didn't always align with OLIN's approach to collaboration and this caused difficulty. A decision-maker said educational institutions exhibited a stronger interest in getting their "brand" out to the international market than in operating collaboratively and suggested partners need to rethink what it means to collaborate.

> I think one of the negative issues was the fact that particularly the university, as a partner, was insistent upon the university brand being visible throughout the whole thing. So that while they were prepared to play the game, they were very clear that the university brand would always be first and foremost. . . . I think in a partnership you've got to be able to stand back and re-evaluate all of that.

Another decision-maker saw organizational self-interest causing an inward focus which prevented seeing new directions or new opportunities:

> reflecting upon it, I think that in the Province politics, small 'p' and big 'p' politics really works against us. . . . It seems to me that we're very parochial in our thinking and that politicians and others, not just politicians, bureaucrats, college leadership, university are very much in it for 'what it can do for me or my institution' and the greater good doesn't always take precedence.

Distrusting

Tensions between private sector and public sector groups were recognized, as "there's always agendas" and "people have their turf" and if their history of working together was strained, this made a shift in thinking difficult. Some decision-makers from both the public and private sector identified unhealthy competition between organizations as contributing to distrust. A decision-maker from the private sector said:

I mean [their relationship] wasn't dysfunctional but there were. . . . associated with the fact that you had two competitors who probably didn't like each other very much there. You had stakeholders like university, the Department of Education and there's tension around, who gets credit . . . that kind of stuff.

Another decision-maker who recognized that distrust existed before and during the collaborative initiative, identified control as a factor that affected building trust:

There's a niggling distrust between the two post-secondary institutions. When you are all the time trying to nurture that, you know, institutionally they don't trust one another. I don't know why. At the time, and maybe still, there was always a kind of 'the provincial government doesn't like the university'. They see [the university] as being outside their ability to *control* . . . [while the college] was within their sphere of influence. So, when you are trying to do something with the university and a college . . . it is a challenge . . . you're all the time beating against that as an issue.

One decision-maker said creating collaboration between independent institutions and two levels of government was not without its challenges and it required time to achieve compromise or to change people's ways of doing things.

Challenges would be that you're dealing with some big organizations so anytime you are dealing with big organizations, sure, there's some challenges. Big university, big college system, trying to get people to meet in the middle, or change ways. Government . . . trying to deal . . . with two orders of government and the whole funding around that.

Silo thinking existed throughout the life of the collaborative entity. One decision-maker agreed that independent thinking was one of the biggest obstacles to any collaboration. Another decision-maker noted that silo thinking remained a challenge throughout the life of the entity. "Silos. Always a challenge. That was the challenge to begin with. You know everybody in their own little silos and that became the challenge in the end."

When asked how to overcome silo thinking, several decision-makers indicated that "authority at the highest level in government" was needed. One decision-maker pointed out that this obstacle would be overcome now with the recommendations of the post-OLIN White Paper:

> Well the fact that we have the White Paper with its cabinet of directives, that should overcome it because you have authority at the highest level that you have to report back to cabinet on . . . where you're dealing with autonomous institutions, an autonomous institution like [the university], without something like that you don't have any clout.

The White Paper recommended changes to the Council on Higher Education to be recognized in legislation, as a way to see more connectedness among post-secondary institutions, stronger accountability to the public, and to show contributions to the social and economic development of the province. In January 2007 the government created the *Council on Higher Education Act.*

Non-Supportive Environment

Decision-makers recognized the environment in which OLIN existed did not endorse the idea of collaboration. Some said there was little support from the Council on

Higher Education, the Advisory Board, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The lack of support was evident in (a) a lack of understanding the technology, (b) a dysfunctional reporting agency without decision-making power, (c) a lack of leadership, (d) little accountabilities, (e) Advisory Board membership with self-interests resulting in (f) difficulties engaging the advisory board membership. The resistance from stakeholders, their inability to agree on a single provincial application network or agree on an international approach to market for their products and services, led to tensions. One decision-maker said these disruptive behaviours arose as people "weren't in a collaborating mood." Another decision-maker who was a member of the CHE said they didn't provide guidance or support to OLIN because they had difficulty understanding the technology language, "most of us were struggling with the fundamentals of technology" and felt the people who were working on the initiative knew more than they did so they let them move things along:

> I certainly don't feel that as a Council we gave OLIN a lot of our time, in terms of quality planning, thinking, and analytical time. I know in my own thinking and tendency to do this, if you've got somebody there that you have confidence in, you know they know what they're doing, you're not inclined to immerse yourself in this, or [you] don't have the time, or [you are] not willing to take the time, or make it a priority, or assign it to someone else.

Reporting Agency

Part of the Council on Higher Education's (CHE) mandate was to bring similar groups in education together to work collaboratively on issues that could be common to all institutions. Although the CHE was created to coordinate policy across the province's

educational system through collaborative activities, one decision-maker said the Council, "was dysfunctional . . . and sometimes the leadership around it was vague at best and that was the group actually that was supposed to ensure collaboration, systemic collaboration." This decision-maker criticized other decision-makers for encouraging this behaviour with their 'silo thinking'. He said, "when they'd [decision-makers] go back to the CHE with issues, [their] institutional preservation instincts would prevail, not the other aspect, not the greater good."

Another decision-maker noted that although the CHE coordinated the provincial policy for the education system, it "lacked power to enact decisions". A decision-maker stated, "the [CHE] had no teeth . . . it had no foundation and no legislation whatsoever . . . it was a policy arm but it was more a gathering to discuss." Another decision-maker felt, as the CHE didn't "embrace [OLIN] as much as you would have liked them to", this didn't help OLIN achieve "some of its objectives . . . in terms of provoking the law of return in institutional, organizational change." Another decision-maker, a member of the CHE, said it lacked a structure for accountabilities which left OLIN to work on its own:

> The [CHE] was not in those days as effective as it probably might have been. We met infrequently for short periods of time. It was not an ongoing dialogue among people. You have to remember the people around this are very, very busy . . . and getting two or three meetings a year was a major feat. I don't think the [CHE] had a good bead on what was going on with OLIN. I think it relied on the Advisory · Board to kind of keep onto this and again we had very infrequent meetings. as well. So OLIN in many ways was somewhat on its own.

A decision-maker from a post-secondary institution recognized the CHE didn't provide the opportunity to develop a collaborative environment and offered a way to resolve the lack of support, "I think . . . maybe we should have worked as institutions, sectors of the education system, to come to a common understanding as opposed to doing it through the [CHE] because the [CHE] was a very formal table."

Advisory Board

Advisory Board membership changed over the life of OLIN. With internal and external changes to the collaboration, Advisory Board involvement moved from active to inactive, leaving OLIN to work on its own for a two year period, to again being active towards the end. One decision-maker believed this inactive period resulted in OLIN becoming self-directed. Another decision-maker commented, "OLIN had become very autonomous. Identified its own activities without much institutional consultation . . . [which resulted in] no effective oversight of any kind and therefore no good feedback at the institutional level."

Several decision-makers spoke of advisory board members not being fully engaged because many brought their own "self-interest and need for personal advancements." One decision-maker observed, "when you become a member of a board of directors you really should leave your own goals and objectives at the door when you come in and most people don't." Another decision-maker agreed, "The leaders in the partner organizations could not leave their own interests aside and work with the interorganizational collaboration to achieve goals that may or may not be in the best interests of their own organizations." One decision-maker described the challenges of engaging the advisory board:

Getting a board of directors to function properly is a challenge for any

organization like OLIN for two reasons. The first is getting the board to get

engaged and do it properly and the second is getting people to satisfy their own

particular agendas for the greater good of the organization. . . . I believe that

everyone on the OLIN [board] would have had his or her own agenda and my gut

feeling is that nobody was able to put them aside long enough to let the

organization [OLIN] function the way it should.

Government Support and Understanding

Decision-makers claimed provincial government support for and understanding of

the initiative was not evident. One decision-maker, in referring to stakeholders' buy-in

to the provincial application network, put forward one reason for the lack of support.

I think there were bureaucratic reasons in the government that precluded the

provincial network ever getting done. I think it needed enthusiastic embracing by

the provincial government to make that happen. Because, you know, it was a big

move for the two institutions to do that, everybody knew that it was a good thing,

and they were willing to keep moving down the road. . . . Now, despite the fact

that we had every agency buy-in to that, every school board, every hospital board,

the university, the college, somehow at the end of the day when it went into the

provincial government, it did not come out the door again.

Another decision-maker suggested a structure of accountability and leadership was

needed:

What was lacking was a framework of expectation and a framework of leadership

at a level above OLIN in the legislature or within the government that would

create the environment that would allow it to be successful. So I don't think that environment existed so it was very, very tough for [OLIN] to be successful.

Another decision-maker reinforced this notion which he called, "quasi support within government." He recognized there was a need for effective leadership within the provincial government, "there [have] to be motivators . . . that reside outside of the institutions, and these motivators would actually come from leadership that addresses the big picture." He saw a problem, if you have "cooperating but independent entities coming together without a provincial leadership framework to make it work" then it is unrealistic "to expect all these separate entities to come together in the absence of a provincial leadership framework that really needs to be driven out of the legislature in order for it to be successful."

Another decision-maker saw the provincial government's role as helping the public sector to work together:

> I think the right kind of leadership certainly is very important. I think it would take a development of a trust and I'm not sure if government is able to instill a sense of trust in the various players but I think that would be important. I think it would probably take government leadership, maybe even legislative environment, the appropriate legislative environment . . . to facilitate the part of the bringing together of the partners.

Funding Criteria

Decision-makers saw the funding criteria as a weak point in assisting the collaboration to function effectively. Two categories emerged. a sense of temporality and limited human resources.

OLIN, funded by a federal/provincial government agreement, was operated on a project basis because the funding available was based on proposals to develop projects that fit under the three main themes of the ERA, (a) Network Integration and Technical Upgrades, (b) Operationalizing the Open Learning Model, and (c) The Catalyst Program for development and delivery. The main criterion for receiving this funding was collaboration but decision-makers saw the project-based approach, coupled with the need to collaborate, as limiting. It gave a sense of temporariness.

A decision-maker from the IT sector said because funding was limited it was difficult for projects to be fully realized:

> I think some of the challenges were they really didn't have access to that much funding to do much themselves. . . . It was always put together this proposal or that proposal, just trying to go out and garner as much money as you could to do a few things. . . . [OLIN] was never really a well financed, funded organization. I think its mandate was to come up with what to do but not necessarily [to] have any money to actually do it.

One decision-maker said because the initiative was project-based it didn't give the sense of urgency to the overall initiative, "all the funding was project funding . . . so there was no long-term objectives and the long-term strategies within government . . . were not there . . . so you never knew from year-to-year if [the funding] was going to be there or not."

Another decision-maker said funding promoted the idea of a project focus rather than being part of an overall system:

So it's not so much institutional will it's because the funding arrangement is geared up in such a way that they can't access the funding unless there's a collaborative effort made . . . the feds I think have done that you know . . . recognizing that there is a need for collaboration, so they gear up the funding in such a way that you have to work together. . . . You kind of get a project focus on collaboration as opposed to a systemic focus.

A decision-maker from the funding agency recognized the funding limitations and felt educational institutions needed to include these initiatives in their budgets:

as our budget sort of oscillates from time-to-time, we do not have the capacity to sort of support these institutions at the level that they sort of expect to be supported and that becomes a very huge sort of constraint. So that's the biggest problem from my perspective in terms of our capacity to keep these things first and foremost. After that I would have to say it's got to do with maybe sort of waning support from people like the [senior university official], the [senior college official], these sorts of folks. Their budget does not permit them to support, I guess, any kind of an organization that we all create together that doesn't quite pay for itself, if it's not that close to the classroom and someone teaching, you know, and that it brings in money or reduces their operating cost, it's very difficult for them to keep it.

Limited Human Resources

One decision-maker pointed out the focus of the funding was specifically for development of programs. application network. and marketing plans leaving little for

OLIN's operational functions, including staff, which hampered achieving the goals of the initiative:

> The size the staff was a challenge. Just too much work, too little time . . . we didn't have enough money to hire more staff because part of what we were doing was trying to upgrade the facilities that we had, so most of the money didn't go into staff. It went into program development and work development.

Changes in External Environment

Global events hampered OLIN. In the mid 1990s a 'dot-com bubble' was created in which globally there was a rapid growth in the information technology sector. In 2000, the bubble burst. This was referred to as the 'dot-com crash'. This crash caused global concerns for the stability of technology development and therefore e-learning. Changes occurring on a provincial level, government leadership, government departments, health care system, the education system, and in the information technology industry, created a sense of uncertainty:

> The ongoing changes in the system while we were trying to do something was a challenge, you know. We had five colleges, we had one college, it had five presidents now it has one. We had eleven [school] boards, we had five boards, we had new directors and every time something like that happened the organization itself has to stop and reorganize itself so you lose a year while they're trying to reorganize themselves, and legitimate enough. . . . These were all ongoing challenges throughout the period.

Another decision-maker agreed. "there was just too much going on to think of OLIN as a priority" and felt . "all of that restructuring probably had to take place before

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the thinking around [OLIN] could evolve to a point where OLIN was seen as, 'Yeah, this is important'." This decision-maker also pointed out that the province was in an economically challenging situation which influenced leader's decision-making in deciding the value of innovative initiatives:

> The fiscal environment was a challenge. We were in an environment of fiscal restraint at the time . . . and when people were thinking about 'do we want to continue this?', 'do we really need this?', 'what is this?', 'what are they doing over there anyway?' . . . there was just too much going on to think that [OLIN] was a priority. . . . There were many I think, who didn't really understand OLIN, didn't really know what the goals really were or if it was going to be important.

Sustaining Stakeholder Engagement

Many decision-makers realized, at the time of OLIN's conception, stakeholders didn't have a good understanding of distance learning, how pervasive the Internet would be in everyday life, and how the technologies would change so rapidly, "the whole area of distributed learning was not clearly understood by anyone in the world. Having a bigger view of what could be done with the technologies and how best to achieve this was not happening."

Decision-makers acknowledged that while some members were committed, understood the goals, and bought into the strategic vision, others were there "to protect their own interests." Documents describe three separate approaches to build a provincial application network and the outcomes. The first met with delay, which kept the status quo of existing parallel application networks. The second, an external consultant's business case, proposed to determine the best approach for one single application network, wasn't

supported by the provincial government. The third attempt failed as a result of a lack of agreement by provincial government departments and general resistance from some OLIN members. One decision-maker recognized the importance of getting stakeholder buy-in:

> If you do not take the time to get everyone who's got a role in every organization involved in such a way that they are comfortable, they don't feel threatened, they see their role, they see what's in it for them, [and] the synergies are evident to everyone. If you don't do that, you're going to have problems. I would suspect that the senior management of some of those organizations certainly did not have enough exposure to buy-in.

Decision-makers suggested that changes in senior level administrators in educational institutions and government departments slowed progress because of the time it takes for new decision-makers to understand OLIN's history and goals before they would embrace them. A decision-maker found changes at the senior level a challenge, "trying to keep all of those new players always kind of working along, you know bringing them into the same head space, and they would rightfully have their own ways of thinking about things, and you know, that was a challenge." Other decision-makers recognized the influence new people in leadership positions can have on an existing collaboration:

> The university has had a number of Vice President Academics during that period and the extent to which those particular individuals embrace this approach is critical. All you need to do is to change a person and even if the next person is kind of predisposed to this kind of stuff, it literally takes a year for that person to

get up to speed, understand all the new players, get all the nuances to show

support. In large organizations like the university everyone is sort of watching for

those signals.

Another decision-maker spoke about the influence leaders have when it comes to

embracing an innovation:

Leadership, you know to see where the VP is going to go with these things . . .

there's one thing I've learned from this, all of these kinds of initiatives, leadership

is absolutely critical and leadership being the support of one or two people at the

top and if you change that mix at all, you've got a problem.

One decision-maker pointed out that "if there is no will", then duplication and

cost inefficiencies remain.

Another decision-maker noted how the influential relationship between

educational institutions and the provincial government affected policy:

You have to remember that the provincial government itself is a cluster of offices

and agencies each with their own interests, and sometimes diverging interests. So

to bring all of the ministries or departments together into agreement is a very

difficult thing. . . . OLIN . . . had the government on its side. . . . But, in the

absence of the kind of encouragement the university could have bought to bear,

the college could have bought to bear, the important impetus was lacking.

As OLIN was not set up as an institution nor was it supported in legislation, some

decision-makers saw it having little power and control over partners, therefore it didn't

have the power to engage people. "I think OLIN lacked teeth to bring together the

partners or the prospective partners to try to develop the relationships that would be needed in order to advance."

A university decision-maker said the incentive to make OLIN valuable in educational institutions wasn't strong:

There was a lack of serious commitment on the part of the educational institutions to use OLIN as a resource. . . . There was no strong willingness to collaborate, to coordinate, to communicate. . . . If the college and university, for example, could have coordinated their educational activities, international activities, and seen OLIN as a resource then the projects . . . [that] OLIN did would very probably have had more relationship to the interests of the higher education sector than it did.

Engaging stakeholders in the collaboration was a constant challenge. To resolve this challenge, a government-based decision-maker said it needed a leader or convener to find the 'win-win' for everyone. "Because you're not going to get people, rarely do you get them to come, if they're leaders, and just roll up their sleeves and dig right into something that is of no benefit to their own organization or worse, if it's detrimental."

Many decision-makers spoke about effective government leadership and legislative presence was needed. As one decision-maker pointed out, OLIN lacked legislated ability to bring partners together:

I think that OLIN was not able to engage the people at the levels in the institution and probably in government who could by sitting around the table and hammering it out and coming to a common understanding of what OLIN could be and what role we could all play and how we would benefit from that and how we could

work together from the ground up to establish something that was bigger than any of us could do alone. That opportunity, that venue was not available or OLIN didn't have the support that it needed to make that happen like the Office of Technology now. . . . OLIN lacked teeth to bring together the partners or the perspective partners to try to develop the relationships that would be needed in order to advance.

Summary

The challenges to creating and maintaining a collaborative environment were the disruptive behaviours of silo thinking causing organizational inertia which in turn influenced engaging stakeholders in the collaboration. A non-supportive environment towards the collaboration existed because stakeholders lacked understanding of the language of technology, the uncertainty in information technology, changes to leadership role in the educational institutions, provincial government, and changes to many system structures influenced stakeholders view of the collaboration's value and which impacted their commitment to embracing the initiative. Instead stakeholders maintained their traditional ways of operating. Funding criteria, although meant to create change, gave the sense of impermanence and stakeholders who were busy and taken up with changes in the external environment, did not attend to the innovation as they might have if they perceived it as being a long-term development.

Section IV Guidelines for Implementing Technology
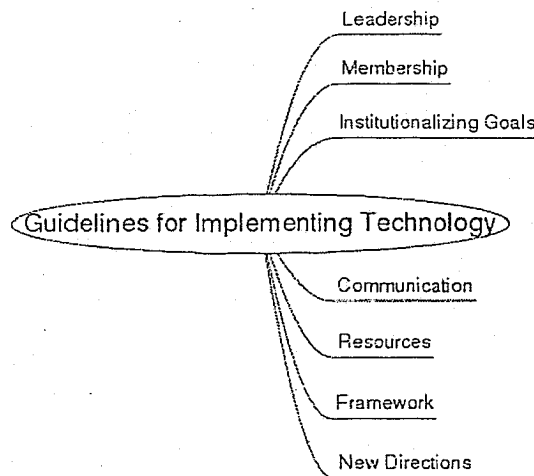
Decision-makers were asked to reflect on changes they would make in this collaboration were they to do it again. Seven themes emerged; leadership, membership, institutionalizing goal, communication, resources, framework, and new directions. .

Leadership

Leadership was the most frequently stated dimension described by decision-makers as important. Most decision-makers recognized the value of having strong, effective leadership which involved organizational and personal buy-in and commitment to the concept.

I think we would probably have more meetings upfront where we would try to get people like university presidents, president of the college, maybe the deputy of some of the provincial departments, we would try to get more buy-in from the people, that at the end of the day, to push all the buttons.

Another decision-maker said leaders' commitment is an important element to collaboration success. "there needs to be something that really establishes a commitment by the players and if that commitment's not there. sorry [it won't happen]." A provincial

government decision-maker agreed leaders have to be committed, "I would absolutely get buy-in from the institutions and ensure that they were comfortable with the way that this was going to roll out."

Membership

OLIN's membership changed as a direct result of partners being "positions not people." In the planning phase it was decided to have influential people in their organizations so they could bring their organizations on-side with OLIN's mandate and goals. However, as those people left their positions, and were replaced by new people, it required the executive director to constantly align newcomers with the aims of the collaboration:

> our working groups that are on the advisory board changed every year just because it was done on position. So it was a constant need to massage that whole piece that the first group had a fairly clear vision of.

Recognizing consistent membership of senior level decision-makers was not possible, this decision-maker argued if members had been senior managers, who had remained constant, the collaborative vision would have continued, "second ten, five, four of the senior managers of those organizations into this organization and have them carry the vision forward and have them be consistent during all the time."

A college decision-maker suggested it may not have been a wise decision to keep it at the presidential level as presidents were not familiar with the technology and they were engaged with pressing institutional matters. "I would say one of the mistakes probably made . . . was keeping this too much at the president level and not having more

people who were more actively involved and interested in distance [education] and more responsible roles working with the Director."

Institutionalizing Goals

Decision-makers recognized the importance of clear, focused, and attainable goals aligned with partner organizations. If a collaboration is to achieve its goals, its purpose and expectations must be understood by the leaders so they can communicate that vision back to their institutions:

> where powerful people presiding over large institutions if they appear to be
> cooperating or collaborating but in reality are *not* or they're not, you know, going
> back to their institutions and selling the message and taking the responsibility for
> the *behaviour* of their respective institutions, then it can't work.

A college decision-maker recognized OLIN was about changing beneficially "something fundamentally at a system level that cuts across institutions and agencies." He therefore believed leaders must understand the overall goals and bring their organizations in-line with collaboration's goals, "I think, there has to be a clear understanding in higher levels of management as to what it is we're doing, why we're doing it and then what their capacity is to actually bring their respective institutions in-line with that."

Communication

One decision-maker spoke of the need for intense communication to all partners, "a fairly rigorous system of communication, so, people, if they don't agree, at least they're aware. . . . Communications is important . . . in terms of a board, if you got a

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board and you put people there, you've got to *do* things, that's the hard part, you've got

to *do* things and you've got to communicate that you've *done* them. . . ."

Resources

Decision-makers referred to the need for more resources – human and financial.

To enter international markets, a senior staff member with international experience was

considered essential to negotiate international contracts. An adequate number of staff to

work with partners on a continuous basis was also considered necessary. One

decision-maker pointed out that the open and distance learning department in his

organization had a bigger operating budget than OLIN, "OLIN was completely

overshadowed and its activities inherently pale in comparison to those of other bodies

who were doing some similar things." He equated increased resources with increased

credibility.

Framework

The administrative framework in which OLIN was embedded was considered

ineffective by some. Decision-makers suggested changes in the administrative framework

to create and nurture change; a more effective reporting structure to show consistent

support and supervision, and increased measures of accountability are all necessary for a

successful collaboration:

> I would change the structures in which we implant entities like OLIN and have a
>
> clearer sense of our purposes and our expectations, and going along with that a
>
> more effective reporting regime . . . to benchmark the activities of the agency
>
> against the objectives that had been set out. All that implies a different form of
>
> administration. . . . something that would provide greater. more consistent

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oversight. Most of all I think, I'd want to implant it in a set of understandings that would link its entitlement to more than annual funding, to its performance with respect to the set of expectations that I say were needed.

Another decision-maker agreed and added it is necessary to operate within a "framework where there is expectation and there's measurement, you know, so you have two sides of the equation balanced and that's got to come from someone who leads it at a level where they can influence what's going on with it."

New Directions

Many decision-makers described OLIN as a catalyst to change things at a fundamental system level in which senior level leaders should realize where their organizations have to go and why, and then bring their organizations in-line with the vision. Bringing about system-wide change necessitates a cultural shift to create a practice of collaboration. One decision-maker summarized how to do this:

We talk about what is the structure but first of all you know 'form follows function', and you really have to think about 'what do we want to create?', 'why do we want to create it?', 'will we be creating value added?' I suspect that if we sat down . . . to talk about the benefits of an OLIN or of a single window or gateway, what it can do for our institutions and our province, then we would all have to agree that we are fragmented in many ways and that if we want to forge ahead, we're going to have to have some sort of a structure that will enable us to do that. So if we can agree upon the basic tenets of what is it that we're going to do, what are the functions, then we can build the structure that will allow us to achieve the goals that we're setting. I suspect it would be a very collaborative

structure . . . one where all partners have an equal role to play, an equal opportunity for their voice to be heard. . . . We have to think about what are the goals, what can we agree upon are the goals, I mean *really* agree . . . . I think that there's enough intellectual capacity around a table to say, as a province, in order to move forward, . . . to attract business, to export our products and services and so on, that we're going to have to have a more collaborative approach, less fragmented than we currently have.

Another decision-maker saw the need to create a structure which would "oblige the institutions to work beyond their own interests." Other decision-makers agreed change on a system level requires patience because a cultural shift takes time.

You're looking at a process in this community that took twenty years to get to the point where we are today, where the province is finally willing to work and force change across what I would call the smokestacks of individual departments. They finally have a Chief Information Officer in place and they look like they are going to create some kind of an organization that would probably procure bandwidth for the whole province. . . . That's taken twenty years and we were naïve enough to think that some of these things would emerge over three or four.

Summary

Of the several factors that decision-makers would change in order to have a successful collaboration, the most cited was leadership. Leaders must work together to understand the goals of the collaboration and how to align them with their institutional goals. This requires commitment to the collaboration and a display of this commitment to their organizations. Decision-makers expressed the need for a stronger, more effective

framework which would provide support and credibility to partner organizations. Communication and resources were considered important in order to maintain a momentum for the collaboration's work over time. The new direction most decision-makers offered to bring about system change is a shift away from traditional approaches towards a "culture of collaboration".

Responses to Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand the necessary conditions and systemic factors necessary to implement educational technology throu.. an interorganzational collaboration arrangement from senior level decision-makers' perspective. The primary research question was: identify the necessary conditions and other systemic factors for an effective implementation of an educational technology innovation. The research was guided by these six questions:

1. What do decision-makers understand collaboration to mean? To what extent do they share a common understanding?

2. What is the purpose of decision-makers' participation in the collaboration?

3. What do decision-makers perceive to be the benefits of collaboration?

4. What do decision-makers perceive to be the challenges of collaboration?

5. What factors do decision-makers perceive to be important in the implementation of an educational technology innovation?

6. What improvements/new directions/advice could be offered to decision-makers for other future collaborations?

Each question is considered in light of the findings from chapters 4 and 5.

Question 1: What do decision-makers understand collaboration to mean? To what extent do they share a common understanding?

Most decision-makers understand collaboration to center around two dimensions, mutually setting goals and developing a dynamic partnership. Decision-makers described individual interpersonal behaviours and actions necessary to develop a dynamic relationship such as being open-minded, having an interest in the domain, compromising on self-interests, willing to make changes to their established way of operating, mutually respecting partners, and appreciating partners' interests and expectations. Everyone mentioned "trust" as key to relationship development and negotiating activities to achieve goals. They recognized trust, critical to keeping the collaboration together, develops when partners are honestly explicit about their reasons for participating, show commitment, and have mutual respect.

These interpersonal factors influence goal setting and achievement. Decision-makers recognized that to set and achieve goals members must have an interest in the domain, there is benefit or "win-win" for them, the goals are beneficial to everyone, the challenges are shared, and there is an understanding of what the goals *need* to be "independent of what they necessarily might want to get out of it personally". They realize in a successful collaboration, partners compromise on self-interests, individual or organizational, and place personal and organizational agendas aside to work together at micro and macro levels. Benefits emerge from long-term commitment and is on a long-term basis because it takes time for the benefits to emerge. Several decision-makers indicated organizations need to include the collaboration's goals in their organization's

strategic plans. A sense of 'collective' was present in decision-makers' understanding of collaboration.

Question 2: What is the purpose of decision-makers' participation in the collaboration?

The response to this research question is organized around how they perceived their role and goals in the collaboration, what motivated them to participate, and how important they saw collaboration in the education system.

Decision-makers' reasons for participating relates to their role in the collaboration and their organization's interests. Decision-maker's roles were many, including liaison between reporting agency and the collaboration, supporter for the collaboration's activities in their organization, policy provider for distance learning, member of the reporting agency, director of the collaboration, facilitator to bring partners together, funding monitor, and advisory board member providing guidance and input. The majority of these decision-makers can be viewed as innovative leaders of change.

Decision-makers described their reason for participating as personal goals to inform policy on distance education and information technology (infrastructure and applications) and organization mandates motivated them to participate. Some of these motivating factors were pragmatic, others idealistic. Decision-makers from academia and industry were interested in building their organizations' capacities, and complementing partner and collaboration goals. Those in academia focused on distance learning using new technologies to benefit learners with a richer learning experience, to increase learner access. and for their institution. to increase enrolment. Those from industry were interested in increasing market share and information technology infrastructures

province-wide thereby complementing their partners' organizational goals. IT industry decision-makers also recognized working in collaboration provided them with business opportunities as part of the collaboration goal to have one provincial application network.

Decision-makers viewed collaboration as very important to education because working together would integrate resources from the education system and information technology industry, therefore enhancing the education system. They also realized participation would increase the province's reputation in the field of open and distance learning internationally. Academic decision-makers saw a need to have a less fragmented education system, a "community of learners". They believed collaborating would encourage, from an holistic perspective, an enriched education system with better managed resources, thus creating organizational advantage.

Decision-makers from government departments and agencies took a policy-related view to create change in the way things were done to implement technology innovation. They saw, by working together, similar groups using information technologies would improve the province's economic situation by increasing learning access to learners in remote areas, by breaking down barriers between postsecondary institutions, and building a common application network and developing common ways of disseminating information to provide more efficient delivery and better service in distance learning. Most decision-makers realized the province was small and without collaboration they would continue to be less productive. They wanted to see a change in their traditional ways of working as independent groups and collaborating was seen as a start to a dialogue that would eventually break down the barriers between and within educational institutions and between industry and institutions.

Question 3: What do decision-makers perceive to be the benefits of collaboration?

Decision-makers identified tangible and intangible outcomes as beneficial to their individual organizations and for the education system in general. These outcomes closely reflect what decision-makers identified as their motivations for participating in the collaboration, that is to increase organizations capacity and enhance the education system.

Tangible outcomes realized were a robust, province-wide distance education system which offered increased access for learners and enrolment in post-secondary institutions; increased access to international markets thus enhancing the province's profile internationally; and industry sector decision-makers increasing business opportunities by complementing the collaboration's goals. These outcomes satisfy the economic underpinnings (cost efficiencies, pooling limited resources, and increasing international markets) governments espoused. Huxham (1996; 1996b) refer to this as collaborative advantage. Two actual benefits that occurred that were not identified as *a priori* reasons to participate were the initiating of collaboration between the K-12 and university systems and an expertise in distance learning design and delivery for public and private sector groups. Creating expertise, however, was one of the key goals of the funding agreement described in chapter 4.

Intangible outcomes influenced future direction. As one decision-maker put it, " it was an excellent learning exercise". There was a positive shift in stakeholder's thinking about collaboration. Decision-makers recognized in a diverse membership they experienced new ways of thinking about things which let them see new possibilities for future accomplishments. They realized through the collaboration they informed another

level of effort for a provincial application network and for future international collaborations. As one decision-maker said, "it raised a profile that got people talking to one another". Decision-makers learned they could learn from each other, "It [OLIN] brought together the key players in the industry . . . you sort of learn what certain people were thinking about, where things could go in education for instance."

Question 4: What do decision-makers perceive to be the challenges of collaboration?

Decision-makers described a number of common conditions that prevented creating collaborative synergies. They are: organizational inertia, a non supportive political environment, low stakeholder engagement, few financial and human resources, and continual changes in the external environment. Different partner organizational cultures created tensions and decision-makers recognized partner organizational reluctance, or inertia, stemmed from disruptive behaviours which created distrust and prevented embracing change. This organizational inertia resulted in collaborative reluctance. They also pointed out that collaboration is complex, multifaceted, and requires continuous attention from partners to suspend their myopic assumptions and work towards a shared vision.

Financial resources came mostly from governments, initially as impetus for the establishment of the collaboration. Most funds were focused on development with too little earmarked for supporting human resources necessary to develop and maintain partner engagement. Funding was allocated in ways that did not give senior level decision-makers a sense of urgency for the initiative. Some decision-makers spoke about how the financial resources "forced" them to work together and "set the direction" for the

initiative thereby reducing their sense of empowerment. The findings suggests the amount of financial resources and how and when they are distributed can affect leaders' judgements of whether the collaboration is 'authentic' or 'forced', can affect judgements of the legitimacy of the collaboration, and can influence leaders commitment. Human resources were scarce even with some partners providing people for a period of time. Partners participating by providing resources could positively influence their sense of belonging to and ownership of the collaboration. Gray (1989) states collaboration is an 'emergent process' rather than a 'prescribed state' of organization. Perhaps, some suggested, the funding earmarked for development, and conditional to collaborating, may have pre-specified deliverables rather than process improvements. If decision-makers are concerned only with deliverables, they may be blinkered against seeing the potential for innovation in the process.

This study also illuminated how influential leaders from one group can affect those from another group. Some institutional leaders didn't fully support the collaboration's goals, their lack of support in turn influenced the support of leaders in provincial government departments and agencies and within their institutions.

Changes in the external environment were identified as other important challenges to collaboration. Decision-makers reflected on the turbulence of structural changes in the public education system, advances in technology, and continual changes in the global technology environment as influencing conditions. Decision-makers, lacking understanding and awareness of the potential for open and distance learning and supportive technology. misperceived the advantages for their organization that could be realized were they to truly collaborate rather than follow their traditional ways of

operating, that is going solo. Most decision-makers' retrospective view of the case study makes clear the importance of working at changing leader's patterns of practice from that of traditional, industrial or post-industrial ways of operating to that of a collective, a 'community of practice', and that they came to realize a collaborative approach is necessary for future innovations.

Decision-makers pointed out the environment in which the collaboration was embedded did not fully endorse the idea of collaboration. This was partly a result of not understanding the language of technology leaving the work on this goal to those who did understand the language. Leadership to provide support, discussion, quality planning, direction, and accountability were realized as needing improvement. Self-interests, unlike those identified as motivators in Research Question 1, were detractors that promoted the status quo, encouraged more organizational self-preservation, and led to members not being in "a collaborating mood". Some decision-makers suggested leadership should come from a top-down, that is, from within the provincial government, to better address the "big picture".

Question 5: What factors do decision-makers perceive to be important in the

implementation of an educational technology innovation?

Decision-makers identified six factors as essential to implementing technology innovation (a) leadership, (b) membership, (c) collaboration's goals, (d) communication, (e) resources, and (f) a framework.

Effective leadership by senior level decision-makers who buy-in and commit to the collaboration's goals and reinforce these goals in their organizations was primary. This suggests leadership is a paramount condition to successful collaboration.

Consistent membership was considered important, suggesting middle managers who are more constant in their positions become more involved to help move the collaboration's vision forward rather than rely solely on senior level decision-makers whose positions are typically time limited. In this study middle managers were members of working groups that assisted in achieving the collaboration's goals. This study suggests a notion of 'community' is necessary rather than one of isolated groups.

Understanding the collaboration's aims by mutually setting clear and attainable goals which leaders communicate back to their organizations shows commitment to the collaboration.

Decision-makers in this study recognized ongoing communication provides a necessary flow of information that helps to understand the vision, bring awareness to activities taking place, and toward goal achievement. This suggests that information sharing brings credibility to the work of the collaboration.

Decision-makers in this study spoke about sufficient resources as critical if change at a system level is to be achieved and as necessary when collaboration is used to effect this change. The findings suggest if a collaboration is to be considered legitimate, it must have sufficient human and financial resources to operationalize its goal.

An effective framework with effective measures of accountability was an important factor identified by most decision-makers in this study. Together they create

genuineness for the collaboration and, once again, leaders play the important role of seeing the collaboration's goals are being met.

Question 6: What improvements/new directions/advice could be offered to decision-makers for other future collaborations?

Decision-makers participating in a future pan-provincial collaboration need to clearly understand the purpose of the initiative, to be able to see beyond their micro worlds to a vision at a macro level, and involve fully their organizations and agencies. Being a collaborative leader requires a new set of principles to create a vision for the initiative and to integrate this vision into their organizations. The findings from this case study suggest a shift in organization's traditional patterns of practice to a collaborative or community approach of they are to successfully implement technology innovation. Decision-makers identified processes necessary to transcend their static patterns of practice to create a culture of collaboration.

Chapter 6 Discussion, Contributions, Implications, and Conclusions

> This is the setting out. The leaving of everything behind.
> Leaving the social milieu. The preconceptions.
> The definitions. The language.
> The narrowed field of vision. The expectations.
> No longer expecting relationships, memories, words, or
> letters to mean what they used to mean.
> To be, in a word: Open.
>
> Rabbi Lawrence Kushner

This research study explored the perspectives of senior level decision-makers, from academia, government, and industry, involved in an interorganizational collaboration to implement educational technology innovation. The collaboration was created in response to economic challenges and government policies in education; it sought better solutions to providing learning opportunities through open and distance learning and new media technologies. The study was undertaken in order to provide a better understanding than what is now available from the literature of what things decision-makers need to be aware to ensure successful and sustainable collaborative arrangements; of what guidelines or frameworks for such ventures can be offered to assist decision-makers; and of what systemic factors will help decision-makers effectively implement innovation beneficial to all actors. It is anticipated the results will provide information to guide provincial policy implementation in open and distance learning and may contribute to a better understanding of cross-sector collaboration.

This qualitative study used grounded theory principles and techniques to generate a conceptual framework for successful collaboration based on interviews with senior level decision-makers with experience in a major collaboration. Government documents

and reports provided background information on the case study. Steps were taken to ensure ethical procedures were followed and participant identities were protected.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the research findings contrasted with relevant literature to show new emphases. The term 'decision-makers' used in this chapter refers to the fourteen participants in this research study. A conceptual model, An Optimal Practice of Collaboration, offers a new view of cross-sector interorganizational collaboration. Contributions to knowledge and practice, implications for future research, and conclusions end the chapter and this dissertation.

The Nature and Importance of a Good Collaborative Framework

The main research question asks, "What are the necessary conditions and other systemic factors for an effective implementation of an educational technology innovation?"

Conditions are defined as circumstances essential for an interorganizational collaboration's existence and factors are defined as characteristics or circumstances that influence or contribute to a collaboration's outcome. The emergent conditions and factors from this study make up an holistic picture for successful collaboration. While they should not be viewed in isolation, it is helpful to isolate them here to reflect on which ones were found to be most important parts of the whole in this study.

Contextual Influences

Collaboration is viewed as a logical and appropriate response to turbulent environments (Emery & Trist, 1965; Trist, 1983; Wood & Gray, 1991; Chrislip & Larson. 1994; Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006). In this case study the impetus events for collaborating included economic challenges, perceived need for cost efficiencies,

government policies and strategies, and technological advances. Gray (1989) describes similar chaotic events as motivators for initiating a collaboration and points out that, as a collective capacity to respond to chaos, "collaboration offers an antidote to turbulence" (p. 28). Bryson et al. (2006) agree cross-sector collaborations form in turbulent environments and posit that formation and sustainability of such collaborations are also affected by driving and constraining forces in competitive and institutional environments (p. 46). Factors that assisted in OLIN's development include people who previously worked together in the domain of open and distance learning, at the time a favourable political environment towards this domain, and a common understanding of collaboration as an appropriate method to solve issues. Funding and organizational support was available and there were champions interested in the domain who recognized collaboration's potential benefits. That is to say, that the key start-up factors already identified in the literature were in fact present in OLIN. For example, Mattessich, Close, and Monsey (2001) recognize political and social climates encourage policy-makers to take action. Bryson et al. (2006) state that through prior relationships partners judge the trustworthiness of others and determine the legitimacy of key stakeholders. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) say that in the initial stage of developing a 'community of practice', as a sense of a shared domain develops, a systematic interaction emerges along with general interest.

'Conveners', credible leaders aware of the multiple areas affected by collaborating, are often considered boundary spanners. Conveners are people or organizations that bring an innovation to the attention of stakeholder groups in order to: determine initial interest, provide an understanding of the issues, and to accord legitimacy

within the group (Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Gray, 1989; Wood & Gray, 1991; Pasquero, 1991; Himmelman, 1996). In OLIN's case, the convener was a member of a federal government agency who facilitated a shared vision with champions and gained initial commitment from stakeholders. Bryson et al. (2006) consider conveners as 'linking mechanisms' influencing the likelihood of collaboration formation.

Collaborative Philosophy

Collaborative philosophy, as emerged from the research findings, is a belief in the value of being interconnected and that everyone around the table has a piece of wisdom that is of value. This philosophy facilitates partners to think beyond their micro worlds to achieve something on a macro level that will be for the 'greater good'. Decision-makers recognized working together was more beneficial than working independently. As one decision-maker stated, collaboration "involves a group of people, organizations working jointly and sharing challenges and maybe dividing work up so that more can be accomplished rather than the individuals working separately". Collaboration is seen through a lens of the 'whole' rather than the parts (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005; Wheatley, 2006; Senge, 1990).

Practicing a collaborative philosophy includes many of the behaviours and actions decision-makers understood to be part of being in a collaboration; open mindedness, interest in the domain, trust, commitment, willingness to compromise on self interests for the greater good, mutual respect for partners, and appreciation of others' experiences and expectations. Sharing these values ensures meaningful work takes place at the collaboration level in a non threatening environment for individual members and for their organizations. By participating, organizations are flexible on their mandates as they

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incorporate a collaboration's goals and make changes to some of the ways they operate. Collaborative philosophy must become the 'espoused theory' and the 'theory-in-use' (Argyris & Schön, 1996).

Collaborative philosophy includes a new language that is congruent with the notion of 'community' (Slater, 1996; Sergiovanni; Gray, 1989; Wenger et al., 2002). This philosophy espouses the idea of moving from "I" to "we", from isolation to community (Kezar, 2005; Slater, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1994; Gray, 1989; Bergquist et al., 1995; Covey, 1999). One decision-maker suggested, partners become "a community of learners". That OLIN was intended to follow a collaborative philosophy was evident in the name, Open Learning and Information Network, and in its description, "a network of networks". A "web of relationship" develops in a community or network (Wheatley, 2006; Wenger et al., 2002; Spekman et al., 2002; Kanter, 1994) and collaborative philosophy brings about what Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001) refer to as "partnership synergy". Alliance spirit, according to Spekman, Isabella, and MacAvoy (2000), "embodies an implicit set of assumptions about the fundamental meaning of partnering" (p. 102) which is essentially collaborative philosophy. They suggest collaborating 'fully and equitably' is what it means to partner in an alliance. Partners perceptions, resources, and skills when shared create something new and valuable, usually described as the "whole is greater than the sum of its parts". Huxham's (1996a) concept of collaborative advantage illustrates collaboration's transforming potential:

Achieving collaborative advantage requires that something unusually creative is

produced – perhaps an objective is met – that no organization could have

produced on its own *and* that each organization. through collaboration. is able to

achieve its own objectives better than it could alone. It may also be possible to achieve something for a wider society that is beyond the remit of any of the participating organization. (p. 141).

Decision-makers recognized the importance of working together for "the greater good", and together achieving goals that may or may not be those of partner organizations. This moral imperative as found in collaboration studies (Huxham, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Himmelman, 1996, Chri .. p & Larson, 1994). Gray (1989; 1996) suggests collaboration is more likely to succeed if partners explicitly recognize their interdependence early in the development of a collaboration and Covey (1999) makes the point very clear, "Whether we're leading in governments, companies, or non profits, . . . we have to work together in order to achieve the greater good. We live in an interdependent reality" (p. 157).

Partners in successful collaborations espouse the interconnectedness and interdependency of groups to achieve major change and, having transcended their individual patterns of practice, they influence change in organizational patterns of practice; assisting others to transcend *habitus* (Slater, 1996: Slater, 2006; Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 2005).

Collaborative Leadership

Leadership was identified by decision-makers as an essential condition for successful collaboration and is considered by some researchers as a key ingredient to successful collaboration (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Kanter. 1994; Bergquist et al., 1995; Singer. 1998: Mattessich et al.. 2001). According to Huxham and Vangen's (2005) action research with collaboration practitioners. leadership does not "feature very much in the

research on collaboration" (p. 202), however, they did encounter it in policy analysis where it is seen as important to inform policy makers (p. 202). Luthans and Slocum (2004) recognize with constant change the relevance of today's leadership theories and practice are being questioned and suggest, "Faced with an unprecedented economic, technological, socio-political, and moral/ethical tumultuous sea of change, there is a need for new theories, new applications and just plain new thinking about leadership" (p. 227).

Chrislip and Larson's (1994) research of 52 successful collaborative initiatives was the first detailed study of leadership as a dimension of collaboration. They offer a framework for understanding leadership in interorganizational collaborations which cross many organizational boundaries and where all leaders work as peers, where "collaborative leaders usually have no formal power or authority" (p. 129), and cannot make unilateral decisions for the collaborative group. Collaborative leaders take a different focus, "to promote and safeguard the collaborative process" (p. 130). Rather than impose their own answers to collective issues, they let the answers "emerge from the interaction of the stakeholders" (p. 130). This leadership contrasts with traditional leadership that relies on "advocacy, hierarchy, exclusion, and brute power to achieve narrow ends . . . . [Collaborative leadership is based on] trust, inclusion, and constructive engagement to achieve a broader common purpose" (p. 14). Chrislip and Larson's collaborative leadership is inclusive of Burn's (1978) transformational and Greenleaf's (1977) facilitative or servant leadership theories. Burns transforming leader uses interactions between leaders and followers where leaders seek to satisfy higher needs in followers. engage the full person . . . [and] acting to meet each others needs while raising (transforming) each other to "higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20).

Greenleaf's leader ensures others' needs are met and they grow as persons, and look out for the broader needs of society (p.10).

Latchem and Hanna (2001) identified lack of transformational leadership as an issue in open and distance learning and add entrepreneurial leadership. Rost's (1991) extensive research on leadership conceptualizes leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect the mutual purpose" (p. 102). The 'influence relationship' view introduces a shared and dynamic model of leadership which is consistent with the process of collaboration. It is similar to a shared or distributed leadership as defined by Bennis (1997), Singer (1998), Wenger et al. (2002) and found in this study, where everyone participates in decision-making.

Singer (1998) recognize there are differences between leading an organization and leading a collaboration and while some leaders may be able to lead a collaboration generally, specific skills such as, an ability to facilitate, to create a collaborative environment and provide direction without being authoritarian, are also needed. Chrislip and Larson (1994) describe collaborative leaders as visionaries who transform their communities by "modeling the way". They create real vision and strategies for the community by convening, energizing, facilitating, and sustaining collaborative processes (p. 146). Decision-makers said some leaders were unable to put aside their personal agendas to work together and that some participating organizations maintained their traditional way of operating, both of which they recognized hampered achieving some collaboration goals. Wheatley (2001) suggests "by holding on we destroy what we hope to preserve: by letting go we feel secure in accepting what is' (p. 2). Chrislip and Larson

(1994) emphasize the commitment and involvement of "high-level, visible leaders" bring credibility to the collaboration's work and are essential for success (p. 53).

Some decision-makers sought top-down, "legislated" leadership, citing political legitimatization and validation, in place of merely adopting and practicing collaborative philosophy and collaborative leadership, "I think it would probably take government leadership, maybe the appropriate legislative environment ... to facilitate the part of bringing together of the partners".

The underlying values of collaborative philosophy help leaders challenge their own views, welcome other perspectives, and develop shared understandings. It supports 'forward looking', transformational leadership (Latchem & Hanna, 2001; Rost 1991) where leaders are curious, reflective, have more questions than answers, and are eager to share their thinking. Effective leaders are risk takers who ignite the collective spirit (Senge, 1999). True collaborative leadership embraces collaboration goals and changes participating organizations' cultures to one that encourages collaboration (Schein, 1985; Bergquist et al., 1995).

Of the four influential factors that help collaborative philosophy to exist, collaborative leadership, collaborative community, dialogue, and trust, collaborative leadership is possibly the most important. As collaborations can expect leader turnover, as was the case in OLIN, partners need to prepare successors and build ways to sustain the collaboration (Alexander, Comfort, Weiner, & Bogue, 2001; Merrill-Sands & Sheridan, 1996) in ways that enhance and emphasize collaborative leadership.

Decision-makers described OLIN's structure as unfortunately neither effective nor very supportive of the collaboration's work. While the actual structure attempted to decentralize bureaucratic and hierarchical partner organization structures, as evident in the original heterarchical concept a "network of networks", actually, because of the specific government funds accounting criteria, a too conventional top-down structure for allocating the use of public funds was adopted.

Some decision-makers suggested a top-down legislated framework was needed to provide government support which would require stakeholders to participate fully. Kanter (1994) takes a different view. Based on productive partnerships research, one fundamental surprising aspect she uncovered for success, and that appears particularly relevant to OLIN, was that members "cannot be controlled by normal systems but require a dense web of interpersonal connections and internal infrastructures that enhance learning" (p. 97). Bergquist et al. (1995) agree the traditional forms of monitoring and control found in top-down structures are "unnecessary and inappropriate" (p. 30) and they remarkably conclude that for successful partnerships to happen, a "move beyond the safety net of legal contracts to a shifting, dynamic relationship based on trust and communication" (p. 31) is necessary. In practice this means that we would be operating as peers with a minimum of formal authority but with discursive legitimation of decisions (Boyd, 1987).

Other decision-makers sought a collaborative structure, "where all partners have an equal role to play, an equal opportunity for their voice to be heard". This fits with Wenger's (1998) idea of a 'community of practice' which espouses a collegial rather than
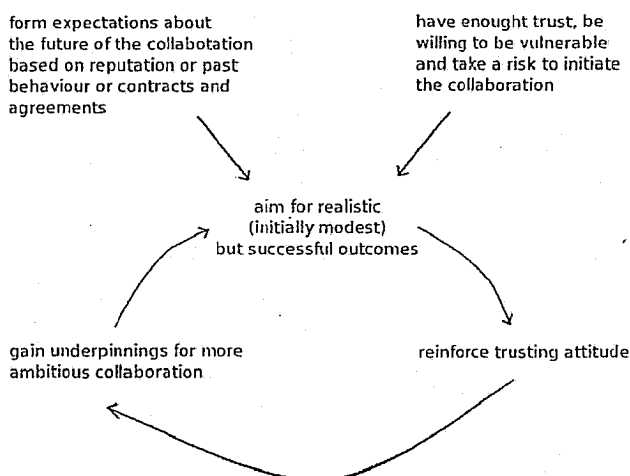
a bureaucratic structure where the emphasis is on connecting people to assist one another to bring the whole together in the domain of knowledge. A community of people interested in the domain, using a shared practice, and involving equal groups working at different levels, view each other as peers, not competitors. As one decision-maker in this study indicated, the partnership should provide a structure to "oblige the institutions to work beyond their own interests". The "community metaphor" (Cohen, 1985) might also provide a more appealing language to senior level decision-makers for easing their transcendence of their habitual narrowly focused patterns of practice. Community may be a more familiar term to government, academia, and industry than "collaboration" and that would allow partners' tensions to ease and let them see the potential benefits. In a learning community everyone becomes a leader where creating and sharing knowledge is the underpinning of moving forward in a time of change (Wenger et al., 2002; Wenger, 1998; Gray, 1989; Spekman et al., 2000; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990; Latchem & Hanna, 2000).

Trust

Trust, a foundation of social order, is recognized as a cornerstone of collaboration (Spekman et al., 2000). Although trust was identified as not always present in OLIN, decision-makers realized it was essential, "this element of trust and negotiating in good faith are two very, very important things in keeping your eye on the goal of why you're collaborating and who it's intending to serve." One decision-maker spoke of partnering motivation as having 'something at risk'. Spekman et al. (2000) recognize a reciprocal relationship where "one partner takes a risk and trusts the other and the other tends to be motivated to behave in a trustworthy manner" (p. 46). Vangen and Huxham (2003)

suggest forming expectations about a collaboration including expected partner

behaviours, along with a willingness to take risks and be vulnerable form a trust building

process. Their cycle shows each time a positive outcome occurs and expectations are met,

risk and vulnerability lessen and trust is reinforced (see Figure 6.1). The simplicity of this

trust building process, they point out, may seem incongruent with the complexity and

ambiguity surrounding collaboration membership and formal structure (p. 154). Their

research supports the notion trust must exist in the initiating stages and takes time to

develop.

Figure 6.1: Cyclical Trust Building Feedback Loop
(Adapted from Vangen & Huxham, 2003, p. 12).

form expectations about
the future of the collabotation
based on reputation or past
behaviour or contracts and
agreements

have enought trust, be
willing to be vulnerable
and take a risk to initiate
the collaboration

aim for realistic
(initially modest)
but successful outcomes

gain underpinnings for more
ambitious collaboration

reinforce trusting attitude

For partners to examine their established views collectively, an environment of

trust and security must exist. Sharing other interests also develops trust (Gray, 1989).

Decision-makers recognized talking to one another allowed them to begin to see the

bigger picture. "you sort of learn what certain people were thinking about, where things

could go in education, for instance, how big distance education could be, or what kinds of

things that they haven't been able to accomplish that they'd love to be able to do".

Competent partners sharing information and knowledge, demonstrating good intentions, and practicing follow-through also builds trust (Arino & de la Torre, 1998). Some decision-makers spoke of a need to inform members of what was happening and how important it was for them to be aware of what was happening even if they didn't agree with it. Others pointed out communicating the work of the collaboration to their organizations was essential if the collaboration was to succeed. To build trust, Spekman et al. (2000) suggest partners and organizations must be able to recognize and adapt to the changing needs of the environment.

Committed partners who share values trigger trust and a belief the collaboration has value and deserves support (Spekman et al., 2000; Chrislip & Larson, 1994). As one decision-maker realized, "if you truly want to collaborate you do have to be prepared to compromise and give up some things in order to make the larger picture come together in a way which serves the whole". Partners' giving tangible commitments of time, energy, and resources increase the probability of a successful partnership. This research study supports the ideas from the literature that trust is important and should exist from the beginning and adds that should trust not exist, it can be developed by holding to a collaborative philosophy, acting as collaborative leaders, and through dialogue.

Dialogue

Diverse members from within and across organizations, bring different languages from their cultures each not necessarily understood by one another. To collaborate, members must understand the different cultures and languages that are being used (Isaacs. 1993: Shein. 1993: Senge et al., 2005). One decision-maker noted, there were "a lot of organizations... a lot of factions... we have great difficulty getting everyone to act

in concert". Another drew attention to members maintaining their own views, "I believe that everyone on the OLIN [board] would have had his or her own agenda and my gut feeling is that nobody was able to put them aside long enough to let the organization [OLIN] function the way it should".

Collaborative synergy depends on dialogue to give everyone the opportunity to voice opinions while they listen to others and themselves, to creatively bring to an end habitual ways of thinking and perceiving that hamper working together (Isaacs, 1993; Shein, 1993; Senge et al., 2005). Dialogue as a practice helps partners learn to suspend their assumptions and enter into collective thinking (Isaacs, 1993; Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 2005). Partners are helped to move beyond defensive (Argyris, 1985) or disruptive (Isaacs, 1993) routines that have their roots in organizational culture to see what could be achieved as a community. It allows partners to shift from traditional ways of practice to develop trust, to understand and appreciate other organizational cultures, to think together. and to create shared meanings (Senge, 1990; Isaacs, 1993; Schein, 1993). Isaacs (1999) explores how "dialogic leadership", an approach to restoring balance in interactions with others by speaking 'your true voice' and encouraging others to do the same. can sometimes overcome fragmentation and bring out collective wisdom. He argues the ability to talk and think together is a source of competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness (p. 5).

Collaboration is as a way to cope with change (Gray, 1989; Bergquist et al., 1994; Kanter. 1994; Huxham, 1996) and as a 'living, self-organizing system' that continually recreates itself. members potential to grow. learn. and evolve depends on their personal and their organization's levels of awareness (Senge et al. 2005; Wheatley. 2006; Senge

1990). If leaders are to look beyond a post industrial age lens where "institutions will continue to expand blindly, unaware of their part in a larger whole..." (Senge et al., 2005 p. 8), their learning must move from "reactive learning", as illustrated in Figure 6.2, to deeper levels of learning that create "increasing awareness of the larger whole and actions that become part of creating alternative futures" (ibid, p. 11). Seeing the "wholes" requires 'outside the box' approaches (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 2005; Wheatley, 2006).

Figure 6.2: Reactive Learning, on the left side and Deep Levels of Learning, on the right side
(Adapted from Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005)
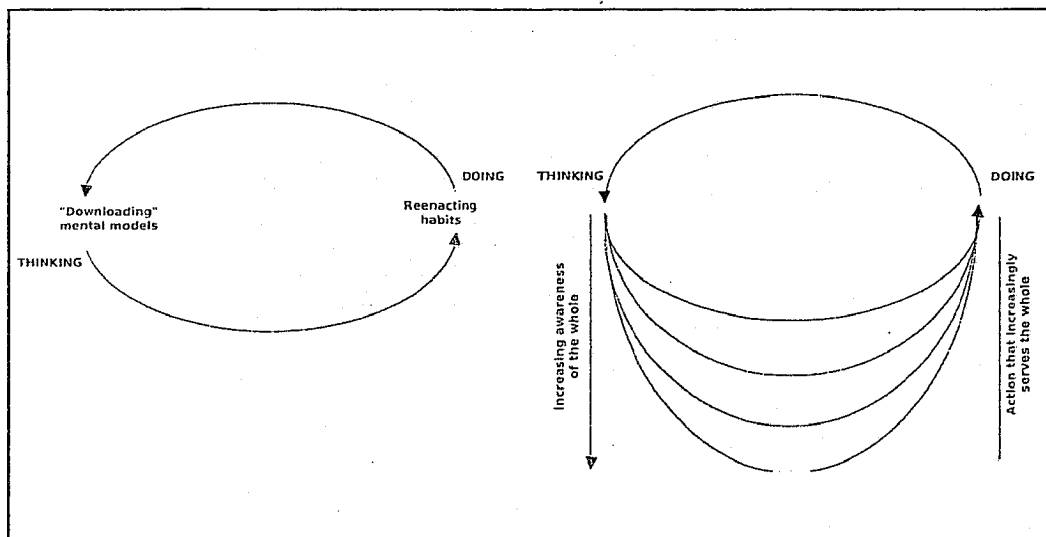
When organizations simply respond to each others' actions, only superficial collaboration occurs. If they take into account the multiple levels of systemic context and motivations involved, then a more viable collaboration should ensue.

This research study reveals dialogue is necessary to bring about deeper levels of learning, open minds, and open communication where partners acting together must suspend their judgements and put aside individual and organizational needs to listen and

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speak openly in order to see the bigger picture and collectively offer creative solutions that will benefit everyone.

Communication

Communicating to keep partners aware of activities and goal achievement was identified as important. One decision-maker stated, "a fairly rigorous system of communication [is needed], so, people, if they don't agree, at least they're aware. . . . Communications is important . . . if you got a board . . . you've got to do things . . . and you've got to communicate that you've done them". Information exchange among partners is achieved by formal and informal meetings and by the use of various communication vehicles – email, written reports, and public events, all creating a sense of community (Mattessich et al., 2001; Wenger et al. 2002; Huxham & Vangen, 1996).

Successful communication uses a common language to create meaningful dialogue about issues and solutions (Lasker & Weiss, 2003). In the case study the language of technology and open and distance learning was not well understood by some members. One decision-maker stated, "most of us were struggling with the fundamentals of technology". With pan-provincial activities to attend to and system changes to deal with, senior level decision-makers allowed those who knew the language to move the activities forward. Trust, commitment, support, and resources from partner organizations are directly related to open and continuous communication (Huxham & Vangen, 1996).

Setting and Institutionalizing Goals

Decision-makers spoke of the importance of having clear, mutually set, attainable goals in a collaboration. "I think, there has to be a clear understanding in higher levels of management as to what it is we're doing, why we're doing it". Huxham and Vangen

(2004) speak of *common wisdom* and *common practice* as they relate to goal setting.

Common wisdom refers to the need for collaboration goals to be clear, however, common

practice includes a range of agendas that can make it difficult to satisfy common wisdom

in practice (p. 191). Bryson, et al. (2006) propose that when collaborations build on

individual and organizational self-interests they are more likely to create 'public value'.

This rings true in this case study as decision-makers' motivating self-interests that

reflected the goals were achieved and public value was realized.

Researchers state organizations need to identify the function and value of the

collaboration as it fits with their overall strategy and mission (Austin, 2000; Huxham &

Vangen, 2000) because a shared vision is motivation to resolve conflict and continue to

working towards common goals (Mattessich et al., 2001). Partners 'buy-in' to the work of

the collaboration and its values should become part of their organization's culture

(Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Fullan, 1999). Decision-makers in the case study realized the

importance of aligning the collaboration's goals with partner organization goals, "where

powerful people presiding over large institutions if they appear to be cooperating or

collaborating but in reality are not or they're not, you know, going back to their

institutions and selling the message and taking the responsibility for the behaviour of

their respective institutions, then it can't work."

Membership

Changing partners in a collaboration exerts pressure on the whole system by

creating direct and dramatic change (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Newcomers

self-interests and agendas mean reassessing and renegotiating group' agendas and

compromises which, in turn, can contribute to "collaborative inertia" (Huxham, 1996).

One decision-maker, as quoted earlier, stated, "All you need to do is to change a person and even if the next person is kind of predisposed to this kind of stuff, it literally takes a year for that person to get up to speed, understand all the new players, get all the nuances, to show support." To foster continuity of collaborative activities requires someone to, as one decision-maker stated, "align newcomers with the aims of the collaboration". The collaborative philosophy leader's espouse through dialogue will help newcomers discover a new view and as Bohm, a quantum physicist, claims newcomers through dialogue will begin to see the collective nature of thought (cited in Senge, 1990).

Diverse membership brings different perspectives, motivations, and experiences to "the table" which should be appreciated by all stakeholders. Chrislip and Larson (1994) take an inclusive approach to collaboration members arguing they should be "people responsible for problems or issues, those who are affected by them, those whose perspectives or knowledge are needed to develop good solutions or strategies and those who have the power and resources to block or implement solutions or strategies" (p. 64-65).

Resources

Resources are necessary because they give of the sense of urgency, authenticity, and ownership. In this study, the financial resources were known to be available before planning began. These resources were available over the life of the collaboration and as it evolved. partner organizations provided some human resources. Gray (1989) locates resource identification in the pre-negotiation phase where stakeholders are given a form or identity to communicate about. and she considers it a critical precondition for the next phase. direction setting.

Lasker et al. (2001) consider resources as the basic building blocks of collaborative synergy because, with resources, partners create something new and valuable. A collaboration requires each partner provide resources to develop and sustain the collaboration (Mattessich et al., 2001; Copper, 1996; Huxham, 2005). While governments may provide most of the financial resources, as each partner provides, at minimum, human resources their sense of belonging and commitment increases (Gray, 1989).

Assessing, Monitoring, and Reflecting

Checking for achievement of desired outcomes is necessary if collaborative support is to be sustained by stakeholders. Crosby and Bryson (2005) recommend leaders engage in regular assessment. Interim indicators show what and how goals are being achieved need to be set early on by decision-makers. The results of early evidence of success, or the issues, help maintain partner interest and awareness of activities so they are able to accept outcomes (Gray, 1989). In this study support for accountability was strong, several decision-maker recognized the need to "have a clearer sense of our purposes and our expectations, and going along with that a more effective reporting regime . . . to benchmark the activities of the agency against the objectives that had been set out".

Decision-makers in collaboration need to scan the environment for changes in political and social activities that can impact collaboration direction. Mattessich et al. (2001) state that a favourable political and social climate is necessary in the beginning, but that may change over the life of the collaboration and it should be monitored and actions taken before changes become negative. Changes took place in this case study in

the global environment related to e-learning and the 'dot-com crash' and in the provincial environment related to structural system changes, as quoted from a decision-maker in chapter five, "We had five colleges, we had one college, it had five presidents now it has one. We had eleven [school] boards, we had five boards, we had new director". The type and pace of system changes directly affect the collaboration's purpose, structure, outcomes (Bryson et al., 2006; Huxham, 2005), and leadership.

Reflection is a reviewing activity. Huxham and Vangen's (2005) theory of collaborative advantage view a practice and reflection cycle to be the core of reflective practice because it offers "conceptual handles" that help partners suspend, momentarily, the complexity of everyday life (p. 235) to make changes.

An Optimal Practice of Collaboration Model

Preamble

This new Optimal Practice of Collaboration model, a simplified systemic diagram, represents what has been newly learned from this research about the most important conditions and factors for a successful partnership. An earlier version of this model was discussed with five individuals, two participants from the research study and three non participants who have many years experience in intra and inter collaborations in the health and education sectors. Everyone confirmed the model reflected the successful conditions and factors they had experienced. One non participant, a coordinator from the health sector commented, "The model's universal application is obvious". A participant from the research study and a non participant, a senior-level decision-maker from the health sector, showed interest in the condition, collaborative

philosophy, and the non participant said it was "a good way to express what has to happen" as people work together. They both recognized that it "was essential" for success. The non participant pointed out, some members would "have to be helped to have a collaborative philosophy and be collaborative leaders". These two conditions would have to be developed by leaders who would be "encouraging, energizing, nurturing, and modeling the philosophy".

Five suggestions were made which are included in the final version. The first suggestion focused on the outer circle, "Contextual influences". This circle should give the sense of being porous as external influences continually enter this phase and should resemble a cloud. The second suggestion was to include an arrow, going from "Looking Forward" to "Making Things Happen" to represent 'continual growth'. The pre existing arrow from "Looking Forward" to "Initiating and Inviting" would represent a collaboration at a five year period, suggesting major changes, as in membership or major developments from the external environments, which may influence the purpose and point to new directions. Another good suggestion was to include an arrow going from "Assessing" to "Making Things Happen" to recognize how assessment is important to sustain stakeholder engagement and buy-in as they see goals being achieved. The fourth suggestion was to include an arrow from "Looking Forward" to the outside of the "Context" to illustrate the 'conclusion' of a collaboration. The fifth change suggested was the centre circle should be broken illustrating the flow of collaborative philosophy, leadership, and community outward and permeating the entire collaborative system. The revised *An Optimal Practice of Collaboration* model is presented in Figure 6.3.

This new systemic model focuses first on Context, located in the outer, cloud-like

form. It depicts permeability and turbulence of the contextual conditions; economic

conditions, policies and strategies in the domain of interest, favourable political

environment globally towards technology, availability of necessary financial resources,

technological changes, and organizational changes, from which a collaboration emerges

and which continues to influence a collaboration over time.

Figure 6.3: An Optimal Practice of Collaboration Model
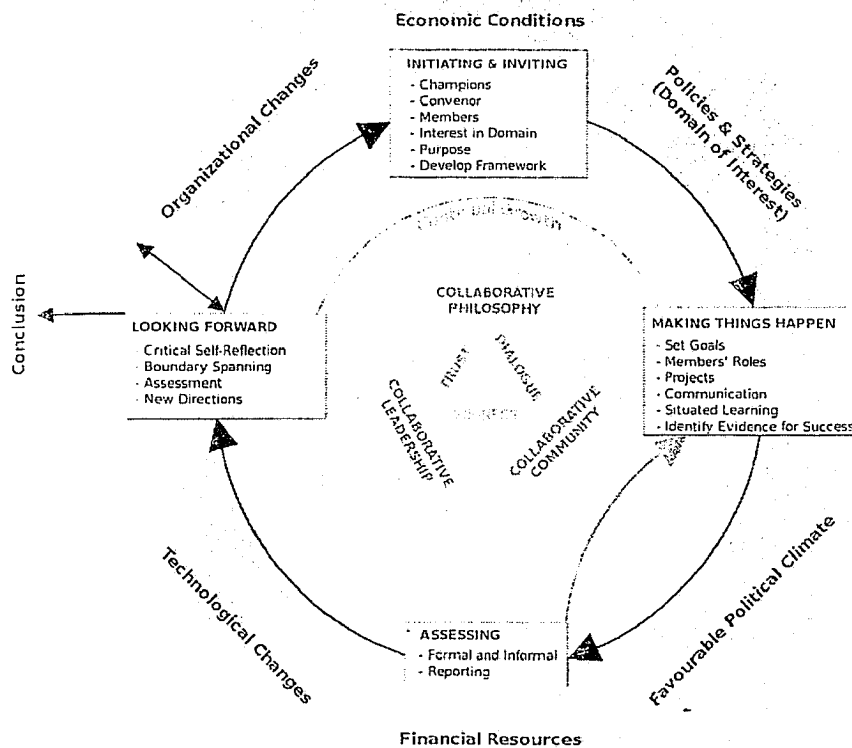
The middle circle includes factors inherent in the four phases which a

collaboration engages in: Initiating and Inviting. Making Things Happen. Assessing, and

Looking Forward. These phases may occur non-sequentially (not necessarily following from one another) and repeating (spiralling around) rather than in a lock-step, linear manner. For example, "assessing activities" can happen at any time in Making Things Happen and also can be a separate phase as indicated. The same holds for the "reflection activities" in Looking Forward, which is ongoing by collaborative leaders.

The centre circle represents the six underpinning conditions that this research study's participants, in agreement with related literature, assert must exist for successful collaboration; Collaborative Philosophy, Collaborative Leadership, and Collaborative Community with trust, dialogue, and a sense of community or 'we-ness'.

All three levels contain shifting, always changing, conditions and factors which can simultaneously influence the collaboration, but of course not always consistently.

Explanatory Description

Context contains the preconditions which provide impetus for the collaboration to emerge and conditions that may continue to influence over the life of the collaboration. Rather than a circle which give a sense of containment, the cloud like form illustrates how elements can gain or lose intensity.

Initiating and Inviting begins when champions invite stakeholders to come together. Working with a convener, stakeholders' understanding of the urgency around the domain of interest and their shared vision to the collaboration's purpose is realized. Without buy-in, the process ends. If the vision is realized they proceed to focus on the collaboration's purpose and begin to design a collaborative framework. Started by champions, these activities are actualized by resources and partners shared interests and willingness to work together.

In Making Things Happen leaders mutually set goals that reflect their agreed responses to changes in the external environment and domain; make explicit their roles; establish projects and activities to meet their goals; identify evidence for success; establish internal and external communication channels; and situated learning begins.

Assessing gives partners formative and summative feedback on progress and goal achievement. Formative feedback occurs frequently in Making Things Happen. Early feedback provides evidence of degrees of success which are communicated through media channels that will keep the goals uppermost in partners' mind and help maintain their interest and energy. Should problems that affect goal achievement, this informal assessment alerts partners early so they can make necessary changes. Summative or formal assessment provides more in-depth results and information which is presented to partner organizations. This feedback is intended to elicit deeper levels of thought, support, and commitment and emphasize the benefits and systems improvements are shared equally by participating organizations.

In Looking Forward, a reflective phase, partners review how goals were achieved, recognize influences on goal achievement, set new goals, continue with existing goals, or conclude certain goals. Just as collaboration goals influence change in society and systems, so changes there reciprocally influence collaboration goals. Collaborative leaders must continually examine micro and macro environments to adjust goals and resources, and celebrate accomplishments. These activities establish momentum and continuation either to a new planning phase if the collaboration is in existence after five or more years or to Making Things Happen in the short term. This phase may determine conclusion of the collaboration.

In the centre, collaborative philosophy, collaborative leadership, and collaborative community are the conditions that work interdependently to create a culture of collaboration. This is the centrepiece that permeates throughout and holds the collaboration together. The four developmental phases, Initiating and Inviting, Making Things Happen, Assessing, and Looking Forward, are based on the interplay and interdependency of collaborative philosophy, leadership, and community as expressed through dialogue, trust, and a sense of community, or "we-ness".

Contributions to Knowledge

Research around interorganizational collaboration in open and distance learning is sparse. This study contributes to the research in this domain and extends it by taking the perspective of decision-makers who experienced cross-sector interorganizational collaboration. The study also contributes to an understanding of cross-sector interorganizational collaboration through the principle of collaborative philosophy. Belief in the value of working together, that interconnections help serve the "greater good", and appreciating everyone in the collaboration were found to be invaluable. Collaborative philosophy must become partners' "espoused theory" and their "theory-in-use". This study extends the literature on defining collaboration by creating a new category, collaborative philosophy, including partners' collaborative behaviours and actions. This new knowledge grants a sense of legitimacy and credibility to interorganizational collaborations as described in various definitions of collaboration and to the processes in a collaboration. Collaborative philosophy as expounded above provides a clear image of the interconnectedness that must exist in collaborations.

A clearer understanding of the effects of leadership (roles and behaviours) on a collaborative system emerged from this study. This study reveals that a new leadership perspective is required centred around what it means to collaborate; what role, behaviour, and attitude leaders need to espouse when in a collaboration. Leaders need to rethink their patterns of practice and view themselves operating in a 'dense web of relationships' in which they are part of a 'network of influence,' not in a simple command hierarchy.

This study suggests a revised 'community of practice' framework should be implemented for such partnership collaborations, one in which the focus extends the conventional systems view and provides a way to newly use familiar language to help partners rethink their patterns of practice. The underlying premise of collaborative philosophy and its interplay with collaborative leadership and a community framework extends Gray's (1989) view of collaboration as an interorganizational process.

Contribution to Practice

This new systemic model stresses that collaborative philosophy, which allows for effective leadership and develops a sense of 'community', is the fundamental cornerstone for major collaborations. Those who initiate a collaborative endeavour to implement major innovations must begin by the adoption of a collaborative philosophy and then through collaborative leadership and dialogue espouse and act with these values as they work with members.

This new model was discussed with practitioners who operate in collaborative endeavours and by participants from this research study. They as readers confirmed the conditions and factors in the model and the primary importance of collaborative philosophy which suggests that transferability of the model to other situations is both

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possible and potentially indeed valuable, which is consistent with what Marshall and Rossman (1999) and Yin (1994) suggest, that it is the reader who makes the transfer of the research results to their particular situation.

Considering all the foregoing, it is the author's considered belief that this model also offers policy makers a guide to collaboration which will help them understand just in which ways, a major collaboration is complex, multifaceted, and dynamic and that this model offers a sound approach to implementing major educational technology innovation ventures.

Implications for Future Study

This research identifies conditions and factors necessary to implement educational technology innovation through an interorganizational collaboration and should provide some specific guidance to others researching the complex, multifaceted, and interconnected conditions of collaborative philosophy, leadership, and community. This case study, as analyzed, reveals that successful cross-sector interorganizational collaboration conditions begin when members come to the collaboration with; a collaborative philosophy, collaborative leadership, an holistic view, and openness, thus encouraging trust. As the intent of this qualitative study was to understand interorganizational collaboration as a strategy for change, further exploration in ensuing studies will be needed to advance the work here and indeed extend these research findings.

Five areas for further investigation are:

1. Explore further the dimension of 'collaborative philosophy' in other interorganizational collaborations involved with educational technology innovation.

2. Examine the effects of interorganizational collaboration, using the conditions and factors from of this model, to reveal effects on partnering organizations. This may provide the collaboration and the organizations involved with mutual benefits.

3. Explore further the dimensions of collaborative leadership in other interorganizational collaborations involved with educational technology innovation.

4. Examine and rethink the structure of an interorganizational collaboration through a systemic community of practice lens.

5. Use this model to explore middle managers' perspectives on an interorganizational collaboration with a view to detecting if a collaborative philosophy is needed or exists at that level and to determine their perceptions of needed leadership and community dimensions.

Conclusion

In this research the findings from the case study and the related literature reveal that six main conditions are necessary to be met to implement a successful educational technology innovation; collaborative philosophy, collaborative leadership, and collaborative community, trust, dialogue, and 'we-ness'.

Collaborative philosophy is the principal condition underpinning the notion of working together; it is the glue that holds an entity together and allows for success. This study also illuminates the importance of leadership in terms of actions, attitude, and process. It suggests a new concept of leadership, collaborative leadership operating as a 'network of influence'. Visionary and risk taking, leaders are willing to take the time to understand innovation, and ready to reap benefits as they make system changes, they work from a focus of "we-ness" that embraces change. Collaborative leadership may be an important part of what Luthans and Slocum (2004) say is needed in terms of new theories, applications, and new thinking. Collaborative philosophy of the kind here prescribed as the primary condition for collaboration extends Gray's (1989) definition of collaboration, "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (p. 5).

A broadly understood community of practice framework modified toward major venture management is a go d fit with the needed collaborative philosophy. Members should take a domain perspective rather than a narrowly organizational view, they need to have a passion for the domain of interest, view themselves as operating in a community as they help set goals, create and share knowledge, provide resources, and recognize the right time to take advantage of change.

This study contributes to a better understanding of the type of collaborative structure needed to implement educational technology innovation on a system-wide level. Some decision-makers saw the need for more government support while others thought it required a greater sense of 'community' to be developed. A collaboration dependant on

just one group or organization, for example, government or bureaucracy, will not create 'forward' thinking and will stifle opportunities to develop collaborative leadership. A community of practice framework has potential to yield greater participation and ownership by members. It was difficult for some decision-makers to transcend habitus (Slater, 1996) and work as a collective. Some wanted to see more activity more at a middle manager level and less at the senior, decision-maker level which fits part of Wenger's et al (2002) notion of 'community of practice'. The central importance of wholeheartedly adopting an appropriate collaborative philosophy and of a commitment to do the associated rethinking of the patterns of practice involved, are the major findings of this study.

The Rhetoric of Innovation. When you stop to think about it, you soon realize that our imagination is what our whole social life is really based on. We have feelings, but they affect only us and those immediately around us; and feelings can't be directly conveyed by words at all. We have intelligence and a capacity for reasoning, but in ordinary life we almost never get a chance to use the intellect by itself. In practically everything we do it's the combination of emotion and intellect we call imagination that goes to work.

Northrop Frye, 1963

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Appendix A – Interview Instruments

Profile Questionnaire

Interview Guide

Researchers Journal Note Form

Biographical Information

1. Name:

2. E-mail:

3. Current position:

4. Education:

5. Number of years in current position:

6. Prior positions in a collaborative endeavour:

7. At the time of your involvement with Open Learning and Information Network (OLIN), what was your position?

8. What was your role in OLIN?

9. Over what period of time?

10. What were your goals in OLIN?

Main Research Questions

1. What were the circumstances that helped create this collaborative arrangement?

2. What characteristics do you associate with interorganizational collaboration?

3. How important is collaboration in our education system? Why?

4. What was your understanding of the goals and objectives of OLIN? Did OLIN accomplish its goals?

5. What political/economic/social influences helped or hindered OLIN accomplishing its goals?

6. What was the structure of OLIN?

7. What would you say were the benefits of OLIN?

8. What would you say were the challenges of OLIN? How were the challenges resolved? What role did you play?

9. Were there challenges that weren't resolved? Why weren't they resolved?

10. From your experience, what was the most important reason(s) for participating in this venture?

11. If it could be all done again, what are some of the things you would change?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end the interview?

13. Is there any other senior level decision-maker you feel would be valuable to this study that I should interview?

Participant _____

Date _____

Researcher Comments	Researcher Interview Notes

Legend: A. Note how interview started and ended

                    B. Note key terms for coding of data

                    C. Themes in today's interview

                    D. Note significant incidents or feelings about today.

                    E. What needs to be clarified?

                    F. Note Participant's reaction to interview questions

                    G. Reflect on the method used today.

Appendix B – Interview Forms

Confirmation Letter

Scheduled Interview

Consent Form to Participate in Research

Confirmation Letter

Date

Address

Dear:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my doctoral research study which is a partial requirement of my doctoral program in Educational Technology at Concordia University in Montreal.

The purpose of this research project is to investigate an interorganizational collaboration to identify conditions necessary for success and other systemic factors that optimize effective implementation of educational technology innovations. This research will take the perspective of senior level decision-makers' who were members in the Open Learning and Information Network in Newfoundland and Labrador. The study will offer a framework and guiding principles to understand interorganizational collaboration in open and distance learning environments and may inform research on policy to implement educational technology innovations.

Your participation in my research study will require we meet in order that I may conduct a personal, one-hour, semi-structured interview with you. If you are willing, I would like to audio record our conversation. A transcript of your interview will be sent to you to review, correct and add further comments. As part of the Ethical Review Process of the university and to ensure confidentiality, names of participants will not be attached to reports of the study. Findings of the study will be made available to you upon request.

At this time, I would like to schedule an interview time in the early September and a location that is convenient to you. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to our conversation.

Sincerely,

Genevieve Gallant

Telephone:

E-mail:

Date

Address

Dear:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my doctoral research study which is a partial requirement of my doctoral program in Educational Technology at Concordia University in Montreal.

I will meet with you at your work place on _____ at _____ to conduct a one-hour, semi-structured interview with you. Attached in this e-mail are two documents:

1. The interview guide requesting biographical information and general interview questions to guide our conversations, and

2. The consent form for your agreement to participate in this study.

I include the interview questions to give you an opportunity to reflect on the topic.

A transcript of your interview will be sent to you for verification and to give you the option to add further comments. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to our conversation.

Sincerely,

Genevieve Gallant

Telephone:

E-mail:

Consent Form to Participate in Research

This is to state that I agree to participate in the research study, Interorganizational

Collaboration to Implement Educational Technology Innovations: Senior Level Decision-

Makers' Perspectives, being conducted by Genevieve M. Gallant, PhD candidate,

Educational Technology, Department of Education, Concordia University, Montreal,

Quebec. Contact information for Genevieve Gallant is: P.O. Box 754, St. John's, NL

A1C 5L4, 709 334-2860, ggallant@willow-house.com

Purpose

I understand the purpose of the research is to investigate an interorganizational

collaboration to identify conditions necessary for success and other systemic factors that

optimise effective implementation of an educational technology innovation. This study

will take the perspective c ͡ senior level decision-makers from member organization in the

Open Learning and Information Networ ͡ ͡ understand their meaning and experiences of

interorganizational collaboration. This study will add to the research on

interorganizational collaboration, provide a framework and guiding principles for senior

level decision-makers in other future interorganizational collaborations, and may inform

policy to implement educational technology innovations.

Procedures

I understand Genevieve Gallant will be conducting a one-hour, semi-structured

interview. Interviews will be audio recorded where there is agreement to do so.

Transcripts of the interview will be sent to me to verify and add any changes. Depending on the findings that emerge, the researcher may wish to conduct follow-up questions with me. Names and identities will not be attached to comments or reports of the study. An electronic copy of the dissertation will be made available to all participants upon request.

Conditions of Participation

☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

☐ I give permission for this interview to be audio recorded.

☐ I understand that my participation in this study is strictly CONFIDENTIAL. My identity and my comments will not be disclosed to anyone, anywhere.

☐ I understand that data from this study may be published.

☐ I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME _____

SIGNATURE _____

WITNESS SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Appendix C – Glossary of Terms

Glossary of Terms

Definitions used in this research listed below are derived from the literature. References are included where direct quotations exists.

Collaboration – a voluntary relationship between two or more organizations to achieve a set of mutually beneficial goals. Collaboration brings otherwise autonomous, independent organizations into a new entity with commitment to new missions and goals. In this study collaboration includes partnerships, consortia, strategic alliances, joint ventures, and networks. This study focused on an educational system interorganizational collaboration.

Decision-makers – senior level decision-makers in education, government, and business. Decision-makers are here are synonymous with "stakeholders". The key decision-makers in this study had a direct interest (or stake) in the outcomes of the collaborative arrangement.

Distance education – a method of delivering instructional materials to learners separated in time and space from their peers and instructors. Distance education includes flexible learning, distributed learning, and e-learning. Delivery methods may include any combination of print, broadcast technology, audio conference, video conference, computer conference, learner management systems, voice over internet protocol, email, facsimile. and telephone.

Educational technology innovation – refers to an innovation that makes use of emerging educational technologies to increase teaching and learning opportunities.

Information and communications technologies – technologies that allow access to information in or through digital and electronic formats which increase interaction and sharing of information among participants in a learning system.

E-learning – a broad term that encompasses a variety of educational contexts in which technology is used to enhance or facilitate learning (Bullen, 2006).

Innovation – Rogers (1995) defines this term as "an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (p. 11).

Online Learning – The use of the Internet to access learning materials; to interact with the content, instructor, and other learners; and to obtain support during the learning process, in order to acquire knowledge, to construct personal meaning, and to grow from the learning experience (Ally, 2004).

Open learning – a philosophy that espouses equitable access and learning flexibility where the learner is in control of the learning. Distance education and information and communication technologies are elements of open learning.

Open learning culture – a belief that learning is optimised through sharing resource development costs; uses clear communication partners; compromises among elements where there is overlap; shares people and resources; and uses knowledge and skills across an education system simultaneously.