

The Adoption of Online Education for the Delivery of Graduate Business Programs in Canadian AACSB Accredited Business Schools: Exploring the Influence of Enabling and Constraining Forces on Institutional Change

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Abstract

The competitiveness of the graduate business education market; concerns over graduate program relevance; and decreased provincial funding are placing destabilizing pressures on the current graduate business program offerings in business schools promoting the possibility of institutional change. Despite most academic institutions embracing online education as an option to respond, Canadian AACSB accredited business schools have not moved in this direction. The purpose of this research study was to explore the reasons for the limited adoption of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. The theoretical lens framing this research study was Institutional theory. A qualitative multiple case study research design was carried out with four Canadian AACSB accredited business schools participating. The main data collection method was semi-structured interviews with senior administration and faculty. This study revealed that the constraining forces were stronger than the enabling forces towards adoption, ultimately leading to limited adoption. The enabling forces identified were: market expansion opportunities; cost and infrastructure savings; and student demand for more online education. The constraining forces identified were: the lack of face-to-face interaction; and development and delivery cost. An examination of stakeholder influence found faculty resistance, to hold the strongest influence on organizational decision making in these business schools. Faculty resistance was concentrated mainly towards fully online graduate programs with greater acceptance for the hybrid format. The Institutional theory lens helped to understand that institutional change in academic institutions is difficult, due to the isomorphic forces acting as constraining forces to institutional change. This rendered the finding that the lack of legitimacy of this delivery medium was the main reason for the limited adoption of online education. A number of significant contributions to research in the areas of online education and institutional change in academic institutions; practical implications; and suggestions for future research in this area were also provided.

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Chapter One – Introduction

1.0 Background

“Organizations, whether for profit or nonprofit, face the same challenge: understanding their customers’ wants and needs and translating them into actionable goals” (Hillmer & Kocabasoglu, 2008, p. 51). For business schools¹ this challenge involves determining the type of graduate business programs to offer, including their structure, content and medium of delivery required to ensure that they fulfill their purpose of developing effective managers that are capable of successfully leading their organizations within the evolving demands of the business world (Ahmed & Robinson, 1996; Boyatzis, Stubbs & Taylor, 2002; Garvin, 2007; Segev, Raveh & Farjoun, 1999).

In addition, a number of environmental factors have impacted the business school environment.² They include (but are not limited to): stakeholder concerns over graduate business program relevance; increased competition; the emergence of the non-traditional student; and advancements in technology (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB), 2002; Bal, Anitsal & Anitsal, 2014; Cavico & Mujtaba, 2010; Friga, Bettis & Sullivan, 2003; Herrington, 2010; Schmotter, 1999; Sharkey & Beeman, 2008). These environmental factors are suggested to be placing destabilizing pressure on the current institutionalized structures, processes and practices in business schools promoting the possibility of institutional change in the business school environment. Institutional change in this case represents a business school’s response to the environmental factors other than maintaining the status quo (current institutionalized structures, processes and practices).

At present and in the future, business schools will, consequently, need to determine if and how they will respond to the various environmental factors currently present in the business school environment to meet the needs and expectations of their stakeholders³ (AACSB, 2011; Friga et al., 2003; Hilmer & Kocabasoglu, 2008). They will also need to ensure that they “... provide a

¹ When this research study refers to “business schools”, it is referring to a business school that is part of an academic institution (university or college).

² The business school environment corresponds to the macro environment for business schools, defined as “the general cultural context of a specified geographical area and contains those forces recognized to have important influences on organizational characteristics and outputs” (Osborn & Hunt, 1974, pp. 231-232).

³ Business school stakeholders include, but are not limited to: senior administration (Deans, Vice Deans, and Program Directors), faculty, students, employers, government, program donors, accrediting organizations, and competitors.

program that will develop effective business leaders who are comfortable in various business situations ... and prepare business executives who can function effectively in a challenging economic environment” (Ahmed & Robinson, 1996, pp. 159-160).

The history of business school education and reform provides an example of attempts by business schools to meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders by devoting a considerable amount of attention to legitimacy and relevancy building redesign initiatives to demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of their graduate business programs. Up until the 1950s, business schools were primarily vocationally focused with faculty composed primarily of retired former managers and curriculum based on practice (Friga et al., 2003; Herrington, 2010). As a result, various stakeholders, particularly faculty from other departments viewed business schools and their programs as inferior because they did not fit into their norms, values and beliefs of what legitimate education should constitute (Schlossman, Sedlak & Wechsler, 1998).

To address these concerns, efforts were made by business schools to become more academic (research and theory based) because stakeholders perceived it as more desirable, proper and appropriate. Changes included the abandonment of vocationalism, revision of curriculum, reduction of specialized course offerings, and a heightened research orientation. By adapting “the traditions of mainstream academia” (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p. 79), business schools were now perceived as having greater credibility and legitimacy. This organizational structure has been reinforced by mechanisms such as the publication of business school rankings and the attainment and maintenance of accreditations, which Estelami and Rezvani (2011) and Naudé, Henneberg, and Jiang (2010) suggest have an influence on stakeholder perceptions of a business school’s prestige and reputation. Bubna-Lutic and Benn (2003) as well as Navarro (2011) add that these legitimacy building efforts by business schools has led to increasing homogeneity in the field of graduate business education (Bubna-Lutic & Benn, 2003; Navarro, 2011).

With the shift in focus from a practice based curriculum to a more theory based curriculum, a new debate in the academic community developed, which focused on the relevance of graduate business education. This debate is still alive and well today. Specifically, it centers on differing opinions of current graduate business programs’ ability to develop the competencies needed in graduates to be effective managers and leaders in the current global competitive environment. Much of the published discourse and empirical studies on graduate business program relevancy has not been overly positive with multiple conflicting views on what should be done (Dierdoff & Rubin, 2006, 2009, 2011; Garvin, 2007; Gupta et al., 2007; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002;

Mintzberg, 2005; Navarro, 2011; Porter & McKibbin, 1998; Rynes, Lawson & Ilies, 2003; Schlossman et al., 1998; Segev et al., 1999). In fact, Pfeffer and Fong (2002) summarized the findings for graduate business programs effectiveness as “bleak” (p. 80). This challenge and debate has been eloquently summarized by Mintzberg and Gosling (2002), when they write:

Management education today is synonymous with the MBA. But these programs are more ‘B’ than ‘A’: They are mostly about the functions of business, not the practice of administering. For the most part, they take people inexperienced in that practice and drill them in analytical decision making. As a consequence, they graduate individual specialists, not collaborative managers; it is hardly coincidental that so many of these people go into consulting and investment banking... There have been all sorts of revisions in recent years – in international activities, uses of new pedagogical techniques efforts to include more ‘soft skills’, and so forth. Yet the fundamentals – the focus on business functions and on analysis and technique – have not changed” (p. 65).

Since the introduction of the first Master of Business Administration (MBA) in the United States in 1908, this degree has been considered the most widely recognized and popular graduate business program offered by business schools (Naudé, Henneberg, & Jiang, 2010; Cao & Sachutchawan, 2011; Segev et al., 1999). Its length varies on average between one to three years. Program structure is built upon a broad array of foundational core business courses with the option of various electives for the student to gain a more in depth understanding of a particular business area (e.g., finance or human resources) (Bubna-Lutic & Benn, 2003; Gupta, Saunders & Smith, 2007; Herrington, 2010). Courses take place mainly in a classroom setting (face-to-face) delivered by faculty members, who are viewed as the subject matter experts. The primary pedagogical strategies employed are lectures and instructional case studies (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). The average demographic of the MBA full-time student is mid to late 20s, with three to five years’ work experience and comfortable with classroom learning (Garvin, 2007). According to various empirical studies, the main reasons cited for students pursuing an MBA is the belief that it will help them develop management and leadership competencies, which will ultimately lead to greater career advancement and job prospects (Beqiri, Chase & Bishka, 2010; Carmuffo, Gerli, Borgo, & Somia, 2009; Dierdoff & Rubin, 2009; Gupta et al., 2007).

Since the 1970s, enrollment in graduate business programs has risen steadily in North America (AACSB, 2011; Friga et al., 2003; Sharkey & Beeman, 2008). However, even though there has been an increase in the number of students pursuing graduate business education in North America, there has also been an increase in the number of business schools outside of North

America providing quality graduate business programs as well as a rise in private consulting and training course offerings, corporate universities (in-house training), and online universities. The result being, prospective students now have more options than ever before to pursue management training other than at their local business school. Therefore, the current business school environment and especially the market for graduate business education can be characterized as increasingly global and highly competitive (Bal et al., 2014; Cavico & Mujtaba; Kaifi, Mujtaba & Williams, 2009; Sharkey & Beeman, 2008; St. Amant, 2007).

Due to the above, business schools in North America are losing market share (AACSB, 2002; Lorange, 2005), and it is predicted that these programs will confront substantial challenges in the future due to rising competition for students (Segev et al., 1999; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; AACSB, 2002, 2011; Friga et al., 2003). Hence, business schools will need to look at different strategies for market growth to remain sustainable in the future. One strategy many business schools have pursued to differentiate themselves in the hope of attracting students is accreditation. Business schools commonly seek accreditation as stakeholders perceive it as a symbol of the quality and excellence of the business school (Bal et al., 2014; Bunker, Cagle & Harris, 2014; Roller, Andrews & Bovee, 2003; Womack & Krueger, 2015). As Naudé et al., (2010), provide:

The market for MBA degrees is rapidly changing. As this market tends to maturity, an increase in the number of universities offering these degrees is evident, and also the different formats in which these degrees are offered. In this increasingly crowded marketplace, there exist two main sources of information that buyers (students as well as prospective employers of MBA students) can use to assess the products on offer – whether or not a business schools/MBA program is accredited, and also the position of the school in the available rankings, a number of which are regularly published (p. 1193).

The AACSB International is the mostly widely recognized independent accrediting body for business schools and their programs in the world. According to the AACSB website (www.aacsb.edu), 736 business schools in 48 countries have earned AACSB accreditation. In terms of the prestige that AACSB accreditation provides to their member institutions, they state:

The AACSB provides internationally recognized, specialized accreditation for business and accounting programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level. The AACSB Accreditation Standards challenge post-secondary educators to pursue excellence and continuous improvement throughout their business programs. AACSB Accreditation is known worldwide, as the longest standing, most recognized form of specialized/professional accreditation an institution and its business programs can earn (AACSB, 2015).

To gain AACSB accreditation and maintain it (schools must re-apply every five years), business schools must meet AACSB quality assurance standards. These standards fall under the Assurance of Learning process and are focused on the achievement and assessment of learning goals and outcomes (AACSB, 2015; Miles, Hazeldine & Munila, 2004; Lakhal & Sévigny, 2015; Romero, 2008). The AACSB accreditation process is extensive and time consuming, however, Brink and Costigan (2015) has provided the following simple overview of the process:

Learning goals that are established for the purpose of AACSB accreditation are the first step in the assurance of learning process and establish programmatic curricular priorities. The goals are then implemented by way of programmatic learning activities within the/or outside the classroom, and goal progress or attainment is ultimately measured by way of programmatic assessment (p. 211).

Therefore, the attainment and maintenance of AACSB accreditation is suggested to be a process of continuous improvement, thereby, ensuring that AACSB accredited business schools provide the highest quality business programs in the world. In this sense, AACSB accreditation raises the legitimacy of these business schools compared to other non-accredited business schools, providing them with a competitive advantage in the market (Womack & Krueger, 2015). In sum:

AACSB accreditation represents the highest standard of achievement for business schools worldwide. Less than 5% of the world's 13,000 business programs have earned AACSB accreditation. AACSB accredited schools produce graduates that are highly skilled and more desirable to employers than other non-accredited schools (AACSB, 2015).

The second environmental factor impacting business schools according to Folkers (2005) is the emergence of the non-traditional student. Dykman and Davis (2008a) attribute this emergence to the increasing need for continuous learning to remain competitive in the job market. Cao and Sachutchawan (2011) add that an increased level of education may offer the non-traditional student a competitive advantage in the job market “either for job hunting or job performing” (p. 1). Correspondingly, these students are not new entrants to the labour market, but rather returning to formal education at the graduate level after a few years of having already completed a university degree program and acquiring work experience. As such, they are often characterized as being older, living off campus, employed in a full-time job, holding family responsibilities and being removed and unpracticed in the classroom setting (AACSB, 2002; Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011). A distinct subsection of this group are those that possess vast experience in business in a corporate setting by having held a number of different positions within organizations; and are therefore

already well versed in organizational dynamics (Garvin, 2007). Subsequently, these types of students are looking for graduate business programs that are convenient and flexible to meet their work and life obligations (Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011). As a result, the traditional full-time graduate business programs offered by business schools may not necessarily fit the non-traditional students' needs and expectations in terms of program content, structure and delivery to their lifestyle commitments (Beqiri et al., 2010).

Finally, one of the most significant environmental factors affecting business schools today is technological advancement. Sharkey and Beeman (2008) cite this environmental factor as the "principle disruptor of the traditional MBA model" (p. 143). These advancements have driven employers to seek "graduates who are prepared to leverage technology in scalable fashion to advance firms' strategies and operations" (AACSB, 2002, p. 11). Lorange (2005) states that to better prepare students for the "networked knowledge society" graduate business programs will need to explore new web based options for program delivery (p. 789). According to the AACSB (2012), graduate business programs should "mirror the demands of organizations and managers" (p. 3). For business schools to mirror the demands of the business world, they will need to investigate options to incorporate technology in the classroom, such as online platforms like WebCT, technologically enriched pedagogy, and technology-wired facilities, which require significant human and capital resources (St. Amant, 2007; Guthrie, 2012).

A graduate business program, like the MBA, is built upon a structure of courses (content), different types of medium program delivery (in class or online), instructional methods (pedagogy), and overall design (program innovations) to attract prospective students. However, one type of graduate business program (i.e. the traditional full-time MBA program) may no longer be sufficient to meet the expectations of all students as the market is highly segmented with heterogeneous needs and preferences (AACSB, 2002; Friga et al., 2003; Sharkey & Beeman, 2008). To respond to the current business school environment, business schools have begun offering various program options such as: specialized programs, part-time MBA programs, joint Master's programs, Executive focused MBA programs, and work placements (co-op).

Another option that has been garnering increasing attention not only in the management literature, but also across academic disciplines is - online education, a medium of program delivery. This interest can be attributed to the dramatic increase in the number of courses and programs being offered online by academic institutions in North America and abroad (Allen &

Seaman, 2008, 2009, 2010), of which, business schools are the largest providers (Allen & Seaman, 2008; Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011). As Watson and Sutton (2012) provide:

In addition to being the primary component of online-only degree programs and being offered in programs for non-traditional learners, online courses are increasingly being offered at traditional, residential universities (p. 803).

According to Allen (2011), there was a 10% increase in enrollments for online programs in the U.S. in 2011. More recently, Allen & Seaman (2013) reported that in the United States the number of students taking at least one online course increased to approximately 6.7 million students, which corresponds to 32% of all students enrolled in higher education academic institutions. Relevant statistics for Canada are not yet readily available. However, Bates (2012) states, “online learning is thriving across the country [Canada] at the post-secondary level” (p.2). Consequently, online education is becoming a standard medium for supplementing or replacing classroom teaching (Drago, Peltier, Hay & Hodgkinson 2005; Okpala, Hopson, Fort & Chapman, 2010).

Online education is the “process of providing formal education in such a way that the instructor and student can be separated by geography, time or both” (Estelami & Rezvani, 2011, p. 159). Online education delivers courses through various multimedia platforms over the Internet, using asynchronous and synchronous methods, whereby the student and instructor communicate without face-to-face interaction (Grandzol, 2004; Smith & Mitry, 2008). Variations to fully online programs include the hybrid format⁴, where the majority of the course is delivered online with students meeting face-to-face with the faculty member at various intervals (Arbaugh, Desai, Rau & Balakuntalam, 2010; Beqiri et al., 2010).

1.1 Research Problem Statement

The focus of this research study is on the adoption of hybrid to fully online graduate business programs (where 30 to 100 percent of the program is offered online) by publicly funded AACSB accredited business schools in Canada as an option to respond to the current environmental factors placing destabilizing pressure on the business school environment. A review of the graduate business program offerings of the 21 AACSB accredited business schools in Canada (see Appendix A) was completed, and it was revealed that only five out of the 21 business

⁴ Within the literature, the term “blended” is often used synonymously with “hybrid.” For the purposes of this research study the term applied will be “hybrid.”

schools currently offer the option of a hybrid to fully online graduate business program as part of their offerings. In particular:

- One business school offers their specialized MBA in the hybrid format.
- One business school offers their interdisciplinary specialized graduate business program fully online with two compulsory short residencies.
- One business school offers their Executive MBA in the hybrid format.
- One business school offers their MBA in various formats dependent on the course (fully online, partially online, and classroom based).
- One business school offers their part-time MBA in the hybrid format.

Considering the number of graduate business programs offered by these business schools, the limited adoption of online education (in particular the adoption of fully online MBA programs) is very surprising, given the overall proliferation of online education in academic institutions. Folkers (2005) notes that for the most part, growth in online program offerings has not been attributed to academic institutions entering the online education market, but rather the rise in new for profit education providers who focus solely on online instruction. As Redpath (2012) states, “although technology has been incorporated in the classroom, the traditional lecture remains the dominant form in business schools” (p. 126). In addition, Ma and Runyon (2004) found that technologies have served more as a supplement to the traditional method of teaching.

This preliminary review leads to the main research problem guiding this research study:
Why are the majority of Canadian AACSB accredited⁵ business schools currently not offering the option of completing their graduate business programs either partially or fully through online education?

A review of the academic literature over the last 20 years, found that little empirical evidence was identified to provide a complete understanding of the main research problem, especially from the Canadian context at the graduate level. This is not surprising, as Martin and Kellermans (2004) and Grandzol (2004) suggest online education research is still very much in its infancy and research surrounding its effectiveness and empirically validated best practices is

⁵ When this research study utilizes the term “accredited” unless otherwise stated the researcher is referring to an AACSB accredited business school. This accreditation was chosen to segment the scope of this research as the AACSB is the largest accrediting institution in the world for business schools and the most highly recognized and sought after accreditation by business schools in Canada.

highly underdeveloped. Furthermore, no study was found looking at the problem from a theoretical perspective, one that is very much needed to understand this important domain of research and knowledge. Therefore, the purpose of this research study is to explore why the majority of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are currently not offering their graduate programs either partially or fully through online education.

The purpose of this introductory chapter has been to provide an overview of the context and research problem that will be guiding this research study – the limited adoption of online education by Canadian publicly funded AACSB accredited business schools. The chapters to follow will include: Chapter Two will provide a critical review of the relevant literature and conclude with the research questions guiding this research study; Chapter Three will outline the methodology used to gather and analyze the data collected; Chapter Four will present an in depth description of the individual case findings for Business school 1; Chapter Five will present an in depth description of the individual case findings for Business school 2; Chapter Six will present an in depth description of the individual case findings for Business school 3; Chapter Seven will present an in depth description of the individual case findings for Business school 4; Chapter Eight will present the results of the cross-case analysis findings as they relate to research question 1; Chapter Nine will present the results of the cross-case analysis findings as they relate to research question 2; Chapter Ten will present the results of the cross-case analysis findings as they relate to research question 3; and Chapter Eleven will conclude with a summary of the main research findings, limitations, contributions and directions for future research.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

To explore the research problem, a clearer understanding of online education and the implications of its adoption in academic institutions is required. To gain insight into the reasons for the limited adoption of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools, the following areas of the literature were given particular attention: defining online education; advantages to the adoption of online education in academic institutions; and barriers to the adoption of online education by academic institutions. In addition, the literature on Institutional theory will be reviewed as the theoretical lens framing this research study. The literature will be reviewed critically from both a context as well as methodological perspective to examine the extent by which the current literature can help to explore the research problem; to identify areas of convergence as well as areas of divergence; and finally areas where further research is needed. This chapter will conclude with the research questions guiding this research study.

2.1 Defining Online Education

Online education is simply the latest evolution in distance education. By contrast to the traditional delivery medium whereby the instructor and student are physically present at the same place and time that the learning and teaching takes place, distance education allows for formal education to be delivered and received anytime and any place regardless of the physical locations of the instructor and students (Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2009; Smith & Mitry, 2008).

Distance education is a medium of education delivery nearly two centuries young. Its first evolution appeared in Europe by way of course material being sent and received through correspondence (mail) from professional schools (Edelson & Pittman, 2008). The University of Chicago offered the first correspondence courses in the United States in 1892 with Queen's University in Canada following suit only a few years later in 1889 (Canadian Association for Distance Education, 1999; Moore, 2003). These correspondence courses filled the needs of homemakers, labourers, managers and others like military personnel who could not travel regularly to a bricks and mortar type of academic institution due to time, work and family obligations (Moore, 2003).

The next evolution in distance education occurred in the 1950s and 1960s with the widespread acquisition of radios and televisions in households. Academic institutions were then able to reach students through audio and video communications. The most recent evolution, which has had the most significant effect on the rise in distance education, occurred in the 1970s with the creation of the Internet. Initially developed by U.S. military for its use, today computers and the Internet can be found in most households and workplaces, which “has enabled educational institutions to provide services to a geographically diverse learning population” (Estelami & Rezvani, 2011, p. 159).

Today’s evolution of distance education is conducted primarily over the Internet. This medium of delivery is commonly known as online education or online learning. Delivery occurs mainly through online platforms, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Course Management Systems (CMS), and programs like Lotus Learning Space and Web CT, which aid in the delivery and management of the online program. In addition, course delivery is available either through asynchronous (where access and delivery of course material can occur at any time) or synchronous (where the instructor and students are available at the same time to receive and react to educational information) communication methods (Wagner, Hassanein & Head, 2008). In addition, within the course the instructor can avail himself/herself of various other multimedia technologies such as videos, podcasts and discussion groups (Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Collins, Weber & Zambrano, 2014).

To confuse matters further, within the domain of online education there are various divisions when labeling a program either as face-to-face, web-facilitated, hybrid or delivered fully online. Traditional face-to-face delivery is what we commonly are familiar with and like its name, refers to education being delivered in a classroom setting with the instructor and students present at a specific time and place, face-to-face. An extension on the traditional structure is web facilitated where technology such as PowerPoint slides, online chat rooms and discussion boards and some videos are taken advantage of to enhance the student learning experience (Myring, Bott & Edwards, 2014). Due to the widespread adoption of technology in all aspects of today’s world, it can be confidently stated that most programs that are referred to as classroom based or face-to-face have embraced the use of technology and are web facilitated today. In a hybrid course or program, part of the course is delivered face-to-face and part of the course or program is delivered online (Colucci & Koppel, 2010). A fully online program, as expected, refers to programs that are in most part delivered in an online setting through synchronous and asynchronous communication

methods. Even though online programs can be taken anywhere and anytime, most online programs still carry a structure with timelines for completion. As Myring et al., (2014) state:

Many online courses are highly structured, so that students are expected to proceed through the course material on a predefined schedule and their performance is monitored through online grading systems. In a typical week, the professor may post video lectures, require students to complete online assignments, participate in chat rooms or discussion boards, and take quizzes and exams (p. 67).

Given the variations that online education can take, there may be some confusion as to what percentage of content needs to be delivered online to be considered a traditional/web-facilitated, hybrid or fully online program. The uncertainty rests mainly with differentiating between hybrid programs and fully online programs. As Yamagatha-Lynch (2014) contends:

Blended learning has also been referred to as a catalyst of potential change in institutions of higher education because there is a little bit of old and new mixed together, but it needs a better articulated definition so that higher education institutions can align their strategic goals to be successful at facilitating blended learning (p. 193).

Yamagatha-Lynch (2014) adds that in her review of hybrid programs in the United States that academic institutions can declare their programs to be hybrid anywhere in the range of 20 to 80 percent of content delivered online. Due to this wide spectrum, “there is no agreed upon percentage of what constitutes a course as blended, and in many institutions there are idiosyncratic definitions of online, distance education, and blended instruction” (pp. 192-193).

Allen and Seaman (2013), researchers who have conducted the largest empirical studies to date on online education in academic institutions in the United States (through sponsorship with the Sloan Consortium⁶) have attempted to provide guidelines to differentiate between programs that apply varying degrees of online education. Their definitions seem to be gaining momentum due to the number of scholars who have applied their percentage spectrum in classifying their studies as fully online, face-to-face/web facilitated and hybrid.

⁶ Sloan Consortium – The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation sponsors an organization of leading universities committed to quality online education called the Sloan Consortium (or Sloan C). This consortium conducts research and publishes reports dealing with contemporary distance learning. These reports are conducted by the Babson Survey Group and published through Pearson.

Allen and Seaman (2013) suggest that:

Fully online courses are those in which at least 80% of the course content is delivered online. Face-to-face instruction includes courses in which zero to 29 percent of the content is delivered online; this category includes both traditional and web facilitated courses. The remaining alternative, blended (sometimes called hybrid) instruction has between 30 to 80 percent of the course content delivered online (p. 7).

In essence, for a course or programs to be considered a form of “online education” at least 30 percent of the course or program needs to be delivered through online education.

2.2 Advantages to the Adoption of Online Education in Academic Institutions

The number of programs being offered by academic institutions is steadily increasing as well as the interest of senior administration in pursuing the adoption of online education as an option for program delivery (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Young, 2011). As Kilburn, Kilburn and Cates (2014) suggest:

Traditional bricks and mortar classrooms have been ever increasingly substituted by the virtual interface between the student and the institution. Current trend increasingly suggest that college students are taking fewer classes in the live classroom and more online” (p. 2).

For example, Allen and Seaman (2013) in their ten year review on the offerings of online education in the United States noted an online program enrollment growth rate of 9.3 percent in 2012; and the number of students taking at least one online course to be at an all-time high of 6.7 million students, which translates to 32 percent of the student population in the United States (p. 4). These findings were part of a larger questionnaire conducted by Allen and Seaman (2013) in conjunction with the Babson Survey Group, the Sloan Consortium and the United States College Board which is the largest survey conducted to date amongst U.S. degree granting academic institutions. This report merged prior findings of past questionnaires conducted by Allen and Seaman since 2003. This questionnaire was sent to all 4,527 degree granting academic institutions in the United States with a total response rate of 2,280, which represented 62.3 percent of the sample universe and 83.3 percent of academic institutions’ enrollments in the United States. The respondents were senior administration. As such, it is the most expansive and all-inclusive research on the adoption of online education to date. Their findings are confirmed by other academics that promote that this growth and interest in online education amongst academic institutions is sure to continue into the present and future (Collins et al., 2014; Kilburn et al.,

2014). Relevant statistics for Canada are not yet readily available, however, Bates (2012) states, “online learning is thriving across the country [Canada] at the post-secondary level” (p. 2).

So what are the reasons for this growth and increasing adoption of online education? In the next section I will explore the reasons for this through a review of the online education literature and discuss some of the insights provided by researchers on the positive drivers or advantages for this change.

2.2.1 Convenience and flexibility.

The last ten years has seen a great increase in demand by post-secondary level students for online education courses and programs (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Kilburn et al., 2014). For students, the main reason cited within the academic literature to explain increasing student demand for online education was the flexibility and convenience that this medium of delivery provides. Many researchers have stated and found that online education is an attractive option to prospective and current students due to the flexibility and convenience that it provides. As Kilburn et al., (2014) note:

Currently online education is continuously extending beyond the traditional instructional boundaries due to knowledge transfer via electronic communities and the convenience and flexibility to study anytime and anywhere. The ubiquitous online interface allows students the opportunity to learn at their own pace and style while saving the student travel time and money, as well as effort of physically attending classes” (p. 2).

In fact, Kilburn et al., (2014) posit that it is the primary driving force “behind the demand for online higher education” (p. 4). The attractiveness can be found in the ability of students to work at their own pace, anywhere and anytime that their schedule permits, especially in asynchronous online courses (Chao & Chen, 2009; Simon, Jackson, & Maxwell, 2013; Srichanyachon, 2014; Yamagatha-Lynch, 2014). Furthermore, it provides access to education to students not living in close proximity to a bricks and mortar academic institution and/or who cannot attend a physical setting due to work and life commitments (AACSB, 2002; Allen & Seaman, 2013; Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Cavico & Mujtaba, 2010; Hummer, Sims, Wooditch, Salley, 2010; Spice, Palacios, Blondo & Hagen, 2011). This flexibility and convenience is also afforded to faculty and their ability to teach anywhere and anytime (Srichanyachon, 2014).

The flexibility of working at one’s own pace is mainly attributed to the use of asynchronous communication methods of online delivery, since students can work through screens

at their own pace and leisure. However, in the synchronous method, the student is not in the classroom but must be present (online) at the time of delivery (e.g., video conferencing or electronic white boards) (Wagner, Hassanein & Head, 2008), which makes this advantage not as pronounced in this method of online delivery.

2.2.2 Accessibility – international expansion and market growth opportunities.

Corresponding to the above, the main reason cited for academic institutions to consider offering the option of online education courses and programs is the opportunity for market growth through increased student enrollments. As such, Allen (2011), who collaborated with the College Board to survey over 2,500 academic institutions, reported that 65 percent of all reporting institutions indicated that online education was a critical piece of their long-term strategy.

The 21st century business school environment has been characterized as having increased global competition causing a shift upward in the number of suppliers of management/business education; more customized and convenient programs catering to various market segments; growing acceptance of technology in the classroom and online delivery; and increasing accountability for universities to demonstrate that they are delivering the intended results (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB), 2002; Bal, Anitsal & Anitsal, 2014; Cavico & Mujtaba, 2010; Friga, Bettis & Sullivan, 2003; Herrington, 2010; Schmotter, 1999; Sharkey & Beeman, 2008).

To succeed in this new environment, it is suggested that business schools will need to develop strategies for market growth and international expansion, as Herrington (2010) and Naudé et al., (2010) contend, the market for traditional graduate business programs (e.g., MBA) is saturated and mature. The advancement in computer technologies is an attractive and powerful tool for teaching and learning. Hence, online education provides business schools with a wider reach in the educational marketplace, by serving students across borders and meeting the needs of students who cannot attend a bricks and mortar academic institution physically due to work and life commitments (Dykman & Davis, 2008b; Gibson, Harris & Colaric, 2008; Kilburn et al., 2014; Martins & Kellermanns, 2004; Srichanyachon, 2014). This opportunity has increasingly been made possible due to the growth in the number of households and workplaces with computers and Internet access (Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Wagner et al., 2008). Omar, Kalulu and Alijani (2011) summarize the above nicely when they say:

The growing demand for online courses from working adults and the global competition from institutions of higher education have led administrators to modify traditional methods of education delivery in order to sustain long term competitiveness. E-learning offers higher education institutions innovative ways to target adult learners who want to continue their education but are constrained by work schedule, family and/or time (p. 40).

Advocates for the adoption of online education cite it as an opportunity to act as a long term strategy for growth through increased enrollments (Allen & Seaman, 2009, 2013; Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Denchant & Denchant, 2010; Hunter, 2011; Kaifi, Mujtaba & Williams, 2009; Zapalska & Brozik, 2007). The opportunity resides in the notion that online education does not necessarily attract students away from traditional in class programs; but rather they open the door to potential students that would not have otherwise continued their education, such as the non-traditional adult student (Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Mangan, 2001; Peltier, Drago & Schibrowsky, 2007). As Kilburn et al., (2014) provide:

Advances in teaching technology are constantly being adopted to complement the browser based classroom. Due to this value added convenience and flexibility; these advances have created a vast new market for universities in the form of students who could not pursue their education using the traditional format (p. 2).

Medlin, Vannay and Dave (2004) define the non-traditional student as holding “a full-time job, who has little flexibility in his or her daily schedule” (p. 429). Due to these types of student characteristics and needs, they seek programs that are convenient and flexible to balance their work and life commitments otherwise they would not be able to continue their education (Estelami & Rezvani, 2011; Marks, Sibley & Arbaugh, 2005). This may be a possible explanation for the increased demand witnessed in part-time and online graduate business programs (AACSB, 2002; Hunter, 2011; Marks et al., 2005). In other words, online education is found to be an attractive option for the non-traditional adult student because they do not have to be physically present in the classroom, so they can mix “academic pursuits into their lifestyles” (Vogel, 2011, p. 79). Furthermore, Allen and Seaman (2013) state that technological advancements provide the accessibility needed by students living in rural areas where there are no bricks and mortar academic institutions available to continue their education through online programs. This also includes international students across borders, “Academics are witnessing a multicultural outreach through online education that is integrating international students and faculty into an academic life without borders” (Dykman & Davis, 2008a, p. 13).

Bocchi, Eastman and Swift (2004) and Cao and Sakchutchawan (2011) both collected demographic data from students enrolled in online MBA courses. Their findings suggest that the characteristics of the average online MBA student include being older, married, and working full-time with family responsibilities. Coincidentally, these findings are similar to the profile proposed by the AACSB (2002) as the demographic characteristics of the non-traditional adult student. Thus, the results of these studies lend support to the idea that online education is a possible option to respond to the current business school environment by leveraging technology to increase market share by attracting enrollment from non-traditional adult students.

Interestingly, both studies provide the demographic profiles of online MBA program cohorts and characterize them as similar to the non-traditional student described above. However, both of these studies did not investigate whether other program options (for example, part-time MBA programs) also have similar or different student characteristics. Perhaps, the reason that the majority of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are currently not pursuing the option of online education is because they view other options (part-time, executive MBA) are better suited to respond to the current business school environment. Since both studies were quantitative based utilizing a survey for their data collection, these studies did not go in depth enough to really delve into the reasoning behind student decisions or business school program offering decisions. As such, further investigation in this area using qualitative data collection methods would be of benefit.

2.2.3 Cost savings.

Eastman and Swift (2001) note that with the cost of education on the rise, business schools are responding by seeking new ways to increase their market shares. It comes as no surprise that government funding to public academic institutions in North America and abroad is decreasing while costs of delivering education is steadily increasing, which according to Myring et al., (2014) has resulted in “an increase in the number of courses (including business and accounting) offered online” (p. 66). Many researchers advocating for online education view it as a more cost effective means to deliver education as well as offering the possibility of generating additional revenue through increased enrollments (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Dibiasi, 2000; DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Yamagata-Lynch, 2014). In addition, it provides the added benefit of savings in classroom space (Chao & Chen, 2009). In sum, Yamagata-Lynch (2014) proposes that:

Online education is now being touted as a method to make educational opportunities accessible to a wide range of audiences. It has been gaining attention as a vehicle for improving pedagogy, introducing flexibility in student access to instruction and lower costs associated with education (p. 190).

Given the advantages cited for the adoption of online education in academic institutions, why have the majority of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools in Canada not taken advantage of these opportunities? The next section will delve into the barriers of online education identified within the academic literature. The main barriers identified in the literature are outlined next.

2.3 Barriers to the Adoption of Online Education by Academic Institutions

The market for online education is growing (Allen & Seaman, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013), however, some academics caution that this growth may not be as expected. “Although technology has been incorporated in the classroom, the traditional lecture remains the dominant form in business schools” (Redpath, 2012, p. 126). In other words, lectures provided in a classroom setting where knowledge transfer occurs through face-to-face interaction. Folkers (2005) notes that for the most part, growth in online education is not attributed to traditional academic institutions entering the online education market, but rather the rise in new for profit education providers who focus solely on online instruction (such as Athabasca). Guthrie (2012) adds that traditional academic institutions that have included online education within their programs have not necessarily taken full advantage. Ma and Runyon (2004) found that technologies have served more as a supplement to the traditional method of teaching as opposed to replacing the classroom environment. In general, Ma and Runyon (2004) found that faculty-student ratios for online courses have been roughly the same as for face-to-face courses, which contradicts the advantage cited for market growth due to the increased enrollments. Furthermore, Parks (2009) states that even though the number of online courses and programs has increased dramatically in the recent years, many academic institutions are experiencing high barriers to achieving success in the areas of delivery, effectiveness and acceptance.

Many scholars have provided insights and suggestions into the reasons for the lack of adoption of online education by some academic institutions. The main disadvantages and barriers to its adoption cited within the academic literature for online education are discussed next.

In general, the largest and most relevant study to the topic at hand and referred to previously, is the study conducted by Allen and Seaman (2013). The participants were senior administration at degree granting academic institutions in the United States. In their findings, Allen and Seaman identified some of the main barriers to the widespread adoption of online education in academic institutions in the United States as (pp. 29-31):

- *More time and effort by faculty to teach an online course:* 44.6 percent of participants reported that they believed that it took a faculty member more time and effort to teach an online course than to teach the corresponding face-to-face course.
- *Inferior learning outcomes:* the results suggest that there is still a large minority of participants (23 percent) that view the learning outcomes between online courses and face-to-face courses as inferior. An interesting finding by the researchers was that over the course of their surveys conducted between 2003 - 2012, they found a strong relationship between positive attitudes and acceptance towards online education and experience with the medium of delivery. In other words, academic institutions that have been exposed to online education have a more positive attitude towards online education than those academic institutions without experience.
- *Faculty acceptance of online education:* the findings indicated a large discrepancy in acceptance by participants of online education between academic institutions that offer online courses and programs, and those that do not. Namely, at academic institutions that offer fully online programs the acceptance rate was 38.4 percent; meanwhile at academic institutions with no offerings, the acceptance rate was only ten percent. This is coupled with the agreement of 67.8 percent of participants that the lack of acceptance of online education by faculty was a major barrier to the growth of online education.
- *Lack of discipline and motivation by some students impeding their success in an online program:* The study found that there was a belief by 88.8 percent of participants that students need more self-discipline to succeed in online courses. As such, students need to be self-motivated to be successful in an online course or program. This finding coincides with the finding that 73.5 percent of participants responded that lower retention rates for online courses were an important barrier to the adoption and growth of online education.

- *Negative perception by employers:* Lastly, the study found that there was concern by 42.8 percent of participants that potential employers would not accept online education for the delivery of their programs, which would be viewed as a considerable barrier to their adoption of online education for program delivery.

It is important to note that the findings of this quantitative survey were based on the perceptions of senior administration only, and did not include faculty member participants (those who deliver the courses). No interviews or other types of qualitative data were collected to delve deeper into the motivation behind some of the identified barriers to adoption. Furthermore, the survey utilized by Allen and Seaman was not explicit to business schools nor did they differentiate between graduate and undergraduate offerings. However, the utility of this study is that it does provide some insight into the reasons why some academic institutions may not be adopting online education for the delivery of their programs. The next section looks more deeply at some of the more significant barriers to the adoption of online education mentioned in the literature.

2.3.1 Development and delivery costs.

Firstly, there is the cost associated with developing an online program. Although such programs may increase revenue, the literature seems to suggest that there are also substantial costs associated with online education. Despite advocates for online education citing cost savings (economies of scale) due to increased class sizes as an advantage to adoption, some researchers have stated that this is not exactly as presented as there is a fairly high upfront cost and continuing cost to deliver online education in terms of the acquiring the technology and faculty training. As Myring et al., (2014) summarize:

Specifically, online accounting programs require extensive startup costs (new technology and faculty training) and continuing costs (student advising and overhead). The cost of training a professor to teach effectively in an online environment can be substantial; however, effectively preparing faculty to teach online is essential to ensuring that the quality of online accounting students is equal to those from traditional accounting programs (p. 68).

2.3.2 Lower student retention.

Secondly, Allen and Seaman (2013) noted that a potential barrier to widespread adoption by academic institutions is lower student retention rates for online education programs than for

face-to-face programs. According to Fajardo (2011) the student plays a more active role (in an online program) in the learning process as much more self-monitoring and self-correction is required. Hence, the responsibility for learning becomes shared (Dykman & Davis, 2008a). As such, Omar, Kalulu and Alijani (2011) declare “since e-learning presents an entirely new learning environment for students, it requires a different skill set in order to succeed” (p. 39).

One of the reasons cited for lower retention is the lack of student discipline. Schmidt and Gallegos (2001) found that students who are not self-directed or self-motivated are not likely to find success in an online program. In addition, Hung, Chou, Chen and Own, (2010) believe that students need to be active in online learning, more responsible for their learning, acquire time-management skills to keep up with classes, complete work on time and be active contributors to instruction in order to be successful. Without these elements present, success is not likely to occur, which results in the student not completing the program.

For academic institutions increasing enrollment through online education is suggested to be a major benefit to its adoption (economies of scale), however, equally as important is that students complete the program and are successful. Kilburn et al., (2014) say it best when they state:

The emergence of alternative delivery methods of educating, such as the online classroom, provides an increased level of convenience and availability, which theoretically leads to increased degree completion. As a result, providers of on-line education strive to maintain a constant level of quality in online education, which will result in increased student enrollment and retention (p. 14).

Aside, from lack of student discipline as a factor leading to lower student retention, student satisfaction is heavily cited in the literature as one of the main factors contributing to the success of online programs. This is an important consideration for senior administration as Kranzow (2013) argues that if students are not satisfied with their online programs, there is greater chance that they will not remain and complete the program.

Student satisfaction measures the expectations and perceptions of effective learning outcomes (Arbaugh, 2005). Correspondingly, it can be said that satisfaction is achieved when the “expectations any student brings to the distance learning course are matched or exceeded” (Yu & Kim, 2010, p. 4). High student satisfaction seems to be a key factor in the success of an online program according to the current literature on online education. As such, what factors support positive student satisfaction?

The overall findings for satisfaction by students enrolled in online courses/programs suggests that student satisfaction with online education increases when certain elements are present such as media variety, faculty commitment and support, perceived usefulness and ease of use, advantages cited previously for online education (flexibility, convenience), and interaction (Abel, 2005; Arbaugh, 2005; Beqiri, Chase & Bishka, 2010; Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Drennan, Kennedy & Pisarski, 2005; Estelami & Rezvani, 2011; Grandzol, 2004; Hunter, 2011; Marks et al., 2005; Martins & Kellermans, 2004; Peltier, Drago & Schibrowsky, 2003; Peltier et al., 2007; Williams, Duray & Reddy, 2006; Yu & Kim, 2010). Some of the key empirical studies linking various factors to student satisfaction and overall success of an online education program follow next.

Palmer and Holt (2009) found that a student's comfort level with technology was critical to their overall satisfaction with an online course. Correspondingly, in online education settings, systems are typically available 24 hours a day during a given semester. Therefore, students have the convenience of logging in and participating at the time most convenient to them. Based on this system, Palmer and Holt concluded that anytime the system was down or unavailable, convenience could be compromised which could increase the likelihood that a student could become dissatisfied.

Kilburn et al., (2014) conducted a four year study involving students registered in online courses at a Southeastern U.S. academic institution. Data for the study was collected from students completing an online survey regarding their online collegiate experience. A total of 146 students out of 941 eligible students taking at least one online course responded to the initial survey request. The researchers found that system availability, or the students' perception that the program's website, student/instructor interface site, and other course related resources availability and accessibility was an important factor in the students perceived level of satisfaction.

Srichanyachon (2009) identified problems with multimedia and Internet connections, which could result in poor infrastructure and support and the cost of the technology itself as factors that could affect the overall quality of online education. In addition, he suggests that the lack of support and services such as providing tutors, knowledge of computers, and technical assistance as having an overall affect on student satisfaction.

Cole, Shelley and Swartz (2014), conducted a three-year study in one southwestern academic institution in the United States on satisfaction with online instruction and learning. The researchers employed a multi-item survey and administered it to graduate and undergraduate

business students over eight academic semesters. In total, 553 out of 603 enrolled students completed the survey, giving it a response rate of 92 percent. Overall, the researchers found that there was no statistically significant difference in the levels of satisfaction based on age, gender, or level of study. In addition, students rated their online instruction as moderately satisfactory, with hybrid or partially online courses rated somewhat more satisfactory than fully online courses. Convenience was the most cited reason for satisfaction. Lack of interaction was the most cited reason for dissatisfaction. Preferences for hybrid courses surfaced in the responses to an open-ended question asking what made the experience with online or partially online courses satisfactory or unsatisfactory. This study's findings support the literature to date and reinforce the significance of student satisfaction with student retention and success.

Finally, Walstrom (2014) provided lessons learned while migrating to an Electronic Business Management course from traditional face-to-face delivery to online delivery. The study took place over a six and half year time frame in one site and compared student satisfaction and learning outcomes using multiple mixed methods such as GPAs in the course and course evaluations. The participants included a total of 225 students who completed the course face-to-face (across 7 sections) and a total of 301 students who completed the course online (across 10 sections). Following Walstrom's analysis he recommended that: (1) the entire course should be prepared and available at the beginning of the semester with students allowed to preview material or work ahead at their convenience; (2) students appreciate the use of low cost, online, open source textbooks as an alternative; (3) students like to be able to engage content repeatedly and in whatever increments desired; (4) if you make the students do the work without "spoon feeding" them or "holding their hand" they may accuse you of not doing your job because it does not fit their paradigm; (5) authentication of student participation is different when students are not in a synchronous environment with the instructor; (6) instructor enthusiasm is important; (7) course evaluation instruments need to be tailored to evaluate online/hybrid course delivery; and (8) be prepared to quickly address problems and issues that arise.

2.3.3 Faculty resistance.

Finally, the literature strongly suggests that the stakeholder most resistant to the adoption of online education in academic institutions are the education providers themselves - faculty members (Folkers, 2005, Guthrie, 2012; Redpath, 2012). Faculty acceptance to date has been mixed at best (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia & Jones, 2010). This is an

important factor in an academic institution's willingness to adopt as Folkers (2005) suggests, "without the support of higher education faculty, true reform (change) within an institution is unlikely to take place" (p. 69). Given the above, what does the scholarly literature suggest to be the main factors contributing to faculty resistance to online education? This issue will be explored next.

2.3.3.1 Lack of perceived quality of online education as a delivery medium.

A review of the empirical evidence to date supports the idea that the main factor contributing to faculty resistance of the adoption of online education is the perception that this medium of delivery lacks quality as it results in inferior learning outcomes compared to face-to-face delivery (Dykman & Davis, 2008b; Guthrie, 2012; Martins & Kellermanns, 2004; Omar et al., 2011; Peltier et al., 2007). Drago et al., (2007) cite the lack of development in certain skills such as public speaking, interpersonal skills, and analytical skills as reasons for the perception by some stakeholders that online education is inferior to the traditional classroom format. However, they contend that the development of these skills is dependent on the technology acquired and that online education may even offer a distinct advantage for developing its own unique skill-set such as virtual-based interpersonal skills (for example: written communication skills, the ability to work independently, and a higher degree of comfort with the Internet).

According to Cao and Sakchutchawan (2011) the quality and effectiveness of online education has always been under the scrutiny of serious research. Hence, given the attention to quality and relevancy in the graduate business education literature, it is not surprising that the majority of empirical studies on online education also focus on quality and effectiveness. Studies on the effectiveness of online education have largely been divided into three areas: (a) student outcomes based on test scores and grades; (b) students' perceptions and attitudes surrounding online education; and (c) student satisfaction with online education (Robinson, Hullinger & Roberts, 2008). The majority of these studies focus on comparing the learning outcomes between single classroom based courses and single online courses or singular units of study. The educational assessment of outcomes relates to what a learner is expected to comprehend and be able to apply after the completion of the learning process (Fajardo, 2011). Interestingly, despite some faculty's perception that the learning outcomes are inferior, and therefore lack quality and effectiveness, various studies have demonstrated contradictory findings (Arbaugh, 2000; Cao &

Sakchutchawan, 2011; Dirienzo & Lilly, 2014; Drago, Peltier, Hay & Hodgkinson, 2005; Means et al., 2010; Rich & Derishiwsky, 2011; Vogel; 2011). Some examples include:

Arbaugh et al., (2010) found in their review of management studies that little empirical research exists that identifies “what is lost in moving to an online learning setting” (p. 49). For instance, Arbaugh (2000) conducted a study of students from a U.S. academic institution comparing the learning outcomes between students enrolled in a classroom based MBA course and students enrolled in an online MBA course. The study focused on two outcome dimensions: exam performance and student participation and interaction. Overall, this empirical study found that there was no significant difference in terms of exam results between the two classes and that there was a lack of significant difference in interaction quality and dynamics as well.

More recently, Rich and Dereshiwsky (2011) conducted a study comparing the learning outcomes between a traditional accounting class and an online accounting class. Data was collected through a survey completed by the students enrolled in the courses. The results indicated that students in the online course performed just as well as those in the traditional on-campus course. Therefore, these studies provide support that there is little difference in terms of learning outcomes for students enrolled in face-to-face courses versus online courses. Other than learning outcomes to measure the effectiveness and quality of online education, the literature also spends a great deal of attention on student satisfaction with online education.

In reviewing the studies above, the majority of the findings were found to be based on some form of quantitative measurement tool. They indicate that the two mediums of delivery are for the most part equal in terms of learning outcome and effectiveness. How then does this explain the perception by some faculty members that online education lacks quality? As such, for this research study a glaring gap in the literature is the lack of qualitative research in the area investigating in depth, the extent of faculty resistance in business schools; and more specifically, the motivations, perceptions and any other factors that may be contributing to business school faculty resistance to the adoption of online education at the graduate business level.

2.3.3.2 Lack of face-to-face interaction.

Another measure found to contribute to the negative perception of the quality of online education is the lack of interaction found in fully online courses or programs. This may be due to the fact that high interaction is said to contribute to positive student learning outcomes and satisfaction (Sher, 2009). As Omar et al., (2008) provide, “The degree of interaction among

participants in an online course is widely acknowledged to be an indicator of successful learning experiences. Interaction contributes to both achievement and student satisfaction” (p. 41).

Specifically, the concerns raised within the literature as a barrier to the adoption of online education are in regard to the decrease in interaction between faculty and learners due to the loss of face-to-face contact (Robinson et al., 2008). In fact, Srichanyachon (2014) notes that it is one of the most frequently cited barriers to the adoption of online education identified in the academic literature. Faculty-student interaction is the nature and frequency of contact between the student and faculty member. In the traditional classroom setting, the faculty member has a multitude of opportunities to interact with students, while in the online setting, this is limited and thus, requires novel and different ways to interact with students. Numerous studies have linked student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction as a factor measuring success of online education.

Marks et al., (2005), Peltier et al., (2007), and Arbaugh (2005) all found that student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction were positively related to students’ perceptions of the overall effectiveness and satisfaction of online courses or programs. Greater interaction has also been linked to greater student engagement (Robinson et al., 2008). As Anderson (2003) states:

Pedagogical success is the aim of any course. Students are enrolled to learn and advance their career options. Deep and meaningful formal learning is supported as long as one of the three forms of interaction (student-teach; student-student; student-content) is at a high level. The other two may be offered at a minimal level or even eliminated, without degrading the educational experience (p. 18).

In addition, Martins and Kellermans (2004) found that effective interaction is a function of the instructor, peer encouragement, design of the module and the technological infrastructure being used. Recent innovations in communication technology have increased the ability of students to interact with each other themselves and the instructor. These technologies include email, chat rooms, asynchronous discussion rooms, real time voice and face-to-face communications via the Internet. Beqiri et al., (2010) and Arbaugh et al., (2010) have both cited hybrid learning as a means to increase opportunities for interaction. However, a disadvantage is that this may decrease the economies of scale benefit of online programs offered fully (Ma & Runyon, 2004).

One factor that may be contributing to faculty resistance due to the loss in face-to-face contact is the question of how to teach instructional case studies in an online environment. Apart from the traditional lecture method, instructional case studies are often cited as the most frequently

applied pedagogical method to teach graduate business students how to become effective managers (Garvin, 2003; Gonzalez, 2011; Kimball, 1995; Liang & Wang, 2004; Mintzberg, 2005; Navarro, 2003; Rippin, Booth, Bowie, & Jordan, 2002; Shivakumar, 2012). The use of instructional case studies was first introduced in the fields of law and medicine, but its use has been common practice in the field of management training since 1910, when first developed and applied at Harvard Business School (Harvard is also the main publishers of cases around the world for application in management training) (Shivakumar, 2012). It is said that instructional case studies are particularly effective for management competency development due to the interaction and discussion that surrounds the case study method in the classroom, as Cullen (2013) provides:

Cases offer a description of a certain situation, normally in the business environment, where a decision needs to be made. They serve as an anchor for an intensely participatory class experience. The information provided is often incomplete, giving students diverse possible options as they prepare their analysis for class discussion. Once in class, accomplished instructors in the case method will carefully orchestrate the class in such a way that students' experiences and viewpoints contribute to a vibrant interaction where, in many instances, it is the students not the instructor that dominate the discourse (p. 212).

Therefore, given the idea that instructional case studies are one of the primary and most well established methods to train future managers in business schools and its effectiveness requires a participatory approach (Garvin, 2003), it is speculated that the lack of face-to-face interaction in an online environment may cause some skepticism amongst faculty leading to resistance to the adoption of online education as it would require faculty to rethink how to deliver their courses. A deeper study on this issue may help in providing another dimension in understanding this research study's research problem.

2.3.3.3 Change in teaching dynamics and environment.

The change in teaching dynamics and environment associated with online education may also be a factor contributing to faculty resistance. To begin to explore this concept it is important to understand how the adoption of online education affects faculty roles and the way education is delivered. Arbaugh, Desai, Rau & Balakuntalam (2010) state that "online learning does not just change the culture of the classroom; it changes the culture of the faculty work environment" (p. 50). Some researchers have contended that traditional classroom delivery is teacher centered, where the instructor is the primary conveyor of knowledge and the student is the recipient. By

contrast, online education is student centered with delivery taking place primarily over the Internet and the student taking primary responsibility for their learning (Grandzol, 2004; Neely & Tucker, 2010). The literature seems to suggest, therefore, that the adoption of online education causes a form of paradigm shift from a teacher centered orientation to student centered orientation (Ilhan & Cetin, 2013; Lee, Yoon & Lee, 2010). In other words, “Online education represents a major shift in how people learn and in turn, how learners are taught” (Cole, Shelley & Swartz, 2014, p. 113).

Neely and Tucker (2010) have provided a valuable contribution in the understanding of this change in teaching dynamics and environment by differentiating the faculty role between the two mediums of delivery by way of illustration using two models of teaching dynamics, the *Traditional Faculty Model* (classroom teaching) and the *Unbundled Faculty Model* (online teaching). In the *Traditional Faculty Model*, the faculty member delivers instruction, develops and maintains course curriculum, assesses learning outcomes, and aligns course materials to pedagogical methods chooses. By contrast, in the *Unbundled Faculty Model*, multiple players take part. The faculty member delivers instruction; the curriculum writer designs and maintains the academic content of courses; the instructor/grader assesses learning outcomes; the academic advisor advises students and monitors student progress; and the instructional designer aligns technology and course materials with overall curriculum design. Therefore, according to Neely and Tucker’s model, the unbundling of the faculty role can be said to separate teaching from delivery activities, causing discomfort amongst some faculty as there is a sense of loss in engagement and control over the student’s learning experience (Folkers, 2005; Guthrie, 2012) and this could contribute to their resistance to this online medium of delivery.

In reviewing Neely and Tucker’s description of change in teaching dynamics and learning environment, their insights may be limited due to the fact that these models presuppose that this is the only model to be followed in delivering online education. As the next section describes, faculty have different level of proficiency in technology. There is no evidence to demonstrate that a faculty member given training cannot act in multiple roles, such as curriculum writer, instructor, and advisor. In addition, the unbundling of the faculty role does not consider hybrid learning formats that mix classroom instruction and online education. Does this factor have an impact on faculty resistance?

2.3.3.4 *Comfort with technology.*

Faculty resistance may also come from faculty's comfort and acceptance with technology. Online education brings new technologies into the workplace and with its introduction and implementation; some faculty may require training in module development and delivery (Drago et al., 2005; Folkers, 2005). As Dykman and Davis (2008c) provide, "An instructor must strive to become expert in using the adopted course management system in order to assure full use of the system's capabilities. This expertise is essential for effective and credible course design" (p. 282).

According to Dykman and Davis (2008b) the degree of acceptance of new technology is directly related to the faculty member's general comfort with technology and perceived benefits of its use. To lend support to this point, Gibson et al. (2000) conducted a study measuring the degree to which the *Technology Acceptance Model* (TAM) could explain acceptance of new technology by faculty. The two main measures of acceptance according to the TAM model is perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the technology. This study was conducted at a large U.S. academic institution with data primarily collected through a quantitative survey. 110 faculty members from the academic institution's Education and Business Department completed the survey. The results indicate that perceived usefulness is a strong indicator of faculty acceptance of online education; however, the perceived ease of use offered little predictive power in terms of faculty acceptance of online education.

Alternatively, Menchaca and Bekele (2008) conducted a qualitative multiple year, multiple stakeholder study that explored the factors for online education success. The participants were senior administration, faculty and students. Data was gathered from an online Master's program in Educational Technology. The results indicated that technology capability or quality of hardware and software available was a success factor in the implementation and acceptance of online education, which lends itself to perceived ease of use. As well, Menchaca and Bekele (2008) suggest that experience with technology is a success factor in the implementation of online education. These differing results support the need for more research in the area to reach a better understanding and consensus.

Upon reviewing the studies above, one factor identified that may be contributing to faculty resistance is comfort with technology. As Ma and Runyon (2004) suggest, faculty have different technical skills and interest in technology, but to what extent can a faculty member's level of comfort with technology explain their acceptance or resistance of online education for the delivery

of graduate business programs in their business school? Furthermore, does generational existence exist? To answer these questions further exploration is required.

2.3.3.5 Increase in workload.

Finally, the scholarly literature indicates that there is the perception that faculty will require more time and effort to plan an online course to ensure online teaching effectiveness (Peltier et al., 2007). As Omar et al., (2011) suggest, “Instructors take a lot of time to create and manage e-learning courses. Compared to traditional delivery of classes, faculty and support staff spend more hours providing online versions of courses” (p. 39).

In addition, managing student-teacher relationships in an online environment is suggested to be more complex (Dykman & Davis, 2008a). “As online delivery formats grow in popularity, so do online size and/or the number of sections per course. The problem of keeping track of students and the challenge of conducting meaningful discussions seems to increase rapidly with class size” (Harmon, Alpert & Histen, 2014, p. 33). To gain acceptance by faculty, Wagner, Hassanein and Head (2011) suggest incentives (monetary and course relief) to minimize resistance to additional workload as a result of the adoption of online education.

Interestingly, Allen and Seaman (2009) state that faculty members lacking experience in delivering online courses tend to hold a higher negative perception of online education than those who have experience with this medium of delivery. A review of the literature on constraints to adoption for online education found that most of the papers citing faculty resistance as a constraint to adoption, although recent, are more often than not based on discussion papers authored by advocates for online education as opposed to empirical studies (Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011). As such, what is needed is more empirical studies involving faculty members, asking them directly – are they resistant to online education, and if so, why? Therefore, further research needs to be conducted with business faculty members using qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding into their perceptions and views towards the adoption of the option of online education for graduate business program delivery.

2.4 Limitations of Current Research on Online Education

The purpose of the literature review was to critically review and explore the current academic literature on online education to provide insights into the research problem as well as areas for further investigation. Overall the literature seems to suggest that the main reasons for the

rise in the adoption of online education is attributed to the benefits of convenience and flexibility that online education brings to students; the international expansion and market growth opportunities for academic institutions; and cost efficiency in that a greater number of students could be enrolled in one course or program than in traditional campus based programs. Given that these advantages are compelling, why have Canadian AACSB accredited business schools not adopted online education to the extent expected in response to the environmental pressures of the business school environment?

To answer this question, the literature review then focused on barriers to adoption. The disadvantages identified in the literature include: development and delivery costs associated with online education; lower student success and retention rates; and faculty resistance. The strength of each of these barriers amongst Canadian AACSB accredited business schools is still unclear. What factors can have an influence on a faculty member's resistance or acceptance of online education? What factors have an influence on senior administration in pursuing this option? The literature provides some explanations focused mainly on the lack of quality of this delivery medium, despite empirical evidence that supports that this medium of delivery is on par or can result in greater student satisfaction, and better learning outcomes and effectiveness.

The concerns supposedly raised by some stakeholders, especially business school faculty with respect to online education's quality and effectiveness are reminiscent of the discourse on the relevance of graduate business education. In reviewing the findings of the empirical research above, these perceptions seem, not to be clearly substantiated. A thoughtful point was made by Vogel (2011) when he states, "this question though, almost presupposes that the traditional face-to-face method of instruction is the most effective means of instruction, which itself is subject to some debate" (p. 83). Thus, although there is empirical evidence to demonstrate that classroom and online education are on par over various dimensions, these findings do not necessarily equate to students receiving a quality and effective education.

To evaluate quality and effectiveness, the studies employed different predetermined evaluation measures such as grades, homework assignments, satisfaction, and student engagement. No consistent approach was used to clearly define what quality and effectiveness really means. Since the majority of studies are modeled after a quantitative based design, using a survey as their only tool and little consideration given to different participant groups other than students, or programs in their entirety, there is a significant gap in the literature to clearly identify the parameters of quality and effectiveness and their relationship and influence on the adoption of

online education for graduate management programs. In order to understand the relationship and influence between these and other factors a more in depth perspective is needed.

Given that perception is a matter of opinion, preference, and attitude that is not easily measured through quantitative methods, there is a need to gather the point of view of those who approve, design and deliver graduate business programs – internal business school stakeholders (senior administration and faculty), in order to answer the main research problem as the literature to date on online education has not been forthcoming. In order to gather the perceptions of these internal stakeholders, qualitative studies are needed. “A qualitative approach is (also) more sensitive to human factors such as their motivations and preferences (Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011). This will help to answer the questions: What are the main factors that enable and constrain the adoption of the option of online education for the delivery of graduate business programs in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools? Is the majority of business school faculty resistant to the adoption of online education at the graduate level? If so, why? Furthermore, how much influence do faculty opinions have on Canadian AACSB accredited business school’s decision making in terms of graduate business program offerings (including delivery medium)? More research is needed to answer these and other questions to provide a better understanding of the enabling and constraining forces to the adoption of the online education for graduate business programs in Canadian AACSB business schools.

This research study and the research problem proposed will focus on answering some of these gaps in knowledge on online education and its adoption in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. In the next section of this literature review another gap in the literature will be explored, which is the lack of a theoretical lens to examine these issues.

2.5 Institutional Theory and Institutional Change

As the previous literature review has shown, much has been written on online education, including the reasons for its adoption and lack of adoption, which has provided a good starting point for this research study. One significant gap though in the literature is the lack of a theoretical lens to explore and understand the adoption of online education in academic institutions. Previously, it was stated that graduate business programs have traditionally been delivered face-to-face in a classroom environment and that the adoption of online education changes the learning environment for both the faculty member and the student. Consequently, to truly explore the research problem there is a need to understand the institutional change process in

order to explore how certain structures, processes and practices become accepted in organizations. As such, the theoretical perspective proposed to frame this research study is Institutional theory due to its focus on the forces that influence institutional change.

Institutional theory was selected as the theoretical lens to guide this research study due to its prevalence and widespread application in organizational studies and its focus on understanding the influence of institutions in guiding the actions and behaviour of organizations in an institutional field (Dacin, Goodstein & Scott, 2002; Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin & Suddaby, 2008; Howells, Karatas-Ozkan, Cagla & Atiq, 2014; Najeeb, 2014; Scott 2004; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). In particular:

Institutional approaches to organizational studies focus attention on the relationships among organizations and the field in which they operate, highlighting in particular the role of rational formal structures in enabling and constraining organizational behaviour. A key contribution of institutional studies has been the development of strong accounts of the processes through which institutions govern action (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006, p. 215).

The quote by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) is understood to mean that organizations do not operate independent of each other. Rather they are deeply affected by other organizations and stakeholders within their institutional fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Institutional theory is therefore, by virtue of its emphasis on contextual, historical and internal processes to explain individual and organizational action (Currie, 2009; Dacin, Goodstein & Scott, 2002) is suggested to be the best theoretical lens to explore the research problem guiding this research study. This perspective is anticipated to provide deeper insights into how various enabling and constraining forces as well as stakeholders in the business school environment can influence a Canadian AACSB accredited business school's organizational decision making in whether or not to adopt the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs.

The structure of this section is as follows: overview of key concepts in institutional theory; developments in institutional theory; organizational legitimacy and rationalized myths; the isomorphic process; stakeholder influence and the process of institutional change; and limitations of institutional theory.

2.5.1 Overview of key concepts in Institutional theory.

Figure 1 below visually depicts some of the key concepts in Institutional theory that will be applied to this research study.

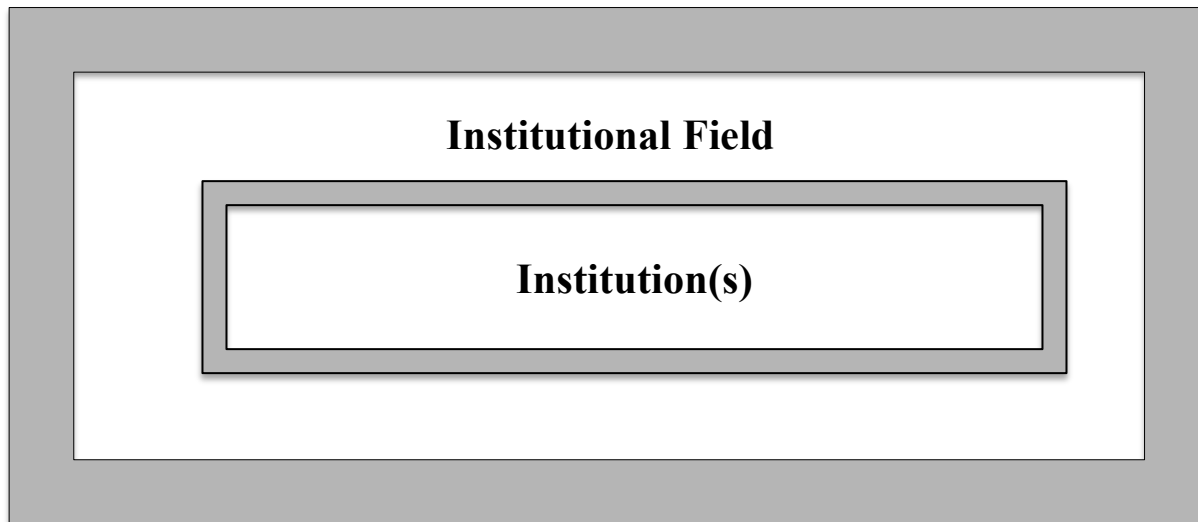


Figure 1 – Elements of Institutional Theory

At the core of Institutional theory are *Institutions*. For the purposes of this research study, Scott's (2001) definition of institutions will be utilized, as follows:

Consisting of “cultured-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that ... provide stability and meaning to social life ... Institutions are transmitted by various types of carriers, including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines and artifacts and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction (p. 48).

An organization's structures, processes and practices are said to become “institutionalized” when these “social processes, obligations or actualities come to take on a rule-like status in social thought and action” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341). In this view, institutional structures, processes and practices are taken for granted and become repetitive and adopted by other organizations in the same institutional field as they are considered to be the most “desirable, proper, or appropriate action and behaviour to take for the entity”, thereby increasing legitimacy (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Organizational legitimacy (a central feature in Institutional theory) refers to “... the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provide explanations for (an organization's) existence” (Meyer & Scott, 1983, p. 201).

Of great relevance to the current research study is how an organizational practice becomes an institutional practice as a medium of delivery is suggested to be a “practice” for the purposes of this research study. Tolbert and Zucker (1983, p. 25) have provided three indicators of institutionalized practice, they are: (1) the practice is widely followed within the institutional field;

(2) the practice is adopted without debate; (3) and the practice exhibits permanence. Given this description, classroom face-to-face delivery is considered the institutionalized practice within the business school environment as this medium of delivery is generally agreed to be the most socially and widely accepted medium of education delivery by business schools at the graduate level.

The next box outside of Institution(s) in *Figure 1* is the *Institutional field*⁷. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) define it as:

Those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized life: key suppliers, resource product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products (pp. 64-65).

The institutional field as defined above, is suggested to correspond to the *business school environment* referred to throughout this research study. It is within this field that “socially constructed expectations and practices become disseminated and reproduced” (Greenwood et al., 2002, p. 58). The institutional field consists of stakeholder norms and values, which reflects what greater society views as the correct way for organizations to behave. Meyer and Rowan (1977) provide add that it is a source of determining legitimacy, providing rewards and incentives as well as constraints or sanctions on an organization’s practices. In other words, stakeholder expectations shape the behaviour of organizations in that accepted norms and values are what are perceived as legitimate. This can be interpreted to mean that institutions guide the behaviour of organizations within an institutional field on how they should be structure, operate and deliver their products and services (Howells et al., 2014; Scott, 2005; Tolbert 1985).

For Canadian AACSB accredited business schools (organizations that are part of the business school environment or institutional field for business schools) this means the type of graduate business program offerings (including delivery mediums) offered to their student population. Thus, “organizational practices are either a direct reflection of, or response to, rules and structures built into their larger environment” (Pauwee & Boselie, 2003, p. 59). The key stakeholders in the institutional field that Canadian AACSB accredited business schools occupy are: internal (senior administration and faculty) and external (students, employers, government bodies (Canadian provincial governments who provide the majority of funding to public academic institutions), accreditation agencies (for example the AACSB), non-AACSB accredited business schools, and other competitors (private companies providing management training). According to

⁷ Also referred to interchangeably in the literature as the institutional environment, institutional context or organizational field, dependent on the time period or researcher.

Institutional theory these stakeholders place pressure on Canadian AACSB accredited business schools to establish and/or maintain institutions.

Given that Institutional theory focuses on established institutional fields, of which academic institutions are surely categorized due to their long history and deeply ingrained traditions, this theory is well suited to help understand the organizational behaviour of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools, which form part of an academic institution (Morphew & Huisman, 2002). More specifically, it will help to provide a perspective on why the majority of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are not offering the option of online education for their graduate business programs and “the traditional mode (classroom-based) remains the dominant medium of delivery in business schools” (Redpath, 2012, p. 126).

2.5.2 Developments in Institutional theory.

The first studies of organizations and their behaviour took root in the field of organizational sociology in the 1950s and quickly made footprints in other fields such as management and the political sciences. In the historical development of Institutional theory, it has often been divided between old institutionalism and new institutionalism (Najeeb, 2014).

Old institutionalism reigned in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s and focused most consistently on the determinants and consequences of organizational structure and examining social processes’ influence on organizational performance. Researchers also focused at the macro level on how power and social inequality influenced organizational behaviour (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Scott, 2004). In essence, old institutionalism viewed organizations as separate and apart from the influence of their environments. Furthermore, established processes and practices were based on the decisions and preferences of management regardless of environmental influence. However, post 1960s saw increasing acceptance among researchers that organizations were increasingly interdependent and responsive to environmental factors such as economic, technical, political and institutional (Scott, 1981). These changes in the paradigmatic view of institutions were the forethought to what is often referred to as new institutionalism with the dispelling of the overly rationalistic view of organizations (Budros, 2001; Greenwood et al., 2008).

New institutionalism extended beyond the technical environment as an explanation of organizational structure to consider the effect of the institutional field itself: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pressures that develop structures and establish legitimacy surrounding certain processes and practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Najeeb,

2014). This expansion in thinking according to Scott (2004) allowed for a larger vision of the environment and the extent to which organizations could be analyzed. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the publication of some critical research and discourse on Institutional theory that set the boundaries for research on the analysis of organizational behaviour of institutions for the next three decades to the present. These works were published by organizational sociologists and are often credited as introducing the main underpinnings of new institutionalism in organization studies (Greenwood et al., 2008; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). These works include: Meyer and Rowan (1977); Zucker (1977); DiMaggio and Powell (1983); and Meyer and Scott (1983).

Briefly:

- Meyer and Rowan (1977) viewed institutions at the macro level interconnected with a set of cultural roles (Greenwood et al., 2008);
- Zucker (1977) focused on the micro foundations of institutions with the power of various cognitive aspects as influencing the conduct and behaviour of individuals (actors) (Scott, 2005). In Zucker (1983), he added “common understandings of what is appropriate and, fundamentally, meaningful behaviour” (p. 105);
- DiMaggio and Powell (1983) introduced the concept of isomorphism to explain structural similarity between organizations in an institutional field (Greenwood et al., 2008); and
- Meyer and Scott (1983) provided that both technical and institutional forces shape organizational structure, processes and practices.

As a result of these key works, the foundations of new institutionalism were established in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Greenwood et al., (2008, p. 6) summarizes these main contributions to the understanding of institutions and their behaviour and conduct as:

- 1) Organizations are influenced by their institutional network contexts. The institutional field consists of rationalized myths of appropriate conduct.
- 2) Institutional pressures affect all organizations and/or difficult to evaluate outputs. Organizations that are especially sensitive to institutional contexts are institutional organizations.
- 3) Organizations become isomorphic within their institutional field in order to secure social approval (legitimacy), which provides survival benefits.

- 4) Because conformity to institutional pressures may be contrary to the dictates of efficiency, conformity may be ceremonial, whereby symbolic structures are decoupled from an organizations technical core.
- 5) Institutionalized practices are typically taken for granted, widely accepted and resistant to change.

For the purposes of narrowing this broad field of study to the areas that are most relevant to this research study (the best fit), the works of Meyer and Rowan (1977) in explaining the influence of organizational legitimacy and rationalized myths; and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) in explaining the influence of isomorphic forces were selected.

2.5.3 Organizational legitimacy and rationalized myths.

Of Meyer and Rowan's (1977) seminal work, the following three assumptions are highlighted:

- 1) Formal organizational structures do not necessarily emerge as a response to the need to coordinate and control organizational members activities:

Organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work and institutionalized society. Organizations that do so increase their legitimacy and their survival prospects, independent of the immediate efficacy of the acquired practices and procedures (p. 340).

- 2) Organizational survival can rest not upon actual performance outcomes, but rather on observation of formal structures.

Thus, organizational success depends on factors other than efficient coordination and control of production activities. Independent of their productive efficiency, organizations, which exist in highly elaborated institutional environments and succeed in becoming isomorphic with these environments gain the legitimacy and resources needed to survive (p. 352).

- 3) There may exist little relationship between the formal structures organizations take and the daily activities performed by its members.

Formal organizations are often loosely coupled...structural elements are only loosely linked to each other and to activities, rules are often violated, decisions are often unimplemented, or if implemented have uncertain consequences, technologies are of problematic efficiency, and evaluation and inspection systems are subverted or rendered so vague as to provide little coordination (p. 342).

The main assumptions above describe Meyer and Rowan's (1977) view that society's norms, perceptions and expectations can act as legitimizing activities resulting in rules that function as rationalized myths that lead to formal structures. When Meyer and Rowan refer to "formalized structures" they are referring to structures, processes and practices that have become institutionalized – institutions. These formal organizational structures have symbolic meaning generating organizational actions. These actions serve to communicate symbolic and shared meanings about the organization to internal and external stakeholders (Budros, 2001; Kamens, 1977; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). The concepts most relevant to the current research study are rationalized myths and legitimacy. As Budros (2001) provides:

These rules function as myths by defining specific structural elements – for example, academic departments, professors and classroom instruction in universities – as necessary without demonstrating their economic utility. Myths are powerful because they are rationalized, prescribing in an impersonal manner given structures (means) as essential for goal attainment, and are institutionalized, having an objective existence beyond any particular social actor (p. 222).

Meyer and Rowan (1977; 1983) proposed that rational myths act like rules of appropriate conduct for the organizations in an institutional field and define specific structural elements. For example these rules define in an academic setting the structure of academic departments, the processes by which faculty members are hired (tenure-track) or how organizational decisions are made; and the best practices to deliver education (i.e. classroom setting). The argument follows that when these rational myths are accepted and followed, organizations gain legitimacy in the eyes of their stakeholders. Legitimacy, more strongly than efficiency and organizational performance, is associated with organizational survival and fitness (Budros, 2001; Scott, 1983; Greenwood et al., 2008). Lastly, by conforming to institutional rules might conflict with the

requirements of technical efficiency (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 310) producing ‘surface isomorphism’ (Zucker, 1987, p. 672).

Several researchers have categorized academic institutions as institutional organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1977; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Mophew & Huisman; 2002; Scott, 1987), whereby organizational structure is more a reflection of the expectations and values of stakeholders as opposed to what is necessarily most efficient. Academic institutions employ ambiguous technologies (teaching) to produce outputs (e.g. knowledge) whose value and quality are difficult to measure. Therefore, these types of institutions are not evaluated based on their efficiency, but rather their ability to develop and offer programs and structures that are perceived as desirable, proper and appropriate. “Organizations that do so increase their legitimacy and survival prospects, independent of the immediate efficacy of the acquired practices and procedures” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 433). Powell (1991) reinforces this sentiment when he states that institutional patterns shape behaviour regarding what is perceived as legitimate as it implies the “congruence between the social values associated with or implied by (organizational) activities and the norms of acceptable behaviour in the larger social system” (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975, p. 122).

The relevancy of the concept of legitimacy and rationalized myths is, how influential this force can be in the business school environment as an enabling and constraining force towards adoption of online education? The literature review did provide a strong indication that online education was perceived by some stakeholders to hold less legitimacy than face-to-face instruction due to quality concerns associated with this medium of delivery. However, how strong is this factor in acting as an enabling and/or constraining force towards adoption? How strong is this perception held and by which stakeholders? How does legitimacy and the concept of an institutional practice help in our understanding of the research problem? Further insights through this research study will be pivotal in our understanding.

2.5.4 The isomorphic process.

DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) most relevant contribution for the purposes of this research study are on their writings pertaining to how the pursuit of legitimacy causes organizations to adopt similar structures, processes and practices resulting in startling homogeneity between organizations in an institutional field. The process of an institutional field becoming more and more homogeneous is called isomorphism. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) define the process of

isomorphism as “a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of institutional conditions (p. 161). In a sense, isomorphism results in a shift from heterogeneous structures, processes and practices between organizations in an institutional field to very similar (or identical) formal structures, processes and practices between organizations in an institutional field. This homogeneity is most pronounced in established institutional fields (where it is strongly argued that academic institutions most certainly fall under) as they have a great deal of inter-organizational interaction, as Morphey and Huisman (2002) suggest:

The acquisition of normatively defined practices and structures is more important for the survival of the institutional organization than are practices that enhance the efficiency of their technical process or the quality of their organizational outputs. And, when these “correct” practices and structures are then adopted by all institutional organizations within a specific field, isomorphic processes are the necessary result and homogeneity within the field is expected to increase (p. 496).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) add that the isomorphic process occurs as a result of three powerful institutional forces known as coercive, mimetic and normative. Briefly:

Coercive forces result in greater homogeneity between organizations in an institutional field because of pressures from external stakeholders, such as powerful organizations (for example, government or accrediting bodies) to adopt certain structures, processes and practices that they perceive to be most legitimate. Organizations in these institutional fields have a tendency to adopt these institutional elements to avoid censure or sanctions. For example, it can be suggested that Canadian AACSB accredited business schools follow AACSB prescribed standards for fear of losing their accreditation.

Mimetic forces result in greater homogeneity between organizations in an institutional field because the environment is uncertain. The environment is uncertain because these organizations are dealing with poorly understood structures and technologies and ambiguous goals, which makes it very difficult for them to demonstrate their technical efficiency. As a response, they “mimic” more successful organizations to reduce ambiguity and survival prospects. “When uncertain organizations copy others’ because others actions are believed to be rational and/or because of a desire to avoid appearing deviant or backward” (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 7). Budros (2001) further adds that this may be unconsciously done by the mimicking organizations. For example, it can be argued that newly AACSB accredited business schools may mimic the structure, content and delivery mediums of the leading/highest ranked business schools because stakeholders have

already accepted them as legitimate. In other words, these structures, processes and practices have already been institutionalized.

Normative forces result in greater homogeneity between organizations in an institutional field because of processes associated with professionalization. Normative forces are the pressures to achieve standards of professionalism where the structures, processes and practices adopted are the ones considered by that professional field as the most current and effective. Normative forces are particularly effective as they are motivated out of respect for social obligations (Greenwood et al., 2008). Professional associations legitimize certain organizational practices motivating individuals to adopt them. Through professional networks, certain practices become endorsed, which further speeds up the adoption process and results in increasing homogeneity. For example, it can be stated that instructional case studies as a pedagogical method to deliver graduate business education has become the one of the main pedagogical approaches endorsed by the professional field to delivery graduate business education. Furthermore, in an academic setting, certain pedagogical approaches have gained greater adoption through academic networks such as academic conferences and journal publications (research).

The outcome of these isomorphic forces is that they result in institutionalized structures, processes and practices between organizations in an institutional field due to the pressure they exert on organizations within an institutional field to conform. Legitimacy is suggested to be the main incentive for adoption to avoid censure or sanctions (Glynn & Abzug, 2002). Turning to the research problem guiding this research study, how can the isomorphic process help to explore the limited adoption of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools? It is suggested that these isomorphic forces are placing pressure on Canadian AACSB accredited business schools to maintain the current institutional practice of face-to-face delivery. Nonetheless, the extent of the influence each of these isomorphic forces has on the adoption of online education has yet to be determined. Furthermore, it is expected that by investigating the research problem from this perspective yet another layer in understanding will be discovered.

2.5.5 Stakeholder influence and the process of institutional change.

Leading up to the 1990s, the institutional perspective shifted more into investigating micro level elements of the organization to explain behaviour. This added another dimension for investigation that recognized that organizational behaviour was not solely as a result of the organization's interaction with its external environment.

As Greenwood et al., (2008), summarize:

But if the promise of Institutional theory was to be realized there was a need to show the underlying motivations of institutional effects (rather than treat them as a default option), to pay greater attention to (and explain) the variability of responses to conflicting institutional pressures, to incorporate more agentic and political dimensions, and to explicitly look at how institutions arise, change and with what consequences (p. 14).

The question now being posed by researchers was “how do organizations acquire manage legitimacy?” (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 17). To answer this question, researchers began to investigate the role of interest and agency in shaping organizational action (DiMaggio, 1988). Many studies have illustrated the ability of these actors (stakeholders), especially those considered to have “power” to steer the direction of institutional fields, including their ability to place pressure for transformation and deinstitutionalization (Ahmadjian & Robinson, 2001; Greenwood et al., 2002; Oliver, 1992). In other words, the influence stakeholders have on changing and maintaining institutional practices (Casile & Davis-Blake, 2002; DiMaggio, 1988; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Scott, 1987).

In addition to researchers growing interest on the influence of stakeholders, there was an increase in interest in explaining the process of institutional change (Casile & Davis-Blake, 2002; Dacin et al., 2002; Greenwood et al., 2002). For example, Hanson (2001) concluded that institutional change is possible within academic institutions. In his study, he asked - are schools smarter in their capacity to solve problems and introduce change initiatives? Pulling from key premises from organizational memory, organizational learning and institutional theory – his response was - yes. “Educational systems do change, perhaps not as dramatically as reform advocates would like but they do change” (pp. 653-654). He further discusses environmental shocks that can bring about institutional change. When environmental shock is strong, the constraining forces that have held the status quo tend to be threatened (destabilized) and institutional change then becomes possible.

In reviewing the history of business school education and reform, Hanson’s (2001) thesis can be demonstrated. Major organizational and program changes occurred as a result of concerns raised by stakeholders that threatened business schools’ perception of being legitimate (environmental shock). The result being, business schools’ structures and program offerings were drastically redesigned – institutional change. Institutional change refers to “a major change leading

to a restructuring of core processes, programs and/or practices” (Hanson, 2001, p. 637). Today, the environmental factors, such as increased competition and concerns over graduate business program relevance may be considered a form of environmental shock counterbalancing the forces constraining institutional change. Where some advocates go as far as stating that not adopting online education could have a negative impact on the business school’s continued prosperity (Hiltz & Turoff, 2005).

Building upon the work of Hanson (2001) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991), how then does institutional change actually occur? Correspondingly, how do institutionalized structures, processes and practices break down or dissolve (deinstitutionalization) and become replaced with new institutionalized structures, processes and structures (transformation). Lounsbury (2002) provides that institutional change takes place when:

The process of institutional transformation involves the deconstruction of an old order and the building up of a new one. As the old order is being dismantled and before a new set of institutional arrangements is in place, however, a great deal of uncertainty exists (p. 255).

Specifically, institutional structures, processes and practices change when the new version (or other option) is considered by the majority of stakeholders in the institutional field as more legitimate (Dacin et al., 2002). The model proposed by Greenwood et al., (2002), depicted in *Figure 2*, illustrates the process of institutional change.

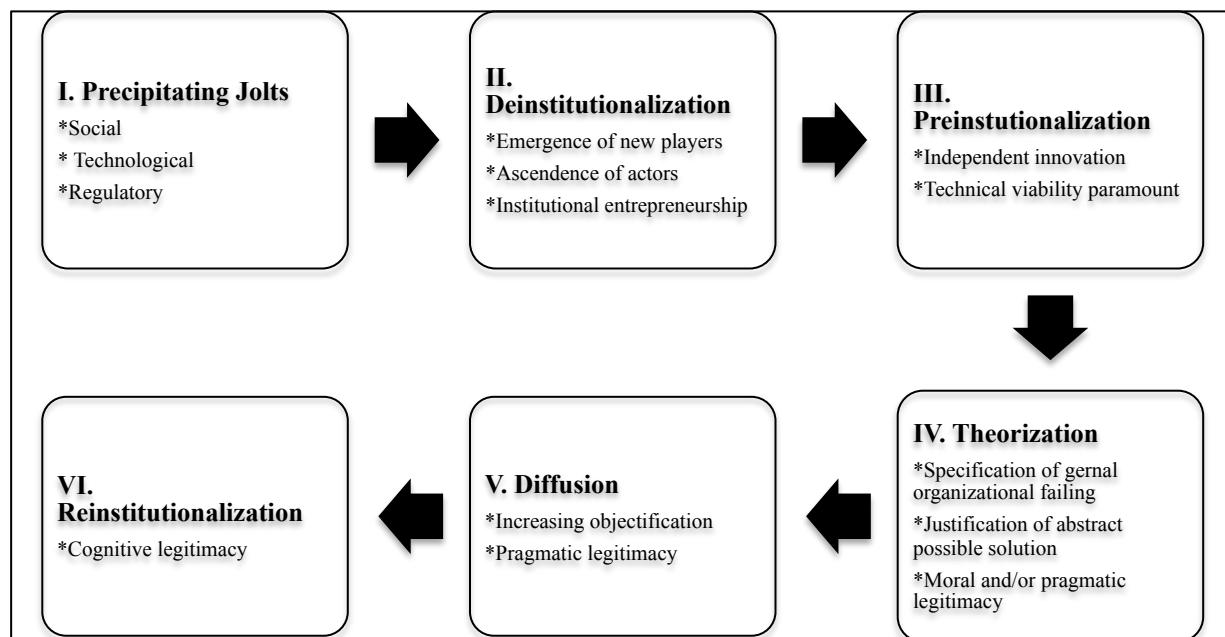


Figure 2 – Stages of Institutional Change (excerpted from Greenwood et al., 2002, p. 60).

The stages of institutional change as depicted in the figure above can be described as follows:

I – Precipitating Jolts - Institutional change is triggered by an exogenous shock or jolt (Meyer, 1982) whereby change happens as a consequence of environmental factors “smacking into stable institutional arrangements and creating indeterminacy” (Clemens & Cook, 1999, p. 447). Hanson (2001) refers similarly to this phenomenon as environmental shocks. These jolts/shocks take on the ability to destabilize established practices. They can occur from social upheaval; technical disruptions or regulatory changes.

II – Deinstitutionalization – In this stage, new entrants (competitors) enter the institutional field bringing with them new ideas and structures, processes and practices, which brings about the “possibility of institutional change” (Greenwood et al., 2002, p. 60).

III – Pre-institutionalization – In this stage, organizations introduce innovations independently in response to perceived problems.

IV – Theorization – According to Greenwood et al. (2002) theorization is “the development and specification of abstract categories and the elaboration of chains of cause and effect. Such theoretical accounts simplify and distill the properties of new practices and explain the outcomes they produce” (p. 60). Put simply, the new structure, process or practice becomes investigated, abstracted and amended until it is in the format that is simplified enabling wider adoption.

V – Diffusion – At this stage, there is growing acceptance by the institutional field that the institutional change precipitated by the “jolt” is more appropriate than current structures, processes and practices in place.

VI – Reinstitutionalization – At this stage, the structure, process and/or practice has become fully institutionalized replacing the old structure, process and/or practice as the most natural and appropriate arrangement (Suchman, 1995). Once institutionalized, they are readily accepted by the institutional field and take on rule like status (rationalized myths).

It is suggested that the institutional change process described in *Figure 2*, is a useful framework to help understand some of the questions raised by the research problem. Namely: At what stage has the adoption of online education by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools occurred? What environmental factors could act as jolts/shocks to destabilize the current

institutionalized practice of face-to-face delivery? Furthermore, what would need to occur for online education to reach the “Reinstitutionalization”? In other words, what are the enabling and constraining forces in the business school environment that could influence institutional change to occur? A deeper investigation through this research study would be needed to gain clarity on the stage of online education in the institutional change process.

2.5.6 Limitations of Institutional theory.

Numerous studies have attempted to apply Institutional theory as the perspective to explain and predict organizational phenomena in terms of the formalized structures, processes and practices that institutions take (Budros, 2001; Casile & Davis-Blake, 2002; Glynn & Anzug, 2002; Greenwood et al., 2002; Hanson, 2001; Howells et al., 2014; Lounsbury, 2002). As Tolbert and Zucker (1996) correctly point out “there is little consensus on the definition of key concepts, measures or methods within this theoretic tradition” or “no central set of standard variables, nor is it associated with a standard research methodology or even a set of method” (p. 175). For this reason, the application of Institutional theory as the lens to frame this research study will focus on the works of Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991) as their writings are the most relevant to the research problem guiding this research study. A key premise provided by Meyer and Rowan (1977) is that the formalized structures that organizations take have symbolic and action generating properties. Kamens (1977) explains this to mean that these socially shared meanings of organizational structures provide information about the organization to both internal and external stakeholders. Consequently, stakeholder perceptions on organizational structure allow researchers to investigate the causes and consequences of structure (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). For this research study this entails stakeholder perspectives on the adoption of the option of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools.

Secondly, another criticism with Institutional theory is its general focus on isomorphic forces (coercive, mimetic and normative) and the result of their influence leading to homogeneity of an institutional field in terms of institutional structures, processes and practices in an institutional field. It almost presupposes that one practice must replace the other. As Dacin et al. (2002) provides “The creation, transformation, and diffusion of institutions requires legitimacy, a condition whereby other alternatives are seen as less appropriate, desirable, or viable” (p. 47). This thinking is an oversimplification as it does not take into account that multiple structures, processes and practices can be institutionalized and co-exist, thereby leading to heterogeneity in the

institutional field. This point of view is not isolated as a number of newer researchers (post 1990s) have grown to accept that institutional fields can be both homogeneous as well as heterogeneous (Casile & Davis-Blake, 2002; Dacin et al., 2002; Greenwood et al., 2008). In the context of the present research study, many of the leading business schools offer both fully classroom based MBA's and a fully online MBA programs. As such, why have Canadian AACSB accredited business schools not adopted the option of online education to the same extent as leading business schools or non-Canadian AACSB accredited business schools? Further investigation is warranted.

In addition, within the review of empirical studies conducted under the lens of Institutional theory, more often than not these studies tended to focus on only one isomorphic force to explain organizational behaviour and action. Interestingly, none were found to explore which isomorphic force has the most influence as an enabling and/or constraining force on institutional change in academic institutions. Therefore, it is contended that in the application of Institutional theory there is a lack of empirical studies that measure the degree to which different isomorphic forces in an institutional field can influence institutional change (Tolbert & Hall, 2009). This research study will attempt to rectify this dilemma in the context of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. Consequently, by investigating the influence of various isomorphic forces, it is anticipated that a deeper understanding of how these forces interact with each other to influence a Canadian AACSB accredited business schools decision to adopt (or not adopt) the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs will provide new insights.

2.6 Purpose of Research Study

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case research study is to explore the reasons why the majority of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are currently not offering the option of completing their graduate business programs either partially or fully through online education. The theoretical lens proposed to frame this research will be Institutional theory. By investigating the research problem through this perspective a deeper understanding into how various enabling and constraining forces as well as stakeholders in the business school environment can influence a Canadian AACSB accredited business school's organizational decision making in terms of whether or not adopt the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs is expected. Furthermore, by reviewing the extent that isomorphic forces (coercive, mimetic and normative) can influence institutional change, further insights are hoped to be gained in terms of institutional change in these academic institutions. To answer the research problem,

data will be collected from participants nearest to the issue itself, the group that designs, delivers, and approves the graduate business programs offered to students, the internal business school stakeholders – senior administration (i.e. Deans, Vice-deans, Program directors, Program committee members, etc.) and business school faculty (full, associate, assistant) from multiple Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. It is anticipated that this particular participant group will be able to provide a deeper insight into the organizational decision making processes behind adoption. The conceptual diagram below (*Figure 3*) shows the main concepts to be explored in this research study and flows from the previous literature review:

(continued on next page)

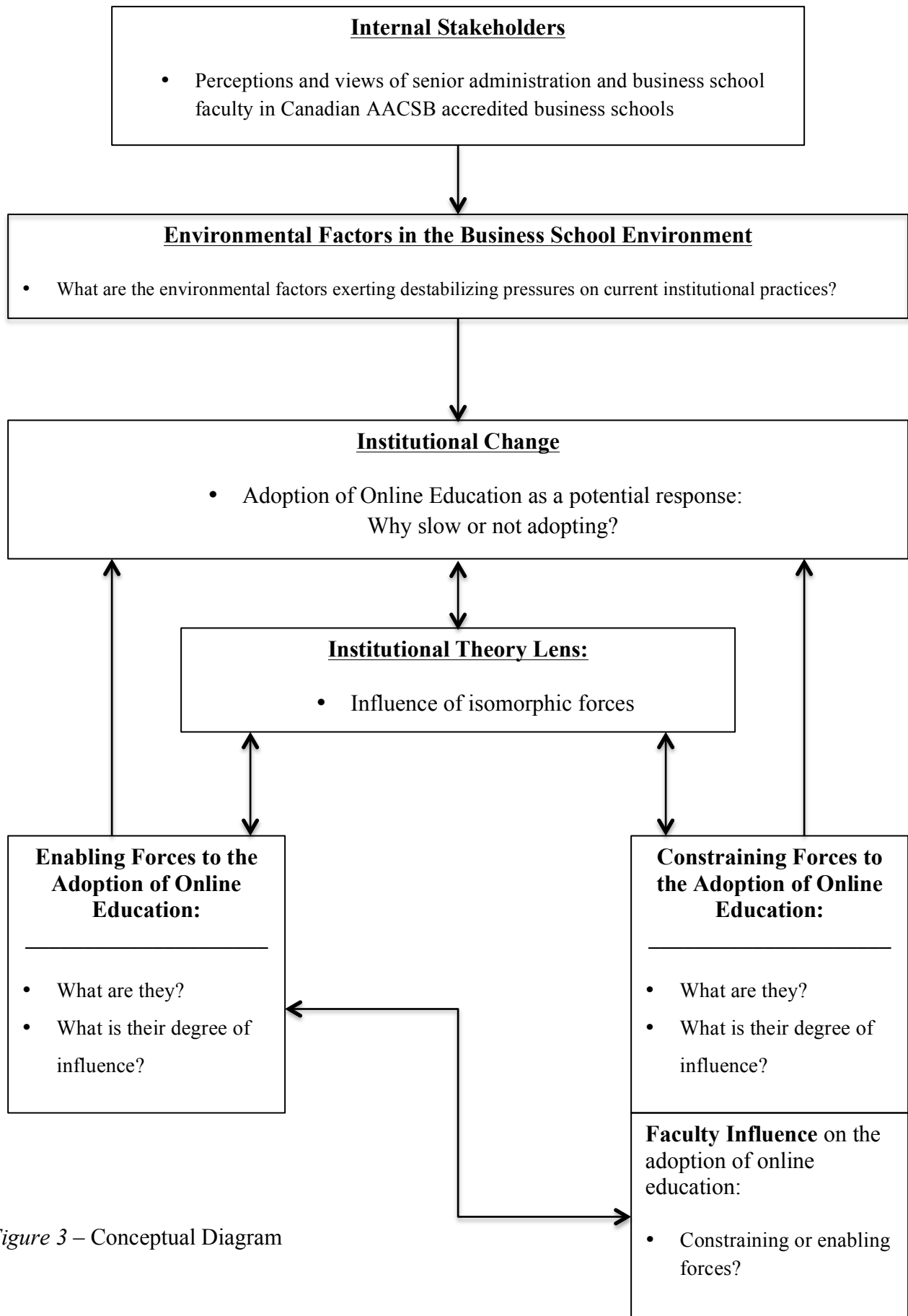


Figure 3 – Conceptual Diagram

Figure 3 provides the conceptual diagram leading into this research study as a result of the review of the literature. It is proposed that the environmental factors (to be identified) are placing destabilizing pressure on current institutional practices in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. One option proposed to respond to the business school environment is the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery (institutional change). To understand the reasons for the limited adoption of online education, this research study will identify and determine the strength of both enabling and constraining forces (to be identified) that can influence these business schools' decision making with respect to whether or not they choose to adopt online education. Furthermore, the research problem will be investigated through the lens of Institutional theory. Specifically, the influence of isomorphic forces on institutional change and what this can tell us in terms of the adoption of online education as an institutional change.

2.7 Research Questions

Based on the gaps identified within the literature review and the stated purpose of this research study, it is proposed that by responding to the following research questions, a more in depth understanding and exploration into the research problem guiding this research study will be feasible. These three research questions are:

- 1) To what degree do the various enabling and constraining forces identified in the current business school environment influence Canadian AACSB accredited business schools' decision of whether or not to adopt the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs?***

The purpose of this question is to identify and determine the influence that various enabling and constraining forces currently present in the business school environment have on Canadian AACSB accredited business schools decision making to adopt or not adopt the option of online education for their graduate business program delivery.

2) *To what extent do faculty play a role in influencing the potential adoption of online education for the delivery of graduate business programs in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools?*

The purpose of this question is to revisit the assumption made in the literature review that business school faculty are resistant to the adoption of online education and the factors that are contributing to this resistance. In addition, this question will explore the extent of faculty resistance, the power yielded by this stakeholder, and factors that could facilitate acceptance amongst business school faculty for online education for graduate business program delivery.

3) *How do the isomorphic forces (coercive, mimetic, and normative) as described by Institutional theory influence institutional change in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools?*

The purpose of this question is to build upon Questions 1 and 2, by applying an Institutional theory lens to look at the influence of isomorphic forces (coercive, mimetic, and normative) on the limited adoption of online education by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools in the context of institutional change.

The next chapter will present the proposed methodology for this research study. In particular, a description of how data will be obtained and analyzed to respond to the three research question will be provided.

Chapter Three – Methodology

3.0 Epistemological Stance

By examining my beliefs about the nature of knowledge as well as the purpose and intent of this research study, I have found that I fall under the research paradigm of social constructivism. Social constructivism, stipulates that knowledge is created by human constructs. It is also heavily influenced by our culture. Our culture determines our politics, ideologies, values, and in turn, it affects the way we understand and form knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Yilmaz, 2008). Due to these multiple realities, Creswell (2007) states “the goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (p. 20).

To explore the reasons for the limited adoption of the option of online education for the delivery of graduate business programs by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools, understanding is needed by those that are closest to the decision making process itself – senior administration and faculty. Since the relationship between the various enabling and constraining forces influencing their decisions are unknown, and the research to date has not provided consistent measures to employ within a quantitative tool, forms of quantitative data collection would not be useful for the purposes of this study “as many issues concerns the quality of the lived experience of individuals, which cannot be reduced to numerical values using statistical analysis” (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, p. 39). Thus, a qualitative approach is proposed to guide the design of this research to best answer the research questions.

In qualitative research, the researcher’s intent is “to make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have of the world” (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011, p. 4). By capturing the internal business school stakeholder perspective (senior administration and faculty) through rich descriptions, broad patterns and finally, through broad understandings, it is expected that qualitative methods will facilitate a greater understanding to respond to the research problem. Qualitative research in this sense will provide “a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).

In order for a researcher to attempt to interpret and depict patterns of these multiple realities, they “position themselves in the research and acknowledge how their own personal, cultural and historical experience influences their interpretations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). My

assumptions and presuppositions that I need to be aware of and acknowledge within this research study are my experiences as an MBA graduate (student perspective) and as an instructor (faculty perspective) at an AACSB accredited business school where in both instances the main medium of delivery was face-to-face in a classroom environment. As such, I naturally may have more familiarity with classroom delivery, as this is where my personal preference lies. Therefore, the qualitative design applied in this research study has kept these considerations in mind.

3.1 Research Design

To best answer the research questions, a qualitative multiple case study research design was applied. According to Creswell (2007), case study research:

Is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case based themes. For example, several programs (a multi-site study) or a single program (a within-site study) may be selected (p. 73).

In this design, the focus is one issue that needs to be explored, such as a particular group, program, project or process (Lichtman, 2011). Business schools involve multiple stakeholders and as this research study is interested in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools' organizational decisions as a collective entity, the most effective means to explore the research problem is to build a case for each Canadian AACSB accredited business school (case) to illustrate their internal processes and rationale for offering or not offering the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs as well as exploring various constraining and enabling forces to its adoption. Furthermore, as this research study intends to explore the landscape for AACSB accredited business schools in Canada, multiple cases will provide the ability to compare and contrast between these business schools in order to add another dimension and explanation to the issue at hand. From this perspective, the multiple case study approach is best suited for the purposes of this research study.

In the multiple case study "the one issue or concern is again selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). The visual depiction of the research design used for this research study is illustrated below in *Figure 4*.

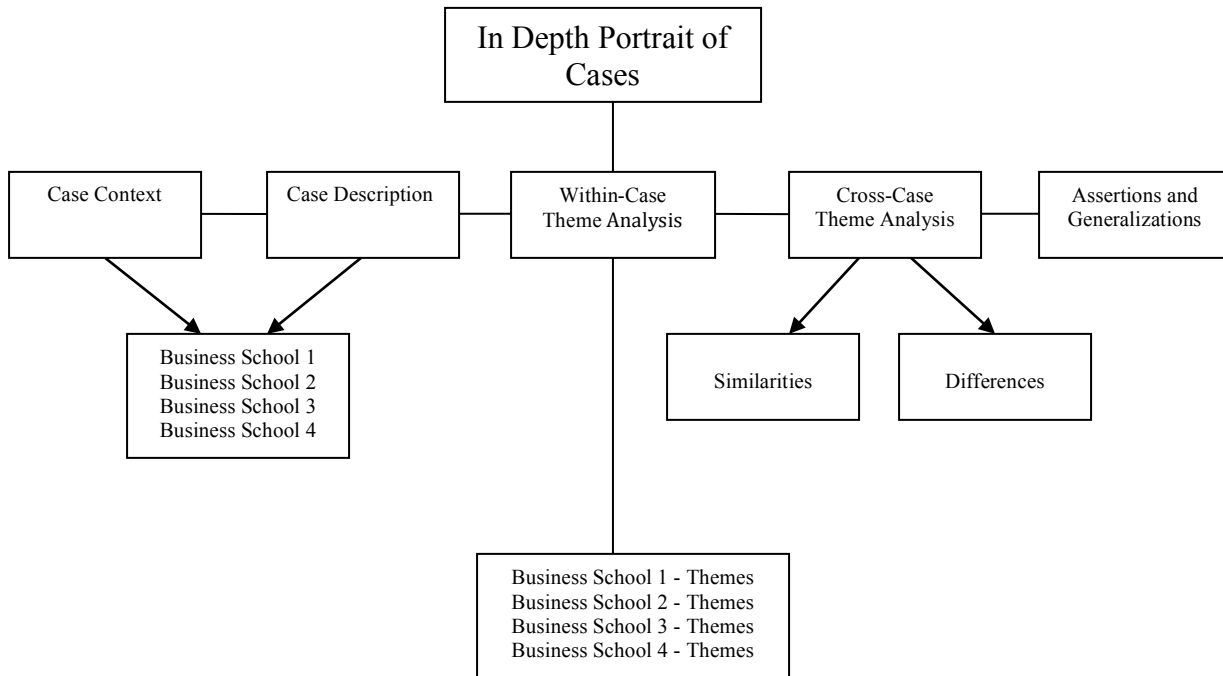


Figure 4: Case Study Research Design (modeled after the diagram proposed by Creswell, 2007, p. 172)

This design includes the following steps divided into two phases. *Phase I:* (1) Collecting data to establish the context and description for each case (collecting background information and data for each business school); and (2) Within-Case Theme Analysis (analyzing the data gathered for each individual business schools to identify the themes for each case). *Phase II:* (3) Cross-Case Theme Analysis (analyzing the data across business school cases to identify common themes); and (4) Assertions and Generalizations (determining findings based on the cross-case analysis). Thus, the cases chosen, data collection methods and analysis need to be framed in such a way to facilitate the steps described above.

3.2 Research Participants

The case context involves the selection and choice of research participants. A challenge often associated with the multiple case study research design is the identification of each case. However, for the purposes of this research study, the identification of case(s) was fairly straightforward, since from the outset, the population to choose from was Canadian AACSB accredited business schools given the research problem guiding this research study. To best answer

the research questions, each case needs to hold fairly homogeneous characteristics to allow for the identification of themes and generalizable findings. Yin (2003) suggests that the multiple case study design use logic of replication in which the inquirer replicates the procedures for each case. To form conclusions, the inquirer needs to select representative cases for inclusion in the qualitative study (Creswell, 2007, p. 74).

In terms of number of cases in a homogenous sampling strategy (sample size), “the researcher recruits a small number that will provide in depth information about the central phenomenon or concept being explored in the study” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 174). Stake (2006) argues, “the benefits of multi-case study will be limited... (if fewer than) four cases are chosen, or more than 10” (p. 22). As part of the recruitment process, 19 of the 21 AACSB accredited business schools were contacted directly by email requesting organizational consent at various intervals during the recruitment process. Two of the 21 business schools were not contacted as they were francophone academic institutions and this posed too great a challenge to contact individual participants and conduct interviews due to my lack of proficiency in French. In addition, one other business school was not contacted, as they did not offer any graduate business programs.

Of the 18 remaining business schools, even after multiple follow up attempts at contact, only four business schools at the end of the recruitment process agreed to participate. I was satisfied with this number as of the four that agreed to participate they were all very open to providing complete access to their senior administration and faculty for data collection. Therefore, four publicly funded Canadian AACSB accredited business schools were included in this research study. Of the four business schools that granted organizational access, two of the four offered at least one of their graduate business programs in either a hybrid or fully online format. This provided the opportunity to compare and contrast two business schools that have adopted the option of online education with two business schools that have yet to adopt the option of online education. In qualitative research many contend that generalizable findings are not possible. However, by limiting the investigation to the population of the 21 AACSB accredited business schools in Canada and a choosing a sample of four cases, it can be positively assumed that the results of this study will provide a thorough review and understanding of the research problem for this particular context, therefore certain assertions will be feasible.

For each case, the individual participants included: senior administration that oversee the graduate business program offerings for their business school (Deans, Vice Deans, and Program

Directors) and full-time (tenure track) business school faculty with experience teaching at the graduate business level. In order to gain access to each case (Canadian AACSB accredited business school), a Request for Organizational Participation (see Appendix B) was sent by email to the Dean of the business school to request participation. A form of incentive as part of the recruitment process was to advise the business schools that they would be provided at the end of the data collection process with an individual Case Profile Report outlining the findings for their business school as well as a Multiple Case Profile Report, which would highlight the results across cases. This proved to be very effective, as many of the business schools' senior administration were interested potentially in adopting some form of online education at their business school and thus, the individual Case Profile Report would provide them with an understanding of the views of their senior administration and business school faculty on the topic.

Once participation was granted, a request was made to the Dean to help identify other senior administrators and faculty to participate. Each potential individual participant was then contacted directly to volunteer as a participant in this research study (Individual Request for Participation Form – see Appendix C). Once accepted, they were provided with a Consent Form (see Appendix D) to be completed prior to their participation taking place. In this sense, a form of purposeful and snowball sampling was used. It is important to clarify that individual participation was confidential and the Dean or other participants for each case were not advised of the other's participation.

3.3 Data Collection

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected, Lincoln and Guba (1985) advise that the methods chosen be dependable, confirmable, credible and transferable. One of the best means to do so is by utilizing multiple sources in order for triangulation to be possible (Creswell, 2007). For this research study, the following data collection sources were employed:

3.3.1 Published documentation.

To establish the background for each case, a review of publicly available documents, especially each business school's website was conducted to provide an overview of the business school's graduate business programs. This review helped to provide an initial profile of the offerings of the business school, the demographic profile of the students, the business school's mission and stated outcomes. It also helped to facilitate preparation for attending the business

school itself and meeting with individual participants. Other secondary documentation referred to, included but was not limited to: business school rankings, the AACSB website (www.aacsb.edu), and any other published articles such as the 2012 mba.com Prospective Student Survey (GMAC, 2012) or the AACSB (2011) Business School Trends.

3.3.2 Participant profile.

Individual participants were asked to fill out a Participant Profile (see Appendix E) in order for this research study to identify similarities and differences between the individual participants and across cases. Items that were important to include within the Participant Profile were factors noted within the literature review to contribute to faculty resistance to online education (see Chapter 2 – section 2.33), such as: experience and acceptance with online education, career stage, and participant perception of the quality and effectiveness of online education.

3.3.3 Interviews.

The main data collection source used was interviews as they provide “... in depth information pertaining to participants’ experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic” (Turner, 2010, p. 7). In particular, the type of interview used in this study was the semi-structured open-ended interview format, whereby each participant was asked the same set of questions and the questions worded to allow for open-ended responses. The main advantage to this type of interview is it allows the interviewee to add as much detail as they like and the interviewer to ask probing and follow-up questions. A disadvantage is that since it may result in a lot of detailed responses, the coding process may be challenging to identify themes and codes (Turner, 2010). However, the benefit outweighs the negative since much rich data would be collected, and researcher bias could be reduced when many participants take part (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003).

The individual participants were senior administration and faculty from each business school. It was also very important to interview the Deans from each business school, as they are the ones involved in key decisions and the direction of the business school (establishing and implementing the business schools mission and organizational strategy). Their interviews will not only provide insight into why their business school is currently not adopting or are adopting online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs, but also a deeper understanding of the factors influencing their organizational decision making process. Every attempt was made to hold the interviews face-to-face, but where not feasible, Skype interviews were conducted. Both

options were audio recorded for ease of transcription. The rationale for this is that the sample participants are homogeneous and very specific.

3.4 Quality assurance

The Interview Guide (see Appendix F) for the semi-structured open-ended interviews with participants flowed from the research questions. The development of the individual questions, were drafted based on the literature review with special attention given to the gaps identified in the literature to ensure that sufficient data from the participants was gathered to fully explore the limited adoption of the option of online education for the delivery of graduate business programs by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. Since, the intention was to go beyond confirming current factors/forces identified within the scholarly literature and to identify potential facilitators towards the adoption of online education, the choice of semi-structured open-ended questions was determined the best strategy for proceeding.

To validate the Interview Guide and Participant Profile, pilot interviews were conducted with two individual participants from Business School 1 to determine weaknesses within the interview design (Kvale, 2007) and to “refine the interview questions and procedures” (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). Based on their feedback, the Interview Guide and Participant Profile were refined and then finalized. Due to the fact that the pilot interviews resulted in only minor changes (such as re-ordering of questions), the decision was made that no further pilot interviews were required. In addition, due to the value of the data collected, the two pilot interviews were included in the data collection and analysis for Business School 1.

Only the two participants in the pilot interviews were provided with the Interview Guide in advance of the interviews. The purpose of not sharing the Interview Guide beforehand was to minimize the risk of the possibility of the Interview Guide being shared with non-participants, which could have jeopardized the integrity of this study. In addition, this research study endeavoured to gain the most spontaneous and honest responses from the participants, which was felt could only be achieved if they were not provided with the interview questions in advance.

To validate the data collected during the interviews, the participants were each sent individually by email a copy of their typed transcript for review and feedback prior to the transcript being finalized and used as part of the data analysis process. This provided each participant with the opportunity to add any new information they felt they omitted during the interview or to request for

certain words or sections to be removed that they felt may either identify them or that they felt uncomfortable forming part of this research study.

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation in qualitative research involves the process of coding the data into themes, then categories to form conclusions (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). By compiling and coding the data collected and grouping them into consistent phrases, expressions and ideas that are common amongst the participants, themes begin to emerge (Kvale, 2007). The constant comparative analysis technique to analyze the data was selected as it allowed for repeated and systematic searching of the data (Hammersly, 1981). This technique provides for the data to be “constantly revisited after initial coding, until it is clear that no new themes are emerging. It can be used in a study with a single method of data collection, or in situations where multiple data collection methods have been used” (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, p. 39). The main data collection method utilized for this research study were interviews with analysis conducted over two phases, first for each case (within-case theme analysis) and then across cases (cross-case analysis). The purpose of this two phase approach was to first identify patterns and themes within each case and then across cases to identify similarities and differences.

3.5.1 Two phase approach.

The two phase approach in action, resulted in the following steps:

3.5.1.1 Phase I:

During Phase I, an Individual Case Profile Report for each business school (case) was developed. The relevant findings from the Individual Case Profile Reports are provided in Chapters Four to Seven – Individual Case Findings. To develop the individual Case Profile Reports the following analysis steps were applied and adapted from those proposed by Hewitt-Taylor (2001), as follows:

- The Case context and description were based on a review of the business school’s published documentation as well as the Participant Profiles received from the participants (as described above).

- To identify the findings for each case a within case theme analysis was conducted using the transcripts from the interviews with participants, applying the following procedures:
 - To facilitate the coding process, the WORD transcripts from the interviews for the case were inputted into NVivo 10 for Mac.
 - Then the first few interview transcripts were reviewed to begin to formulate and identify possible themes. Reading through each section/paragraph to gain a common understanding completed this step. Close attention was given to the themes that were identified in the literature review (for example, accreditation, business school rankings, and disadvantages and advantages to online education) first as they were the easiest to discover, then additional themes were identified as a result of re-reading through each transcript.
 - Subsequently, the remainder of the transcripts were coded for that particular case.
 - This process was conducted multiple times to ensure no new possible themes were missed as this research is being conducted by a sole researcher as opposed to a group of researchers.
 - The themes were then grouped based on similarities and relevance to form categories, such as advantages or barriers for adoption.
- The results for each Canadian AACSB accredited business school were summarized in an Individual Case Profile Report and sent to each participant from that business school for feedback to validate that the findings were an accurate reflection of their opinions and reflections. This approach is known as member checking (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).
- Each participant was also provided with the opportunity to participate in a focus group to further validate the findings and to add value. As the focus groups were not feasible due to lack of volunteers to participate, additional individual follow-up interviews were conducted. It is noted that the follow-up interviews did not provide any value added, other than re-confirming the data already previously collected during the interviews.
- No formal Inter-coder agreement was implemented. However, both my doctoral research supervisor and I did review and analyze the transcripts independently. Subsequently, we met to discuss the possible themes that emerged for each case. In general, the themes that emerged from both our independent reviews were the same, aside from some theme title differences.
- Once all the feedback was received from individual participants, the Individual Case Profile Reports were finalized and a copy was sent to the business school for their own internal use.

This process was repeated for each of the four Canadian AACSB business schools that participated in this research study.

3.5.1.2 Phase II:

During Phase II, a cross-case theme analysis was performed to form the findings to respond to the research questions guiding this research study. The similarities and differences between the cases were further critically examined to generate the discussion sections of this research study. These findings are provided in Chapters Eight to Ten.

To conduct the cross-case theme analysis, a similar process for data analysis was performed as with the within case theme analysis described above in Phase I, as follows:

- The WORD transcripts for all participants across business schools (cases) were inputted into NVivo 10 for Mac.
- All transcripts were first reviewed and sections/paragraphs across cases were grouped into the themes identified as part of Phase I of the data analysis process, as they were the easiest to identify. Subsequently, all transcripts were reviewed once more to identify any additional themes that may have emerged across cases or individually for each case.
- This process was conducted multiple times to ensure no new possible themes were missed as this research is being conducted by a sole researcher as opposed to a group of researchers.
- No formal or informal Inter-coder agreement was established for Phase II.
- The themes were then grouped based on similarities and relevance to form categories, such as enabling or constraining forces.
- To generate the findings for this research study, close attention was given to similarities and differences between the cases.

Following the final submission of this research study, the main findings across cases will be summarized into a Multiple Case Profile Report and sent to the four participating Canadian AACSB accredited business schools for their information and use. The final Multiple Case Profile report will utilize pseudonyms and non-identifying articles to ensure anonymity of the business schools that participated in this research study.

3.6 Participant Characteristics

A total of four Canadian publicly funded AACSB accredited business schools participated in this research study. Please note, due to ethical restrictions and concerns with anonymity, non-identifying characteristics will be utilized throughout this research study and each business school annotated as Business School 1, 2, 3 and 4. Briefly:

3.6.1 Business school 1.

In December 2013, Business school 1 was invited to participate in this research study. The Dean granted organizational access on December 5, 2013. Shortly thereafter, individual members of senior administration and faculty were contacted directly by email with an invitation to participate. The email included the research study's objectives as well as a description of the participant's involvement. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed with the participants offered the option to review their transcript to ensure their perspectives were accurately noted and to add any additional feedback and/or comments.

Between January to April 2014 a total of seven semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted with senior administration and faculty at Business School 1. All interviews were conducted on site and in person with the participants consent to audio-record the interviews. Following participants review of the draft of Business school 1's Case Profile Report all participants were offered to participate in a focus group. None of the participants accepted to participate, however all provided feedback on the report and two follow-up interviews were conducted in the place of the focus group.

Business school 1 currently offers one hybrid graduate business program, whereby 1/3 of the courses offered are available online. More hybrid graduate business programs are expected in the future.

3.6.2 Business school 2.

In December 2013, Business School 2 was invited to participate in this research study. The Dean granted organizational access on December 17, 2013. Subsequently, individual members from senior administration and faculty were contacted directly by email with an invitation to participate. The email included the research study's objectives as well as a description of what the participant's involvement would entail. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed

with the participants offered the option to review their transcript to ensure their perspectives were accurately noted as well as to add any additional feedback and/or comments.

Between February to October 2014 a total of seven semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted with senior administration and faculty at Business School 2. All interviews were conducted on site and in person with the participants consent to audio-record the interviews. Following participants review of the draft of Business school 2's Case Profile Report all participants were offered to participate in a focus group. None of the participants accepted to participate, however all provided feedback on the report and two follow-up interviews were conducted in the place of the focus group.

Business school 2 currently does not currently offer the option at the graduate business level of any courses/programs fully or partially online (hybrid).

3.6.3 Business school 3.

In July 2014, Business School 3 was invited to participate in this research study. The Acting Associate Dean, granted organizational access on July 31, 2014. Subsequently, individual members from senior administration and faculty were contacted directly by email with an invitation to participate. The email included the research study's objectives as well as a description of the participant's involvement. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed with the participants offered the option to review their transcript to ensure their perspectives were accurately noted as well as to add any additional feedback and/or comments.

Between August and October 2014 a total of seven semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted with senior administration and faculty at Business School 3. Five interviews were conducted on site and in person and two via Skype with the participants consent to having the interviews audio-recorded. Following participants review of the draft of Business school 3's Case Profile report all participants were offered to participate in a focus group. None of the participants accepted to participate, however all provided feedback on the report and two follow-up interviews were conducted in the place of the focus group.

Business School 3 currently does not offer the option at the graduate level of courses fully or partially online (hybrid). However, they do offer a fully online program for their joint Masters programs in co-operation with another Department at the University.

3.6.4 Business school 4.

In November 2014, Business School 4 was invited to participate in this research study. The Dean granted organizational access on November 19, 2014. Subsequently, individual members of senior administration and faculty were contacted directly by email with an invitation to participate. The email included the research study's objectives as well as a description of the participant's involvement. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed with the participants offered the option to review their transcript to ensure their perspectives were accurately noted as well as to add any additional feedback and/or comments.

Between January and February 2015 a total of eight semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted with senior administration and faculty at Business school 4. Four interviews were conducted on site and in person and four via Skype with the participants consenting to having the interviews audio-recorded. Following participants review of the draft Business school 4 Case Profile Report all participants were offered to participate in a focus group. None of the participants accepted to participate, however all provided feedback on the report and two follow-up interviews were conducted in the place of the focus group.

Business school 4 currently does not currently offer the option at the graduate business level of any courses/programs fully or partially online (hybrid).

3.7 Total Participants

In total, 29 interviews were conducted with senior administration and faculty with various tenures across four publicly funded AACSB accredited business schools in Canada. At least two participants from each business school currently held or has held in the past a senior administrative position at their business school. Exact number of senior administration participants was not feasible, as not all participants identified themselves as such on their Participant Profiles. In hindsight, this category should have been included in the Participant Profile to provide further ability to identify similarities and differences in perspectives between faculty and senior administration.

The average interview length per interview was 50 minutes giving an abundance of data collected (over 350 legal sized pages of transcription notes) over a one-year period. Each participant was also able to provide feedback on two occasions, once for his or her interview

transcript and once for their business school's draft Case Profile Report. Based on the feedback received each Case Profile Report was finalized and then considered complete.

It is important to note, that even though focus groups were proposed as part of the data collection plan, no focus groups were conducted at any of the four business schools. An effort was made on two occasions for participants to take part in focus groups in Business schools 1 and 2, however, none of the participants availed themselves of this option. During the course of the data collection process, it was expressed by many of the participants that they felt very strongly that they wished to maintain their anonymity so that they could freely express their opinions in the interviews. This wish may lend explanation for the failure to secure focus groups by the participants, as anonymity and confidentiality would not be feasible in a focus group setting. Since, focus groups were not feasible with Business School 1 and 2, in order to maintain a balance of perspectives, the decision was made not to pursue this option with Business school 3 or 4.

However, to ensure that data collection was rigorous and complete aside from member checking, follow-up individual interviews were conducted with a small sample of participants (1-2 participants) at each business school to replace the focus group. It is noted, that the follow-up interviews did not add any new insights to the data already collected during the original participant interviews. Rather, these follow-up interviews mainly confirmed the findings presented in their business school's individual Case Profile Reports. As such, this lent itself to the strong belief and confidence that sufficient data had been collected to respond to the research questions.

The following four chapters present the individual case findings for each business school. Context for each business school will first be provided as an introduction to the business school; followed by a detailed description of the findings for the business school; and an overall summary of the main findings for the business school concluding the chapter.

Chapter Four – Individual Case Findings for Business School 1

4.0 Introduction

The findings for Business school 1 of this qualitative research study are presented in this chapter. This case will begin with the context for Business school 1, followed by an in depth description of the findings for this business school divided by the following six categories:

- External Environmental Factors⁸ in the Business School Environment
- Response to Business School Environment by Business School 1
- Influence of Various External Stakeholders on Business School 1
- Influence of Various Internal Environmental Factors on Business School 1
- Participant Perspectives of Online Education in Business School 1
- Faculty Acceptance of Online Education in Business School 1

4.1 Case Context

Business school 1 is a large Canadian multiple accredited business school offering undergraduate and graduate business programs. Enrollment at the undergraduate level ranges approximately 4,000 students (full-time or part-time) and 300 students at the graduate level (full-time or part-time). At the graduate level, Business School 1 offers an MBA with options; an EMBA; a research based Master's program and two interdisciplinary Master's programs as well as various professional certificates. According to the participants, the main medium of program delivery is face-to-face in a classroom environment. In addition to lectures, the most cited pedagogical methods utilized are instructional case studies and experiential learning exercises. In terms of online education, Business school 1 currently does offer one of its main Master's programs in a hybrid format (1/3 online) with at least one more Master's program expected to follow suit in the near future. The hybrid or fully online education option are currently not being considered for Business school 1's research based Master's programs at this time.

⁸ Environmental factors in this context are any phenomena, processes, or organization (or group of organizations) in the business school environment that may influence or place pressure on Canadian AACSB accredited business schools decision making in terms of their graduate business programs offerings. External environmental factors refer to factors outside of the AACSB accredited business school and internal environmental factors refer to factors within the AACSB accredited business school.

According to the Participant Profiles collected, the seven individual participants representing Business school 1 hold the following characteristics:

- *Gender*: Five males and two females participated.
- *Stage of career*: Four at the Assistant level; one at the Associate level; and two at the Full level (four of the participants have held a senior administrative role in the last year).
- *Tenure*: One with 1-5 years; three with 6-15 years; and three with 16+ years of tenure.
- All the participants work on a computer on a daily basis.
- *Computer proficiency*: One rated at average; four rated at above average; and two rated their computer proficiency as excellent.
- *Level of acceptance of technology to deliver course content*: One rated it average; two rated it above average; and four rated their level of acceptance of leveraging technology to deliver course content as excellent.
- *Prior experience in teaching online*: Three with experience and four without experience in teaching online.
- *Option of teaching online*: Six participants answered they would like the option to teach online and one responded they would not like the option.

4.2 External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment

All participants were asked to describe the current business school environment. The responses focused on the various external environmental factors placing pressure on business schools. The top four cited external environmental factors in the business school environment were:

(continued on next page)

Table 1

External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment

Environmental factor	Number of participants cited
Balancing stakeholder demand and expectations	7 out of 7
Concerns over graduate business program relevance	6 out of 7
Increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market	6 out of 7
Decreased provincial funding	3 out of 7

4.2.1 Balancing stakeholder demand and expectations.

All seven participants commented on the extent and influence of balancing various stakeholder needs and expectations in order to continue to compete in the current business school environment. The majority of the participants felt that if business schools do not offer graduate business programs that stakeholders believe are attractive and relevant, enrollment decreases as well as donations, which has a negative financial impact on the business school. In addition, some participants mentioned the challenge of maintaining legitimacy, which was defined as the perceptions by stakeholders that the graduate business programs offered were of high quality and effective in preparing students to be future leaders and managers.

4.2.2 Concerns over graduate business program relevance.

Six out of seven participants raised concerns in ensuring that their graduate business programs content and delivery were relevant given the changing nature of business and correspondingly, the changing nature of the role of today's manager. One participant reinforces this statement when he stated:

So, lots of data, faster pace, high diversity and global connections. (Because of this environment) we need to ask ourselves the question, should we be managing the same way we have been managing in the last 150 years? So I think there is really the opportunity for graduate schools of management to carve out something that says, well here's what's new and here's what the new manager looks like.

In addition, each participant was asked to define the main purpose of graduate business education. Ultimately, the main responses referred to the graduate business program's ability to develop the competencies needed in their students to effectively manage and lead well performing organizations. Secondly, the responses varied by the program's focus, as follows:

- Professionally based programs (e.g. MBA): Leadership development, strategic thinking, change management, strong foundation in management disciplines, and preparing future managers and leaders.
- Research based programs (e.g. PhD): Develop a specialization in a management discipline, analytical and critical thinking, develop research methodology skills and develop new knowledge in management.

Lastly, participants mentioned the challenge of deciding whether business schools and their graduate business program offerings should be professionally based or academic based. In other words, whether program curriculum should focus more on theory or practice.

4.2.3 Increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market.

Six out of seven participants touched on the increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market. This competitiveness was attributed to two main factors:

- The increase in the number of business schools outside of North America offering high quality graduate business programs, especially from emerging countries like India and China. For example:

There are a lot of different business schools across the country. And they are all trying to offer programs that will attract the top students. And they have been offering different programs and different modes of delivery to try to attract different populations as well, be they MBAs or undergrads. Primarily MBAs. They have really looked at different options: part-time, evening, etc. I even know of some that are morning programs, now. Some that are doing satellite programs.

- The number of alternative options available to prospective students to attain management development and training apart from traditional bricks and mortar type of academic institutions. These options include but are not limited to: non-educational institutions, in-house

corporate management training programs, online universities (such as Athabasca University), and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs). For instance:

For now they are given by Harvard University and MIT for free. But eventually they won't be free. And because these universities are well recognized and offer top professors, it's competition we can see two, three years from now. Students will say, well why would I take my course from XX when I can take it at Harvard? This challenge is coming. Maybe not in two years or five years from now. But it is coming. It's just a question of time.

4.2.4 Decreased provincial funding.

Three out of seven participants brought forward decreased provincial funding as an issue facing most publicly funded academic institutions today. One of the impacts of decreased funding is the number of faculty members that could be hired and their respective workloads. The perception amongst the participants was that the more funding was decreased provincially, the greater the burden on workloads that would be placed on faculty members and staff. For example, larger class sizes or greater pressure for faculty to bring in grants.

The government also imposes a tuition cap (i.e. the percentage increase in tuition that could be imposed per year). Therefore, alternate forms of funding from private donations are needed for the continued survival of these business schools. However, this is not a fixed source of income. An option to address this funding issue is to opt out of provincial funding and privatize, however the participants felt that this is unlikely to occur at Business school 1 for its undergraduate or graduate business programs. Finally, the participants felt that business schools are seeking mechanisms to cut costs and streamline operations more efficiently as a response to decreased provincial funding.

4.3 Response to Business School Environment by Business School 1

Participants from Business school 1 were asked how their business school has responded to the current business school environment. No participants from Business school 1 stated that their business school has not responded to the environmental factors in the business school environment (i.e. maintained status quo). The top three responses by Business School 1 to the business school environment were:

Table 2

Response to Business School Environment – Mechanisms for Differentiation

Response	Number of participants cited
Expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings	7 out of 7
Multiple accreditations	7 out of 7
Establishing centers of expertise	6 out of 7

The main strategy applied by Business school 1 to respond to the current business school environment has been to apply a differentiation strategy by implementing various initiatives in relation to their graduate business program offerings to increase enrollment.

4.3.1 Expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings.

To respond to the various needs and expectations of different student types (traditional students and students working with family obligations – non-traditional student) Business school 1 has launched various program options. Aside from offering their graduate business programs in English and French as well as full-time and part-time, they offer international exchanges and consulting project options. In addition, Business school 1 has been employing and leveraging technology (integrating more experiential learning components within their graduate business programs) to provide a more relevant and effective learning environment for their students by really investing and focusing on student engagement and the student experience. As such, they are attempting to differentiate based on the structure and architecture of their programs as opposed to content:

You know the core content of an MBA program professionally is all the same. To be honest, we look at all of them and we review them and they all pretty much have the same stuff. So content is all the same, architecture varies. So we are looking at architecture and pedagogy. In terms of figuring out, what should we do that uniquely fits with the content we deliver here.

Two main graduate business program initiatives have been launched at Business school 1, as follows:

4.3.1.1 Program expansion.

Aside from its MBA program, Business school 1 has launched a number of different graduate business programs focusing on a particular industry as well as a research based graduate business program. In addition, it is also anticipated that Business school 1 will be launching a PhD program in the near future. These graduate business programs serve to attract different students markets.

4.3.1.2 Hybrid delivery model.

Due to decreased applications to one of Business school 1's main graduate business programs, a decision was made to offer this program in the hybrid format, following consultations held with current and former students. The main feedback received was that students wanted to finish the program faster, decrease the amount of time required to be on campus, have greater flexibility in terms of time management and continue to interact with other students and the faculty member. The program was re-launched in 2013-2014. To date, about 90% of the program is still fully classroom-based but the objective is to move to 1/3 online content in the next one to two years. Other professionally based graduate business programs are expected to follow suit in the near future. As such, the hybrid model was the best fit to meet the needs of Business school 1's students, as confirmed by one participant:

I think it would be important that the student have a face-to-face relationship with the prof during the program. And it's why we XX hybrid. Losing that would be losing something very important. In our program, one of the main skills is to be able to work with others, team management, team skills, interpersonal relationship skills. So if there is no relationship and no teamwork, how will you be able to develop that skill?

4.3.2 Multiple accreditations.

All participants discussed accreditation in terms of its significance for Business school 1. Over and over, all participants cited attaining multiple different accreditations (including AACSB accreditation) as the main means by which Business school 1 differentiates itself in the business school market from its competitors. The two main reasons provided by the participants for the value placed on multiple accreditations were:

4.3.2.1 Increased competition.

Participants felt that if they were not accredited it could lead to a disadvantage due to the number of business schools in Canada who are already at least accredited by the AACSB. In conjunction, it is believed that accreditation helps to recruit a higher quality of faculty and student to their business school.

4.3.2.2 Increased international presence and visibility.

Participants viewed accreditation as very valuable due to its perceived ability to elevate the reputation of the business school and increase its international presence as accreditations are globally recognized (especially AACSB – the largest accrediting body for business schools in the world). Due to the international presence and visibility that accreditation brings, the participants felt that their business school is now in a better position to attract international students (broadening their student base) and increasing their potential for international partnerships. For example:

There is a lot of international opportunities because we are accredited. A lot of students from other countries are looking for management education. So, for the school (accreditation) is one of the main ways to represent on the international (stage) and to be able to attract students but also to reach students outside of the country.

4.3.3 Establishing centers of expertise.

Business school 1's graduate business programs are built upon three Centers of expertise. Multiple participants considered these Centers of expertise as the cornerstone of the business school and a mechanism to differentiate the business school and its graduate business programs by emphasizing the prestige of their faculty and the uniqueness of their programs. These Centers of expertise, have also acted as a mechanism to build partnerships in different industries and provide opportunities for their students within these industries. For example, Business school 1's MBA program provides a consulting project option with different organizations to gain real world experience.

4.4 Influence of Various External Stakeholders on Business School 1

All participants were asked the extent to which various external environmental stakeholders (e.g., AACSB accreditation, business schools rankings, leading business schools, and

employers and students) influenced Business school 1's decision making in terms of overall graduate business program offerings, which includes content, structure and delivery (the adoption of online education).

Table 3

Degree of Influence of Various External Stakeholders

External stakeholder	Degree of influence on:	
	Overall program offerings	Online education
AACSB accreditation	Strong	Low
Business school rankings	Low	Low
Leading business schools	Medium	Low
Employers and students	Strong	Medium

Degree of influence on Business school 1's organizational decision making: strong, medium, low

4.4.1 AACSB accreditation.

All participants cited AACSB accreditation as very significant for Business school 1. Since AACSB accreditation is received from an external organization, and therefore viewed as unbiased, it increases visibility, and promotes a reputation of excellence. Hence, per the participants, AACSB accreditation facilitates the attraction of the best students and faculty to their business school. In addition, the participants viewed AACSB accreditation as a measure of quality that increases the legitimacy and reputation of their business school. Therefore, it is vital to their continued success. For example:

It is because if you're not accredited, if you're not ranked, you're not as visible and it becomes a lot more difficult for you to attract excellent candidates from wherever they may be. If you want to excel, if you want to bring in excellent professors, if you want to bring in excellent students it will help create the reputation of the school. So you need to have a visibility, rigour associated with accreditations and ideally become ranked as a school.

AACSB accreditation reinforces a process of continuous improvement and seeks business schools to look at achieving their learning goals and objectives. This is heightened by the need to

meet certain standards (Assurance of Learning) to maintain AACSB accreditation. However, the majority of the participants cited AACSB accreditation as hard to maintain due its cumbersome re-accreditation process and standards. For example, the AACSB accreditation standards impact overall program offerings and hiring practices, as it requires a high percentage of instructors to be full-time faculty with a PhD.

In order to receive AACSB accreditation and maintain it, the participants felt that a considerable amount of work and close scrutiny of Business school 1's processes and learning goals and objectives is required. Its benefits include: increasing the quality of programs, consistent quality across courses, and since it is an international accreditation it helps to attract international students to Business school 1's graduate business programs. In essence, participants viewed the maintenance of AACSB accreditation as a continuous process of improvement. In terms of the adoption of online education, AACSB accreditation focuses on process (evaluation of the achievement of learning goals/outcomes) as opposed to specific delivery mediums. Such as:

Accreditations are generally worried about the process they are not really worried about the exact program portfolio you have...But what they try to see is: What is your strategy? How is your program portfolio aligned with your strategy? How do you make sure that there is continuous improvement at every level? How do you make sure whatever your learning outcomes are for your programs that you can demonstrate that the students coming out of your programs have met them?

Therefore, the participants felt that the AACSB had a strong influence on overall graduate business program offerings, but low influence in terms of the adoption of online education on Business school 1's decision making due to the current AACSB standards in place for maintaining membership.

4.4.2 Business school rankings.

In conjunction with AACSB accreditation, all participants discussed the influence of business school rankings on their business school. Business school 1 has not been very successful in reaching a high ranking, which was brought forward for many reasons, such as bias and political reasons. In other words, the majority of participants viewed business school rankings as highly subjective with the caveat that they would like to be ranked higher. Therefore, the influence of this external stakeholder on Business school's decision making in terms of their overall graduate program offerings as well as the adoption of online education was deemed to be low.

4.4.3 Leading business schools.

All seven participants were asked and discussed the influence and impact the major and most prestigious business schools (for example, Harvard and Columbia business schools) have on Business school 1 in terms of their graduate business program offerings and their decision of whether or not to adopt online education for graduate program delivery. Surprisingly, the program offerings and initiatives launched by the leading business schools have little direct impact on overall program offerings made by Business school 1. Rather, these business schools formed part of Business school 1's benchmarking and program review process. The opportunity resides in adopting best practices from these business schools. For example, as one participant provided if Business school 1 were to pursue online education, they would naturally look at the most successful online programs:

At the same time we are looking at any innovation we can find from competitors to see how the field is evolving in terms of its curriculum, its delivery. We try to keep abreast of new technologies and so on and so forth.

Correspondingly, the challenge is trying to implement some of these best practices despite limited resources. The participants viewed the most prestigious schools as the trendsetters in the field, but recognize that they are not in the same category as these schools and do not necessarily have the same resources (financial, human) to launch the same graduate business program offerings and options. As one participant summed up:

Personally, I read a lot about the programs that other people are offering. We are driven by our own strengths and limitations. Take a look at who do I have on board, what are their strengths and how can I maximize those strengths. If I had different people, I would do different things. But I have to work within the envelope and limitations I have.

Instead, Business school 1 really focuses on competing directly with the business schools in the same category and geographical area they are in. For example:

You have to recognize that each school makes decisions based upon their unique environment. ... So that's my view, it has to fit. What you are trying to accomplish as a school for your own unique market. If it makes sense do it; if it doesn't, it doesn't.

The actions of the leading business schools, the participants reflect could impact or influence the perceptions of stakeholders on the most appropriate and legitimate way graduate business education should be delivered.

As one participant stated, leading business schools are the trendsetters:

They certainly are kind of trendsetters. In general the public looks to them as well. So I think we naturally tend to look at them and see what they are doing. The accreditation bodies are American based, well at least one of them is, that we have, which is the AACSB. Certainly their standards tend to come from those schools. Yes. So from that perspective we definitely look and are affected by those top notch, or top ranked schools.

Therefore, since leading business schools are used by Business school 1 for benchmarking purposes they do have a medium influence on their overall graduate business program offerings, but given limited resources their influence on the adoption of online education is viewed as low.

4.4.4 Employers and students.

The main external stakeholders cited by participants were prospective and current students, and employers and alumni. Business school 1 has an Advisory Board composed of business leaders from the private and public sectors. The mandate of the Advisory Board is to advise Business school 1 with regard to its strategic choices and to provide information, which will permit the evaluation of the relevance, the quality and effectiveness of its current and new programs. Amongst the participants there was unanimous belief that there would be interest by students in more online education due to the flexibility that medium of delivery provides. However, the hybrid approach was found to be much more appealing than full online delivery due to the in class interaction and the value it represents. The participants felt that the barriers and negative perceptions held by employers were breaking down towards online education due to the accelerated pace and acceptance of technology in the workplace. Furthermore, the majority of participants believed that employers are more concerned that graduates possess the competencies needed to be effective managers, rather than medium of delivery applied. For example:

In what I read there is still a widespread scepticism I think, among the employment community about the quality and effectiveness of online education process. But I think that that scepticism is breaking down. I mean online education is especially at the graduate business level has been around for close to 20 years. As early as 1995, I believe in Canada, probably earlier elsewhere, and I think there are more and more graduates of online programs who are now working their way into middle and senior management.

With respect to the actual influence and impact that students' opinions and employers have on Business school 1's program offering decisions, the participant views were divided by the short term and long term direction of the business school. From a day-to-day basis, employer and

student perceptions had little impact as the faculty member is seen as the expert on the subject matter for the courses they deliver. However, over the long term, employer and student perceptions (particularly members of the Advisory Board) have a medium influence, due to their financial impact. Put simply, if Business school 1 offers a program that employers do not want to hire graduates from, student enrollment will decrease and the program will fail.

4.5 Influence of Various Internal Environmental Factors on Business School 1

The participants for Business school 1 were asked a number of questions related to their internal governance processes. The findings are described below.

4.5.1 Program evaluation.

Business school 1's graduate business programs are continuously evaluated informally and formally. Such as:

- Informal measures: student evaluations, enrollment statistics, student satisfaction questionnaires, career placement statistics, feedback from alumni and employers, course output, time completion, placement rates, student intent to recommend programs, graduate admission to high quality PhD program; and salary upon hiring and career progression.

Business school 1 is very concerned with maintaining program relevance and ensuring the success of its graduates and therefore, they continuously collect data on their graduate business courses and programs through continuous student feedback (e.g., surveys, focus groups, and course evaluations). In particular, Business school 1 is very interested in evaluating whether their graduates have acquired the skills and competencies needed to be high performing effective managers upon graduation.

- Formal measures: total number of international accreditations (including re-accreditation reviews conducted by the accreditation bodies), rankings, and provincial reviews (occurs every five to seven years – conducted by internal and external academics).

Many of the participants cited the AACSB accreditation and re-accreditation process as the main source for measuring and evaluating the quality of their graduate business programs. The participants explained that it is an extensive process as the accrediting body comes to the business school and wants to see everything from syllabuses to course objectives. Therefore, Business

school 1 continuously evaluates their business programs both internally and externally by consulting with multiple stakeholders and utilizing multiple evaluation measures to do so.

4.5.2 Internal governance - approval structure.

From the program evaluation data collected, often recommendations for program changes are made. All program changes are approved through various committees employing a consensus driven voting structure:⁹

Everything runs by committee. The role of the committee after that is to go back to their section meetings, talk about it there, get the input and bring it back with the hopes that by the time it gets to faculty council, it has to get voted on, it will get passed through without a glitch.

The number of committees that a certain program change (or new initiative) requires approval from is dependent on the change itself. In total, Business school 1 has five internal committees within the business school and five external committees that could go all the way up to the provincial Ministry of education. Thus, given the number of committee approval levels, major program changes could take up to one year and sometimes longer to take place. It is also important that buy in from committee members is facilitated at each approval level as one cannot proceed to the next committee for approval without having gained approval from the previous committee level first. In sum:

It's quite a hierarchy. Each program has a program director. Then there is the vice-dean of programs. Then there are committees for each of the program areas. Then there is the executive committee. Then there is XX, the university, School Council. Then there is the university itself, the school of graduate studies. If we are going to make a major program change we have to go through all of those steps. The province is the final one we have to go to. We need approval all the way through those steps.

4.5.3 Faculty participation in program changes.

Unanimously, participants stated that faculty members hold a primary role when it comes to program changes and the launching of new programs or initiatives, as they are the persons that compose the committees. As well, senior administrative positions are held primarily by faculty members assigned to these positions. For example the Dean, Vice Deans, and Directors of

⁹ For within course changes, the faculty member has the overall control and ability to make changes in terms of structure, content, and delivery.

programs at Business school 1 are all faculty members, first and foremost. Initiatives are usually launched by a member of senior administration (i.e. the Program Director or Dean), however suggestions for program changes can also come from individual faculty members as long as the initiative is supported by their department or section.

4.6 Participant Perspectives of Online Education in Business School 1

All participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages associated with delivering graduate business programs online for faculty and senior administration.

4.6.1 Advantages.

Table 4 below describes the number of Business School 1 participants that believed the benefit listed below could be realized for faculty members or senior administration with the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery.

Table 4

Advantages of Online Education for Faculty and Senior Administration

Advantage	Number of participants cited	
	Faculty	Senior administration
Access to multiple tools	4 out of 7	N/A
Increased flexibility	3 out of 7	N/A
Market expansion opportunities	N/A	5 out of 7
Cost and infrastructure savings	N/A	4 out of 7
Respond to student demand	N/A	4 out of 7
Access to international expertise	N/A	1 out of 7

4.6.1.1. Perceived advantages for faculty.

Access to multiple tools: Online education provides the faculty member with the option of leveraging technology to enhance the learning experience of students, thereby expanding their pedagogical delivery options.

Increased flexibility: Once the faculty member is proficient in delivering courses online, online education can be convenient for them as well because they are able to teach their courses from anywhere in the world (given that it is a fully online course). In terms of asynchronous delivery, faculty can also deliver and respond to students on their own timing. Alternatively, in a hybrid format the amount of time in the classroom could also be reduced.

4.6.1.2 Perceived advantages for senior administration.

Market expansion opportunities: Online education provides the potential for a broader reach for the business school, as students do not necessarily have to be local. Rather, students from around the world could enroll and take part in the business school's graduate business programs (if the program was fully online). Thus, there is an opportunity to attract international students and increase enrollment numbers by appealing to a broader geographical student market.

Cost and infrastructure savings: Fully online programs provide a benefit in terms the ability to have more students enrolled in one course or program, which decreases the cost per student. In addition, as most courses can be delivered outside of the classroom, there is a savings in terms of classroom space. For instance:

... You require less infrastructure, in terms of physical space so you can accommodate a much larger growth if you want, without having to worry about extra physical space.

Respond to student demand: There is a strong belief amongst the participants, that there is a demand for more online education by the students. As such, online education could meet the needs and expectations of some current and prospective students. For example:

.... The student population is really comfortable first of all with all things online. They are a generation that is really plugged in. They really like it, I think. So, its benefits are, first of all they are comfortable, second of all it is flexible, it's immediate, in terms of feedback.

Access to international expertise: Online education also provides the ability to tap into various international expertise, such as faculty members from around the world. It is no longer necessary to hire faculty members living in the area or incur the costs of flying them in as there are various technological options using video technology (i.e. video-conferencing) to teach the students online without being present. This in turn provides the business school with expertise that they would not normally have access too.

4.6.2 Disadvantages.

The Table below describes the number of Business school 1 participants that believed the disadvantage listed below could be realized for faculty members or senior administration with the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery.

Table 5

Disadvantages of Online Education for Faculty and Senior Administration

Disadvantage	Number of participants cited	
	Faculty	Senior administration
Lack of face-to-face interaction	5 out of 7	N/A
Increased workload	5 out of 7	N/A
Loss of ownership over intellectual property	2 out of 7	2 out of 7
Development and delivery cost	N/A	3 out of 7

4.6.3.1 Perceived disadvantages for faculty.

Lack of face-to-face interaction: Many participants cited that they would miss the face-to-face interaction component of teaching in the classroom. By going fully online, some participants felt that they would be unable to get to know the students and build the same relationships with them as they do currently, which is something many of the participants would miss.

For example:

I think a number of them would miss that if it were purely online. They would feel they are become people just tapping on the computer screen as opposed to actually engaging the human element of learning which is what is important in a lot of cases.

Increased workload: Many of the participants cited the increased worry that teaching an online course would increase their workload in terms of the effort required to redesign and build their courses to be online compatible. This also includes extra time to learn the technology and manage larger class sizes. For example:

So the investment in the beginning is high. It is totally a disadvantage, you have to take your course that you teach for the last five years and it's going well and you have to rethink your course in another way. You need to invest time.

Loss of ownership over intellectual property: Questions were raised as to who would own the content of the course if the courses were online and offered in multiple sections with multiple faculty members. Ownership was also linked to compensation and incentives for work completed on online courses.

4.6.3.2 Perceived disadvantages for senior administration.

Development and delivery cost: From a senior administration point of view, to bring in a new initiative such as online education there is the perception (some from experience) that there is a fairly high upfront cost and higher ongoing delivery cost due to the technology and additional support (i.e. additional teaching assistants) to accommodate larger class sizes. Although, this could lead to an advantage if the technology allows for a greater number of students to be enrolled in the business school's graduate programs, reducing the cost per student to deliver the program. However, this advantage is dependent on the ability to attract increased class sizes to achieve economies of scale without sacrificing the overall quality of instruction and delivery. Recruiting students (especially to full online programs) may not be as easy as believed.

For example, as suggested by one participant:

So, what some of my students have said to me, listen you know we appreciate the flexibility of the online thing, but we like being in contact with professors. If I wanted a fully online program, I would have gone to Athabasca. So there is some value in being face-to-face with professors and meeting with students and arguing with each other and all that fun stuff.

4.7 Faculty Acceptance of Online Education in Business School 1

Given the general advantages and disadvantages cited by the participants for the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery, participants were asked directly how they perceived acceptance amongst faculty. Overall, the participants at Business school 1 believed that faculty would hold mixed sentiments (with a heavier percentage resistant) towards the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery. However, it was acknowledged that most faculty have not taught an online course nor have they been introduced to the advantages or opportunities associated with online education.

4.7.1 Overall quality perceptions associated with online education.

All seven participants were questioned on the quality of online education in the context of various quality measures such as relevance, learning outcomes and student satisfaction. In terms of the overall quality comparison between the two delivery mediums (online versus classroom), the majority of participants did not see any great difference between various quality measures in terms of relevance, learning outcomes (effectiveness) or student satisfaction. Specifically:

- The level of quality and effectiveness of online education was rated by the participants as average (four participants) to above average (three participants).
- The participants viewed the success of online education as dependent on the design of the program and/or the specific skills the program was trying to develop in their students.
- Three participants had experience in teaching an online course during their careers and four without.
- Six participants responded that they would like the option to teach an online course.

4.7.1.1 *Relevance.*

Online education was perceived by the participants as relevant in terms of its ability to take advantage of up to date technology, which can simulate real world experiences through experiential learning exercise. Correspondingly, it was reiterated multiple times that relevance was more directly linked to the content of the course as opposed to the actual delivery medium. In other words, online education facilitates the delivery of content and pedagogy in innovative and interesting ways but does not necessarily make the program relevant by its use.

4.7.1.2 *Learning outcomes.*

The participants were almost unanimous in agreement that their preference for online delivery versus in class was dependent on the subject matter. In particular, courses related to behavioural skills such as negotiation and leadership skills were best suited to the classroom environment, as they believed that there needed to be a face-to-face component to the course to teach these skills. Although, for more quantitative type of courses online delivery could be better suited. In addition, graduate business education was viewed by the participants as more than just the courses offered, but also about the campus experience itself that holds value for students. For instance:

Because an MBA program is about the network. It's about that interaction. It's about learning from others. And when you are face-to-face you have a greater opportunity to learn from others. You know in a class you can go from one group discussion to another group discussion. You can truly benefit from the learning from others in small situations.

Secondly, the design of the course was the main determinate of the effectiveness of the course. As one participant provided, a course that is poorly designed would render poor learning outcomes regardless of delivery medium chosen:

It depends on how it is designed of course, online is just a platform. So, it always depends on good curriculum design. You can't just throw it on the Internet/computer and expect it to work properly. So, it has to be properly designed.

Another participant brought forward that the quality of the instructor also impacted effectiveness:

Yes, it will be effective, if it is well-designed. It's not an absolute. It's like a prof in class are they the best? Sometimes no, absolutely not. The student will learn much more if they stay at home. So there is no absolute, but if it is well done, yes. If it is not well done, no.

4.7.1.3 *Student satisfaction.*

The participants were asked if they believed students would be positively satisfied with an online course. The answer was “yes”, as they believed students would appreciate and value the benefits of online education. However, with the same caveat as above, if the course was poorly designed and delivered, they believed that student satisfaction would be low. Furthermore, the majority of the participants stated that to offer a program that was fully online would see students less satisfied than if the program was delivered in a hybrid format due to the lack of face-to-face interaction.

4.7.2 *Ideal format for graduate program delivery.*

Business school 1 does offer the option of online education at the graduate business level applying a hybrid medium of delivery for one of its main graduate business programs with the plan to apply this format of delivery to at least one other graduate business program in the future. However, there is a general agreement amongst the participants that for their research based graduate business programs, due to the limited number of courses and the emphasis on research skills development, an online component would not be suitable.

When participants were asked the best delivery medium to deliver graduate business education, six out of seven participants cited the hybrid model as the ideal delivery mechanism due to its ability to reconcile the advantages of both in class and online benefits. In addition, the majority of the participants felt that offering a graduate business program that was fully online would not be of benefit to Business school 1 in terms of increasing enrolment or differentiating the business school in the market. Finally, some participants believed that the hybrid model could offer an even richer learning experience to their students than either the fully in class or online options. Therefore:

Hybrids are definitely the way to go because there are certain elements that are perfectly suited to online. If you are trying to communicate a bunch of content like as a lecture format, a lot of that can be done online using different media. A lot of the group work, you can do some virtually and it is good practice to do a little bit, because we work like that anyway. But face-to-face has to be there too.

4.7.3 Factors contributing to faculty resistance of online education.

Due to the role that faculty play at Business school 1 in the approval of program changes through the committee structure as well as the delivery of the programs themselves, they hold the majority of the power in program decision making as a collective. Therefore, they can be viewed as the strongest stakeholder influence on adoption of online education.

Overall, the participants were unanimous in the belief that there would be mixed reactions in terms of faculty being in favour of online education or opposed to it with a slightly greater proportion of overall faculty being resistant. The resistance was believed to be stronger for a fully online graduate business program than a hybrid program. It was also abundantly clear, that Business school 1 would not consider replacing their current primarily face-to-face MBA program with a fully online program. The main reason cited by the participants for the lack of enthusiasm for this option by some business school faculty is the perception that online education is of inferior quality compared to the face-to-face delivery medium. Besides concerns over the quality of online education, the main factors contributing to business school faculty resistance identified were:

Table 6

Factors Contributing to Faculty Resistance of Online Education

Factor	Number of participants cited
Resistance to change	7 out of 7
Fear of the unknown	5 out of 7

Resistance to change: The main reason the participants cited that some faculty were resistant to online education was due to resistance to change in general, which they believed was not limited to the adoption of online education but any major initiative or change. For instance:

There's always resistance for any initiative. It's human nature. People resist change. They get comfortable in what they do and what they like and they resist change systematically. It's not unique to professors. The difference with professors is that they are trained to argue so they will find all kind of excuses that sound reasonable to oppose. It's really delicate so you need to do a lot of evidence based convincing. Even then you are going to be getting some resistance. That's exactly what they do, what they have been trained to do.

Fear of the unknown: With the introduction of online education, the traditional role of the faculty member in the classroom is changed, which brings forward an element of fear of the unknown. Namely, how will the technology work? How much time will it take? For example:

Professors are used to lecturing, they're used to preparing a case and be the facilitator of comments in the classroom. So that's a role they're used to. They're going to have to think very differently about what their role is in the context of these new tools. And I think that's part of why it is still being red taped.

Factors perceived by the participants to have little or no influence on faculty resistance to online education:

Generational resistance: The participants' views were mixed on whether generational resistance contributed towards faculty resistance to online education. Interestingly, of the seven participants, most rated online education favourably.

Comfort with technology: The overwhelming response by participants was "somewhat." However, it was dependent on the individual faculty member, their acceptance of technology for education delivery, as well as the type of technology adopted and the associated technological support.

4.7.4 Facilitators to increase faculty acceptance of online education.

Given the findings presented so far for Business school 1, it has become quite clear that the adoption of online education would not be feasible without the support of faculty as they hold as a collective a considerable amount of influence on the approval of proposed program changes or initiatives within their business school. As such, how could senior administration facilitate and increase acceptance amongst faculty for online education? The top four facilitators identified by the participants were:

(continued on next page)

Table 7

Facilitators to Increase Faculty Acceptance of Online Education

Facilitator	Number of participants cited
Instructional and technical support	7 out of 7
Understanding the advantages of online education	5 out of 7
Incentives and rewards	3 out of 7
Peer leadership	2 out of 7

Instructional and technical support: One of the main disadvantages cited by the participants is the fear that online education would increase their workloads. One strategy taken that would help to alleviate this concern would be support. In particular, instructional design support to aid the faculty member in designing and converting their courses to an online platform. This support was cited by the participants as the most effective facilitator to the acceptance of online education by faculty. For example:

It doesn't have to be the same or less it just has to be shown that every step is being taken to minimize the effort involved. Then it's a co-creation activity between the faculty and whomever wants it to happen. And it will work. It's just a question of making sure they have the right information and they have the right support as they go through the process.

Understanding the advantages of online education: Understanding and proving the benefits of online education is one of the key facilitators to adoption. As stated previously, most faculty at Business school 1 have not taught an online course. Therefore, they are unaware of the benefits. There is a feeling amongst the participants that once the advantages become known, resistance may lessen when the opportunities associated with online education are experienced. For instance:

I think that if professors have been slow to adopt online education, it is because they have not experienced first hand the advantages and clearly an advantage is convenience for them as well. If you become proficient at the delivery of online education you can deliver from home, you can be in your pajamas if you want. When you've tried it, your eyes are suddenly open to those kinds of advantages and provided you do some upfront preparation you can build in a whole bunch of multimedia tools and experiences for your students that you were not able to do before.

Incentives and rewards: Another facilitator cited by the participants was incentives and rewards. As described above, some faculty perceive that the introduction of online education would increase their workloads. What some of the participants cited as a means to gain support was through various incentives, monetary or workload.

Peer leadership: It was expressed multiple times by the participants that directions from senior management would not be taken well by faculty. Rather, the participants generally agreed that successful initiatives take place through peer leadership (i.e. peers speaking to peers). A facilitator to faculty acceptance is for senior administration to gain the support of a few respected faculty members to act as champions for online education. For example, one participant highlighted the effectiveness of peer pressure on acceptance:

So, you need to find a few leaders typically that are open-minded, that are able to convince their peers. Peer convincing is a lot more effective then when it comes from a dean. So basically peers, and having peers that are able to think, ok, is there a way for us to take advantage of this new technology in such a way that it doesn't mean more work for me. But it's having the willingness to sit down and think about it carefully, and then convincing others that it can be done.

4.8 Summary of Main Findings for Business School 1

Business school 1 participants described the business school environment as increasingly competitive due to the number of options available in the market to attain management development and training. The main opportunities reside in attracting different student populations domestically and abroad by refocusing graduate business program portfolios and offering different program options that are perceived as relevant and best meet the needs and expectations of different student markets. In addition, developing stronger partnerships with the business community and seeking alternate sources of revenue. The main challenges cited were maintaining graduate business program relevance, balancing stakeholder interests, and managing decreased funding while attempting to remain competitive and prosperous. Thus, business schools are realizing that it is a competitive landscape and maintaining the status quo is no longer a viable option. Business school 1 has responded by attempting to differentiate themselves in the market by offering various program options to cater to different student markets in the hope of expanding their market share. They compete by offering innovative and relevant programs that employ different pedagogical tools that leverages various interactive technologies. In addition, they are

elevating their international reputation by heavily publicizing that they have multiple international accreditations and focusing on quality initiatives such as establishing Centers of expertise.

In terms of the influence of various external stakeholders, the maintenance of AACSB accreditation was found to have the strongest influence on overall graduate business program offerings as this accrediting body was viewed by the majority of participants as vital to Business school 1's continued success in the future as it formed part of their differentiation strategy. However, given current AACSB accreditation standards, whether or not Business school 1 pursues online education has little influence, as it would not impact their status with the AACSB. Business school rankings have a low influence due to it being viewed by the participants as a subjective evaluation measure. Leading business schools had a medium influence on overall graduate business program offerings due to the benchmarking of their programs that takes place, however, as Business school 1 did not view the leading business schools as being their direct competitors or having the same resources, their influence on the adoption of online education is considered low. The opinions of employers and students, especially the members on their Business Advisory Board have a strong influence on overall graduate business program offerings and medium influence on the adoption of online education due to the need to recruit students and to receive donations from employers. It is believed that employers still hold a slightly negative perception of fully online graduate business programs. Lastly, the participants felt that the barriers and negative perceptions held by employers were breaking down towards online education due to the accelerated pace and acceptance of technology in the workplace.

The participants felt that business schools have various opportunities and challenges given the business school environment. On the one hand, senior administration would like to address the needs and expectations of the market, but are constrained by various internal mechanisms that could stall or render the process unattainable. It is important to note that it was unanimously articulated by the participants that senior administration could not unilaterally impose a major program change or initiative, as they do not have the authority to do so. Major program decisions are approved through the committee approval process (consensus driven voting structure). Therefore, collectively, faculty hold a great amount of influence on overall program direction. As such, senior administration could not impose a major change to a program without faculty support. In addition, major program changes take a considerable amount of time due to the number of committee levels the initiative or change requires approval from before it is implemented. This

constrains the Business school 1's ability to adapt their graduate programs quickly to the rapidly changing business environment itself.

The participants from Business school 1 viewed online education as an additional tool to deliver content. In other words, it is a platform to deliver pedagogy in an innovative way. One of the main perceived advantages for faculty was flexibility. Flexibility in the sense that courses are not regulated to a specific time or classroom location. In addition, for faculty it provides them with additional tools to deliver their course that they would not have access to before. Finally, for senior administration it provides the ability to extend their reach for students beyond the local area, save on classroom space and access faculty expertise from around the world.

The participants for Business school 1 almost unanimously quoted the biggest disadvantage to online education as the cost and time required to develop and deliver an effective online course or program. In addition, some faculty would miss face-to-face interaction and the richness and value attained from in class discussions and presentations. For senior administration there is an added need to attract a larger number of students to their programs in order to decrease overall cost without impacting the quality of instruction.

In terms of the ideal format for the delivery of graduate business education, the majority of participants felt that the hybrid model was best due to its ability to reconcile the advantages of both in class and online mediums of delivery. In addition, the participants were in agreement that offering graduate programs that were fully online would not be of benefit in terms of increasing enrollment or differentiating Business school 1.

Overall, the participants at Business school 1 believed that their faculty would be mixed (with a heavier percentage resistant) towards the adoption of online education. Interestingly, the majority of participants did not see any great difference between various quality measures in terms of relevance, learning outcomes (effectiveness) or student satisfaction. Correspondingly, all the participants rated the quality and effectiveness of online education as average to above average. The main factors found to determine the success of online education was the quality of the design and the type of course (subject matter) to be delivered. Thus, if both are done well and are appropriate to the subject matter, the differences between in class and online delivery in terms of certain quality measures was perceived as minimal. Despite mixed resistance amongst faculty towards the adoption of online education, there was the recognition that the adoption of more online education was inevitable.

In sum, there was the resounding feeling amongst the participants that change in their business school and business schools in general was a slow process and major change almost always includes a form of resistance. In the case of online education, the majority of the resistance perceived by the participants at Business school 1 is due to the lack of experience by faculty with this medium of delivery and concerns over quality due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. In order to overcome resistance, the participants believe that peer leadership is required, an incentive/reward system be established to compensate faculty for the extra work required to develop online courses, a demonstration of the benefits to online education be provided and strong technical support in the form of hiring internal instructional designers that are easily accessible.

Chapter Five – Individual Case Findings for Business School 2

5.0 Introduction

The findings for Business school 1 of this qualitative research study are presented in this chapter. This case will begin with the context for Business school 2, followed by an in depth description of the findings for this business school divided by the following six categories:

- External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment
- Response to Business School Environment by Business School 2
- Influence of Various External Stakeholders on Business School 2
- Influence of Various Internal Environmental Factors on Business School 2
- Participant Perspectives of Online Education in Business School 2
- Faculty Acceptance of Online Education in Business School 2

5.1 Case Context

Business school 2 is a small Canadian newly AACSB accredited business school offering undergraduate and graduate business programs. Enrollment at the undergraduate level ranges approximately 1,900 students (full-time or part-time) and 200 students at the graduate level (full-time or part-time). At the graduate level, Business school 2 offers an MBA with options, two MBA programs abroad and a PhD program as well as various professional certificates. According to the participants, the main medium of program delivery is face-to-face in a classroom environment. In addition to lectures, the most cited pedagogical methods utilized are instructional case studies and experiential learning exercises. Business school 2 also has a strong international exchange program. In terms of online education, Business school 2 currently does not offer any programs in the hybrid or fully online format at the graduate level.

According to the Participant Profiles collected, the seven individual participants representing Business school 2, hold the following characteristics:

- *Gender*: Four males and two females participated.
- *Stage of career*: Three at the Associate level; three at the Full level; and one multi-year contract instructor (four of the participants have held a senior administrative role over the course of their careers at Business School 2).
- *Tenure*: Two with 1-5 years; one with 6-15 years; and four with 16+ years of tenure.
- All the participants work on a computer on a daily basis.
- *Computer proficiency*: Two rated at average; three rated at above average; and two rated their computer proficiency as excellent.
- *Level of acceptance of technology to deliver course content*: One rated it below average; two rated it average; and four rated their level of acceptance of leveraging technology to deliver course content as excellent.
- *Prior experience in teaching online*: Two with experience; and five without experience in teaching online.
- *Option of teaching online*: One participant answered they would like the option to teach online; and four responded they would not like the option to teach online. Two participants declined to respond.

5.2 External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment

All participants were asked to describe the current business school environment. The responses focused on the various external environmental factors placing pressure on business schools. The top four cited external environmental factors in the business school environment identified were:

(continued on next page)

Table 8

External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment

Factor	Number of participants cited
Balancing stakeholder demand and expectations	7 out of 7
Concerns over graduate business program relevance	5 out of 7
Increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market	5 out of 7
Decreased provincial funding	4 out of 7

5.2.1 Balancing stakeholder demand and expectations.

All seven participants commented on the extent and influence of balancing various stakeholder needs and expectations in order to continue to compete in the current business school environment. The majority of the participants felt that if business schools do not offer graduate business programs that stakeholders believe are attractive and relevant, enrollment decreases as well as donations, which has a negative financial impact on the business school. Some perceptions held by participants with respect to students and their graduate business program demand and interests were:

- Decrease in demand for traditional MBA programs. The traditional MBA has long been considered the flagship of most business schools. However, there was a sentiment amongst participants that now is the time to “rethink” business schools’ portfolio of programs.
- According to participants, the demand is moving away from the generalist MBA towards more specialized graduate business programs to attract different student niches. However, these programs may not necessarily be the most efficient mechanism to deliver graduate programs.

The above sentiments were summed up best by one participant when he provided:

If I am truly candid, I think that the timeframe for a traditional MBA is largely past. I am not at all convinced that this flagship program should be the flagship. I think that there are too many schools chasing too few students all trying to come up with almost the exact same material and perhaps not all doing it as well as we really should. So I think it would be nice to see some retrenchment, you know some sort of really high level rethinking as to what is the portfolio of programs schools offer. I don't see many of the schools wanting to consider that. I think that they are afraid that if they lose that MBA that they have lost something fundamental to being a business school in Canada.

5.2.2 Concerns over graduate business program relevance.

Five out of seven participants raised the importance of ensuring that their graduate business programs content and delivery were relevant given the changing nature of business and correspondingly, the changing nature of the role of today's manager. According to the participants, in order for business schools to develop effective and successful managers, it is highly important that their curriculum and teaching strategies reflect what is happening in the business world today. Furthermore, to make the necessary adaptations to graduate business programs' curriculum and content, business schools are finding "keeping up" a challenge due to the fast pace and changing nature of business itself. The participants reflected on the challenge of maintaining legitimacy, which was defined as the perception by stakeholders that the graduate business programs offered were of high quality and effective in preparing students to be future managers and leaders in the future. For example:

We spend a lot of time in business schools trying to prove to other departments within the university that we are a legitimate, academic discipline and that comes at a cost of being relevant to organizations. So we are constantly in between those pressures of being relevant to organizations and being academic, rigors and all those things. And I think that's very difficult. I think the challenge is doing that and remaining relevant because if we just become another school of social science, or at the same time if we become consultants, then what are we doing? So I think finding that space is really challenging.

In addition, each participant was asked to define the main purpose of graduate business education. Ultimately, the main responses referred to the graduate business program's ability to prepare their students to be active, effective and responsible managers and leaders across a wide range of organizations and contexts. In essence, to "teach students of various backgrounds the

language and logic of business.” Secondly, the responses varied dependent on the program focus, as follows:

- Professionally based programs (e.g. MBA): Develop analytical and other skills to prepare students for the job market.
- Research based programs (e.g. PhD): Develop critical thinking, enable focus, research skills, and develop in depth in a field of interest.

Finally, participants mentioned the challenge of deciding whether business schools and their graduate business programs should be professionally based or academic based. In other words, the balance between theory versus practice. In fact, some participants mentioned that business schools have focused so much on rigour and research that there is a feeling that they have sacrificed to a certain degree their relationship with the business community. As such, the participants voiced that there is a need to re-establish those relationships with the business community in order to maintain and build relevance. As one participant cited:

I think there is a crisis facing business schools, I think it's perhaps the need to go back and maintain a contact with the business communities that they originally served. They started out doing more applied research. They then moved on from that and became collective parts of the academic community. I think there is a certain balance that needs to be struck in going back and being applied.

5.2.3 Increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market.

Five of the seven participants touched on the increasing competitiveness of the business school environment. Competitiveness was mainly attributed to the demographic decrease in the number of domestic students interested in pursuing graduate business education. According to the participants, business schools have responded by expanding enrollment. However, this strategy has raised concern over the quality of students admitted to graduate business programs. In addition, a few participants stated that some business schools have tried to make-up for the decrease in the domestic student market by recruiting international students, however this too proves a challenge in terms of attracting well-qualified students as well as teaching ability due to cultural and linguistic differences.

For example:

I think one of the big challenges today (is that) there are fewer Canadian students interested in doing graduate management education, particularly an MBA. Well part of that is demographic, the age that people are most interested in doing an MBA where they are going to get greatest pay back on their investment. All the business schools are chasing (a) smaller domestic audience.

5.2.4 Decreased provincial funding.

Four out of the seven participants cited that the greatest impediment to maintaining program relevance and balancing stakeholder demand and interests as decreased provincial funding. According to the participants, costs do not seem to be decreasing; but rather expenditures are on the rise, which is forcing business schools to look at alternate avenues to generate income. As such, rising costs are a big concern for publicly funded business schools today:

Business schools perhaps not so much in Canada but certainly worldwide globally have become very expensive operations. I am not sure if that is sustainable at that level. As part of universities in general, I think we are all in crisis in terms of deciding how best to deliver our programs. You know it was fine, when we were elite institutions and one percent of the population went to university, well we are not there anymore. So, I think we need to come to terms with how we deliver our programs in a more sustainable fashion.

5.3 Response to Business School Environment by Business School 2

Participants from Business school 2 were asked how their business school has responded to the current business school environment. No participants from Business school 2 stated that their business school has not responded to the external environmental factors in the business school environment (i.e. maintained status quo). The top three responses by Business school 2 to the business school environment were:

Table 9

Response to Business School Environment – Mechanisms for Differentiation

Response	Number of participants cited
AACSB accreditation	7 out of 7
Expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings	7 out of 7
International recruitment and partnerships	6 out of 7

The main strategy applied by Business school 2 to respond to the current business school environment has been to apply a differentiation strategy by building upon its core strengths: international focus, innovation and responsible management. Building upon their core strengths, Business school 2 has implemented various initiatives in relation to their graduate business programs offerings to attract to students and increase enrollment. Each of these responses will be looked at next.

5.3.1 AACSB accreditation.

All participants viewed AACSB accreditation as a means for Business school 2 to compete in the business school environment. The three main reasons cited for the value placed on AACSB accreditation were:

5.3.1.1 Remain competitive.

Business school 2 only recently attained their AACSB accreditation. However, the application process began over six years ago. There was a sense brought forward by the participants that the lack of AACSB accreditation could render the business school at a competitive disadvantage, if not achieved.

5.3.1.2 To establish international partnerships.

Business school 2 has made it clear in its mission and vision that it seeks to be international and has done so by establishing MBA programs abroad. To facilitate this international strategy, AACSB accreditation is viewed as a necessary prerequisite to form these partnerships because it

increases their international presence as AACSB accreditation is globally recognized (AACSB – is the largest accreditation body for business schools in the world).

5.3.1.3 *Quality and legitimacy.*

A major reason cited by the participants for attaining AACSB accreditation is to achieve legitimacy in terms of stakeholder perception. After all, as one participant stated, it is a “hallmark of excellence.” Correspondingly, there is the belief by the participants that AACSB accreditation demonstrates to stakeholders and especially prospective students that their programs are of “high quality.” For instance:

The legitimacy because many of the good schools are accredited, so you want to be part of those. So it is a major legitimacy, branding thing. Once you go through the AACSB process you now have a framework and you have things that you want to achieve and you have a framework to do that. So when you talk about quality control, when you talk about the control of programs, the expectations of faculty, you have a very concrete thing to say we have to do this because we are an accredited school as opposed to its just good for us.

5.3.2 Expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings.

To respond to the various needs and expectations of different student types (traditional and non-traditional students) Business school 2 has launched various program delivery initiatives. Aside from offering their graduate business programs (MBA) in full-time and part-time options, Business school 2 offers an array of international exchange options. Within the MBA and PhD program, Business school 2 also offers various specializations to adapt to different student interests. As well, a unique part of Business school 2’s MBA program is that it is one of the few MBA programs in Canada that does not require work experience for admission. Rather, the MBA program includes a 16 week work internship that allows their students to attain work experience within the program. It is also worthy of note, the MBA program is less than a decade old, so not as well established as other business schools in Canada.

5.3.3 International recruitment and partnerships.

Business school 2’s graduate business programs are built upon three core strengths: international focus, innovation and responsible management. Multiple participants discussed how this international focus translates into efforts to recruit international students and develop

partnerships through joint programs in other areas of the world, thereby increasing Business school 2's international presence. For example, Business school 2 has established two MBA programs abroad and expects to launch more such programs in the future.

5.4 Influence of Various External Stakeholders on Business School 2

All participants were asked the extent to which various external stakeholders (AACSB accreditation, business school rankings, leading business schools, and employers and students) influence Business school 2's decision making for overall graduate program offerings, which includes content, structure and delivery (the adoption of online education). Their responses are summarized below.

Table 10

Degree of Influence of Various External Stakeholders

External stakeholder	Degree of influence on:	
	Overall program offerings	Online education
AACSB accreditation	Strong	Low
Business school rankings	Low	Low
Leading business schools	Medium	Low
Employers and students	Strong	Medium

Degree of influence on Business school 2's organizational decision making: strong, medium, low

5.4.1 AACSB accreditation.

All participants cited AACSB accreditation as very significant for Business school 2. Since AACSB accreditation is received from an external organization and therefore viewed as unbiased, it increases visibility, and promotes a reputation of excellence. Hence, per the participants, AACSB accreditation facilitates the attraction of the best students and faculty to Business school 2. In particular, for Business school 2 to implement their international expansion strategy, AACSB accreditation is vital to fostering these partnerships with other business schools abroad.

The majority of the participants cite AACSB accreditation as hard to receive and to maintain with its cumbersome re-accreditation process and standards. For example, the AACSB accreditation standards impact overall program offerings and hiring practices, as they require a high percentage of instructors to be full-time faculty with a PhD. In order to achieve AACSB accreditation and maintain it a considerable amount of work and close scrutiny of the business school's processes and learning goals and objectives is required. However, its benefits include: increasing the quality of their programs, consistent quality across courses, and since AACSB accreditation is an international accreditation it helps to attract international students to Business school 2's graduate business programs. In essence, participants viewed the maintenance of AACSB accreditation as a continuous process of improvement for their programs as it requires consistent review of its learning objectives and outcomes. For instance:

Because it is a quality mindset. It is much easier to do things if there is an external requirement for you to do them. I think for example the assurance of learning that we are required to do on our accreditation with the AACSB. It just makes sense. To say that it is not a good thing broad level, program level that your students are able to understand and do at the end of a program. Then figure out how you can do it and then measure it. You can take action when it's not happening that's really hard to argue against. That is what we teach at business schools, so that is what we should be doing.

In terms of the adoption of online education, AACSB accreditation focuses on process (evaluation of the achievement of learning goals and outcomes through the Assurance of Learning framework) as opposed to specific delivery mediums. Therefore, the participants felt that in terms of their overall programs offerings AACSB accreditation had a strong influence, however, as the accreditation standards do not impact Business school 2's accreditation their influence on their decision of whether or not to adopt online education is considered low. The participants did state that if a time came when the AACSB changed their criteria, whereby their accreditation could be jeopardized by the adoption of online education, they would most likely not pursue it.

5.4.2 Business school rankings.

In conjunction with AACSB accreditation, all participants discussed the influence of business school rankings. Various publications rank business schools, such as MacLean's or Forbes magazine. Rankings foster visibility in the business school environment. Business school 2 has not been very successful in reaching a high ranking, which was brought forward for many

reasons, bias, political reasons or criteria used. In other words, participants viewed rankings as highly subjective although there was a caveat that they would like to be ranked higher.

It was felt by the majority of the participants that business school rankings have a more direct impact on potential student decision making as opposed to the business school itself. They influence stakeholders perceptions in terms of the prestige associated with the business school, and therefore potentially prospective students' decision on which business school to attend. However, three participants noted that rankings would not have much impact on a student's decision on which school to attend if they were geographically and/or work immobile. Therefore, the influence of this external stakeholder on Business school 2's decision making in terms of their overall graduate program offerings as well as the adoption of online education was deemed to be low.

5.4.3 Leading business schools.

All seven participants were asked to discuss the influence the major and most prestigious business schools (for example, Harvard and Columbia business schools) have on Business school 2 in terms of their graduate business program offerings and their decision of whether or not to adopt online education. Surprisingly, the graduate business program offerings and initiatives launched by the leading business schools have little direct impact on the program decisions made by Business school 2. Rather, these schools serve more as part of their benchmarking and program review process:

Yeah, obviously we get into a major redesign of a program, particularly an MBA program for example, we certainly do an environmental scan, benchmarking, and things that have been done by highly ranked schools, we certainly look at that. You don't want to duplicate exactly what they are doing. But you need to do something that is appropriate for your environment.

The participants viewed the most prestigious schools as the trendsetters in the field, but recognize that Business school 2 is not in the same category as these schools and do not necessarily have the same resources (e.g. financial, human) to launch the same program options. Instead, Business school 2 really focuses on competing directly with the business schools in the same category they are in. As one participant responded, the purpose of this is that it helps to identify competitive gaps and potential areas for where Business school 2 can differentiate itself:

I don't think it is the most prestigious, I think we look to the schools that are comparable and that we consider to be in our competitive group. I don't think we are looking at what MIT is doing. But we do look at what XX is doing.

However, if the leading business schools made public declarations as to the inferiority of online versus classroom based delivery, the majority of participants stated that Business school 2 would at least consider it as it could challenge the legitimacy of online education in the view of stakeholders. In addition, it was found that the source of the criticism of online education might have a greater impact. For example, if criticism came from foreign schools (due to Business school 2's partnerships abroad), this may have a greater influence than criticism from U.S. based schools. For instance:

They do tend to affect public opinion and the markets opinion. Right, which is what we are interested in, in being able to attract student. So, I think we are influenced a little bit.

Therefore, since leading business schools are used by Business school 2 for benchmarking purposes they do have a medium influence on their overall graduate business program offerings, but given limited resources their influence on the adoption of online education is viewed as low.

5.4.4 Employers and students.

The main external stakeholders cited by participants were prospective and current students, and employers and alumni. Business school 2 also has an Advisory Board composed of business leaders from a broad cross-section of industries and sectors. The Advisory Board provides the Dean and faculty members with advice and support in the areas of relevance, advocacy and philanthropy. This includes advising on strategy and programs. In general, the majority of participants believed that there is still an overall negative or stigma associated with online education by employers and students, especially for fully online programs. For example:

I think online education still has a little bit of stigma that you didn't really take the course. You know, that online doesn't really count. It is just like you bought your degree. You didn't go through the process. I don't think online education is mature enough to have the same level of legitimacy.

As one participant provided, this may be reinforced by some of the pure online schools who are not as well regarded as most bricks and mortar types of academic institutions:

I think there is a negative vision of online learning by a lot of people, partly through the Phoenix's'. I mean, we will not interview a PhD who got their degree from an online school. We just don't think you get the kind of attention and interaction that you need.

In addition, some of the participants felt that the barriers and negative perceptions that employers are believe to have for online education are breaking down due to the accelerated pace and acceptance of technology in the workplace. Furthermore, employers are mainly concerned that graduates possess the knowledge and skills needed to be effective managers regardless of medium of delivery. A few of the participants mentioned that they believed there is a demand out there by students for more online education due to the flexibility that this medium of delivery provides to them.

With respect to the actual influence and impact that students and employers opinions have on Business school 2's program offering decisions, the participant views were divided by the short term and long term direction of the business school. From a day-to-day basis, employer and student perceptions had little impact as the faculty member is seen as the expert on the subject matter for the courses they deliver. However, over the long term employer and student perceptions (particularly members on the Advisory Board) have a medium influence, due to their financial impact. Put simply, if Business school 2 offers a program that employers do not want to hire graduates from, student enrollment will decrease and the program will fail:

Well stakeholders are very important in anything that we do. If we put together a program and if we have no students that is not a good thing. If we put together a program that employers are not particularly interested in we are misleading our students that are interested. We do consult extensively every time we come up with either a major revision to a program.

5.5 Influence of Various Internal Environmental Factors on Business School 2

The participants from Business school 2 were asked a number of questions related to their internal governance processes. The findings are described below.

5.5.1 Program evaluation.

Business school 2's graduate business programs are continuously evaluated informally and formally. Such as:

Informal measures: student graduation rates, the achievements of graduates, number of students, profit or contribution margin, student employment rates post graduation and placements, and surveys of student satisfaction.

Formal measures: AACSB accreditation process and provincial reviews (occurs every seven years).

As stated previously, Business school 2 has been recently accredited by the AACSB. Through this accreditation many of Business school 2's program evaluation processes have been formalized as a result. Since, AACSB accreditation is fairly new, Business school 2 has yet to go through the re-accreditation process, which occurs every five years. One mechanism to formally review the process put in place as a result of AACSB accreditation is the Assurance of Learning Framework (AOL). The main purpose of the AOL framework is to ensure that programs have resulted in meeting their described learning goals and objectives.

In addition, the provincial Ministry of education requires a cyclical review every five to seven years. The province previously conducted this process but it is now delegated at the university level in conjunction with external reviewers (from other universities) taking part in the process. Therefore, Business school 2 continuously evaluates their business programs both internally and externally by consulting with multiple stakeholders and utilizing multiple evaluation measures to do so.

5.5.2 Internal governance – approval structure.

From the program evaluation data collected, recommendations for program changes often occur. All program changes are approved through various committees employing a consensus driven voting structure.¹⁰ The number of committees that a certain program change (or new initiative) requires approval from is dependent on the change itself. For example, for a completely redesigned or new program, the requirement is to seek approval all the way to the province

¹⁰ For within course changes, the faculty member has the overall control and ability to make changes in terms of structure, content, and delivery.

(provincial Ministry of education). However, for a delivery medium change (without program content or structure change), the process would end at the internal university level. For instance:

Delivery mode I believe is defined as a major change, major changes require going through all the procedures. So for us that would be an internal curriculum committee decision. It would then go to our faculty board, which is basically all faculty who would have to vote on it. It would then have to go to the faculty of graduate studies, which has its own curriculum review sub-committee and faculty board itself. It has to go through our internal quality assurance board, which has an oversight committee. It has to go to a subcommittee of the Senate and it has to be approved by the Senate. So it is quite extensive.

At Business school 2 there currently exists, approximately three internal committees within the business school and four external committees outside of the business school up to the provincial Ministry of education. Therefore, given the number of committee approval levels, major program changes could take up to one year to take place. It is also important that buy-in from committee members is facilitated at each committee level as one cannot proceed to the next committee level without having gained approval from the previous committee level first.

5.5.3 Faculty participation in program changes.

Faculty hold a primary role when it comes to program changes and the launching of new programs or initiatives as they sit on the committees. As well, senior administrative positions are primarily held by faculty members assigned to those positions. For example, the Dean and Associate Deans are all Business school 2 faculty members first and foremost. Initiatives are typically launched by senior administration (i.e. the program's Associate Dean). However, suggestions for program changes can also come from individual faculty with the support of their teaching area.

The role of the Dean and senior administration is that of oversight and direction setting as opposed to decision making in terms of programs. As such, senior administration does not have unilateral decision making authority to approve programs.

5.6 Participant Perspectives of Online Education in Business School 2

All participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages associated with delivering a graduate business programs online for faculty and senior administration.

5.6.1 Advantages.

Table 11 below describes the number of Business school 2 participants that believed the benefit listed below could be realized for faculty members or senior administration with the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery.

Table 11

Benefits of Online Education for Faculty and Senior Administration

Advantage	Number of participants cited	
	Faculty	Senior administration
Increased flexibility	2 out of 7	N/A
More effective use of class time	1 out of 7	N/A
Market expansion opportunities	N/A	5 out of 7
Cost and infrastructure savings	N/A	5 out of 7
Increased international integration	N/A	2 out of 7
Respond to student demand	N/A	2 out of 7

5.6.1.1 Perceived advantages for faculty.

Increased flexibility: Two out of seven participants felt that once the faculty member is proficient in delivering courses online, it can be convenient for them as well because they are able to teach the course from anywhere in the world (given that it is a fully online course). Alternatively, in a hybrid format, the amount of time on campus could also be reduced.

More effective use of class time: One participant suggested that if their courses were partly online (hybrid), the online component could be for the purpose of knowledge transfer and then the time in class better utilized for instructional case studies and other experiential learning exercises.

5.6.1.2 Perceived advantages for senior administration.

Market expansion opportunities: Online education provides in general a broader reach, as students do not necessarily have to be local. Rather, students from around the world could enrol and take part in Business school 2's graduate programs (applicable to fully online programs only). Thus, there is an opportunity to attract international students (without relocation) and increase enrolments numbers by appealing to a broader geographical student market:

There are people who are simply unable to physically or otherwise, financially, to interrupt whatever they are doing and go to study at a university, at the physical location of a university.

In particular for the non-traditional student:

Yeah, I think the benefits are for people who are working. It fits better into their life. It gives them flexibility in terms of engaging in their coursework. So, there is definitely an interest amongst grad students, particularly for that.

Cost and infrastructure savings: Online education could be an advantage if the technology allows for a greater number of students to be enrolled in the business school's graduate programs, thereby reducing the cost per student to deliver the program. However, this advantage is dependent on the ability to attract increased class sizes to achieve economies of scale. In addition, saving on sending faculty members to other locations to teach. The addendum to this advantage is that consideration needs to be made with respect to the labour intensiveness required to deliver a quality course online with increased student enrolment. One participant summed up this dilemma as:

So, size is a factor. Just in terms of how many people can you meet, replacing a program of a hundred students with an online one is a very high upfront cost per participant. You know if you are offering an online version to a thousand students a year that's more likely to be a more profitable undertaking.

As online education occurs over the Internet there is a savings in terms of classroom space and booking classrooms on the part of the university. In addition, the ability to have more students enrolled in one program. Even with the hybrid format of delivery there could be the benefit of infrastructure savings.

Increase international integration: Online education also facilitates international integration and reducing overall costs of sending faculty members abroad to teach in international partnerships.

Respond to student demand: A few participants mentioned that they are aware that their students are interested in taking more courses online and therefore, adoption would address this demand. For instance:

... Standing in an auditorium giving a lecture to 150 to 200 students is dead or dying ... But I think we need to be getting out of that because I don't think that is very efficient. I don't think it is a very good learning mechanism for students ... That was probably always true but we justified it because we really did not have any other alternative ways of doing things ... It's more and more difficult for us to justify not doing that. For me I find that online education is actually a better way of teaching some things particularly when its information transfer and basic underlying knowledge transfer.

However, the caveat is that if prospective students were interested in fully online programs they would most likely apply to fully online business schools such as Athabasca that specialize in this delivery format.

5.6.2 Disadvantages.

Table 12 below describes the number of Business school 2 participants that believed the disadvantage listed could be realized for faculty members or senior administration with the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery.

Table 12

Disadvantages of Online Education for Faculty and Senior Administration

Disadvantage	Number of participants cited	
	Faculty	Senior administration
Lack of face-to-face interaction	5 out of 7	N/A
Increased workload	4 out of 7	N/A
Loss of ownership over intellectual property	2 out of 7	N/A
Development and delivery cost	N/A	5 out of 7

5.6.3.1 Perceived disadvantages for faculty.

Lack of face-to-face interaction: Five out of seven participants cited that they would miss the face-to-face interaction component of teaching in the classroom. For instance:

I really like the interaction with the students in the classroom. I like to be able to see how they are responding and if they get it or if they don't. To me, in the classroom there is a two-way communication. I'm delivering something to the students and I'm getting something back from them. So there is a reciprocal relationship or reciprocity in terms of that relationship which to me is really important in terms of making connections. I'm not convinced that is something that is easily replicable in an online environment.

Furthermore, by going fully online some participants felt that they would be unable to build the same relationships with their students as they do currently. In addition, in the classroom the faculty member has the ability to have more control over the learning process:

I get something back from the classroom. That energizes me. And if all I am doing is interacting with this machine, it just doesn't do it. To me it would be much harder to get to know the students. It's hard enough when you have a big class but even harder if they are online. I'm not convinced I will have that same feeling of knowing them and being confident to do that. So, yes I think that is something that the students may not notice that they are missing out on because they may not know any different but it is certainly something I would miss if it's all digital.

Increased workload: Four out of seven participants cited the worry that teaching an online course would increase their workload in terms of the effort required to design and build their courses to be online compatible. This also includes extra time to learn the technology, and increased written feedback to students. For example:

A lot of it is "Oh my god, everybody I talk to tells me it is a lot of work." And it is a massive amount of work. The amount of work that you have to put into actually getting the course up and running is huge.

As well, there is a feeling amongst the participants that due to the increasing workload to develop an effective online course(s), they would have to forego other initiatives, such as their research unless senior administration intervenes.

For example:

I think it is time related. It's upfront time in order to develop it. You know what kind of support is available. Does it take longer? There is a suggestion that it actually does take longer to prepare those materials than it does to go in and do your regular lecture. And most of us are incredibly pressed for time already. So, adding one extra thing, which is different and requires you to figure it out where if the technology doesn't work and you're really kind of stuck there may not be the support you need that's going to be a concern.

Loss of ownership over intellectual property: Questions were raised by the participants as to who would own the content of the course if the courses were online and offered in multiple sections with multiple faculty members. Ownership was also linked to compensation and incentives for work completed on online courses. For example:

There are many questions regarding ...who owns that work, what happens if we are not teaching and somebody else is teaching? There are lots of questions around that have not been fully answered...in terms of copyright. What is considered a fair workload? If you create the course infrastructure to deliver online and then you have a contract instructor teaching you cannot expect that person to create that infrastructure. But if they are using your infrastructure? So there are all sorts of questions about how you make it work.

As well as ...

If I teach a course, the university has no right to come in and take me or ask for my notes or ask for my course outline. They have no ownership of that. So if I give a series of lectures and they videotape them, who has the ownership?

5.6.3.2 Perceived disadvantages for senior administration.

Development and delivery cost: From a senior administration point of view, to bring in a new initiative such as online education there is the perception (some from experience) that there is a fairly high upfront cost and higher ongoing delivery cost due to the technology and additional support (i.e. additional teaching assistants to accommodate larger class sizes) that is needed to set up an effective online program. Although, this could lead to an advantage if the technology allows for a greater number of students to be enrolled in the business school's graduate program, reducing the cost per student to deliver the program.

However, this may not be the case:

Would there actually be a take-up to justify it? It is a crowded market. So, are we really going to put the amount of resources needed to acquire a market? I am not sure from my point of view if that would make sense ... I think we have to do something different. It can't just be a standard MBA. It has to be an MBA that fills a niche this is not being satisfied. So you know, online programs, which I think are ripe are probably more like specialized MBAs where there is potentially a large market but one that is thinly spread.

Consequently, this advantage is dependent on the ability to attract increased class sizes to achieve economies of scale without sacrificing the overall quality of instruction and delivery.

For example:

It seems to require an inordinate amount of investment up front in order to do that and then you have got to convince everybody that that is what they would like to be doing. You don't want to go into it, unless you are going to do a good job. Because you can, yes you can extend your reputation but you may be extending the wrong kind of reputation if you are not doing it well.

5.7 Faculty Acceptance of Online Education in Business School 2

Given the general advantages and disadvantages cited by the participants for the adoption of online education for graduate program delivery, participants were asked directly how they perceived acceptance amongst faculty. Overall, the participants at Business school 2 believed that faculty were mixed (with a higher percentage resistant) towards the adoption of online education. However, it was acknowledged that most faculty members have not taught an online course nor have they been introduced to the advantages or opportunities associated with this medium of delivery.

5.7.1 Overall quality perceptions associated with online education.

All seven participants were questioned on the quality of online education in the context of various quality measures such as relevance, learning outcomes and student satisfaction in comparison between the two delivery mediums (online versus face-to-face). Specifically:

- Three participants rated the quality and effectiveness of online education as above average (dependent on type of course) to excellent.
- Four participants rated the quality and effectiveness of online education as below average.

- Correspondingly, of the five participants that responded whether they would like to teach an online course, four out of the five rated that they would not.
- It is important to note that only two of the seven participants had any prior experience teaching an online course, therefore the responses was based more or less on perception rather than from experience.

5.7.1.1 Relevance and learning outcomes.

All participants were asked their agreement with how relevant online education was for the delivery of graduate business education as well as their comparison of perceived learning outcomes between face-to-face and online education. The participants tended to group relevance and learning outcomes in the same category with mixed results. Not surprisingly, those that rated the quality of online education as below average also viewed online education as less relevant and providing inferior learning outcomes to face-to-face delivery. The remainder of the participants perceived both delivery mediums as equal. However, there were a few similarities in responses:

Quality of instruction: There was general agreement amongst participants that relevance and learning outcomes (whether online or in class) were heavily determined by the quality of the instruction and pedagogy employed by the instructor.

Quality of design: The participants felt that the design of the program was the main determinate of its effectiveness. In other words, a program that was poorly designed would render poor learning outcomes regardless of delivery medium chosen.

Nature of course or learning outcome sought: The participants were generally in agreement that the choice of online versus in class delivery was dependent on the subject matter. In particular, courses related to behavioural skills, such as negotiation and leadership skills were best suited to the classroom environment. For more quantitative type of courses, online delivery may be better suited. Furthermore, online education may be best suited for courses at the undergraduate level where there are 200+ students, since the instructor-student interaction is already limited, so there is little benefit to face-to-face instruction anyhow. The sentiment held by the participants was that the softer skills couldn't be taught online.

For example:

... I think online probably works well for transmitting relatively technical content ... But graduate management education is very much about some of the softer skills. And I am not convinced that we have effective ways to teach those softer skills in terms of leadership, in terms of team building and communication skills and so on. And so I am not sure that online covers off some of those areas as effectively.

Lack of face-to-face interaction: By far the most heavily cited disadvantage in the achievement of positive learning outcomes and effectiveness was the lack of face-to-face interaction between the students and the instructor. Many cited that it would be hard to teach certain types of behavioural courses (i.e. negotiation skills and leadership skills) fully online. In addition to faculty member-student interaction, some participants perceived that students in an online environment would miss out on the benefit of the peer-to-peer learning that often takes place in graduate courses during classroom discussions, instructional case studies, and experiential learning exercises that is often hard to replicate in an online environment. For instance:

The disadvantages are at a loss of peer learning or reduction in peer learning and peer support that goes with that. I think it is also very difficult with the kinds of experiential teaching that many like I do and many of my colleagues do.

5.7.1.2 Student satisfaction.

Next, the participants were asked if they believed graduate business students would be positively satisfied with an online program. The majority of the participants stated that student satisfaction would be dependent on the following factors: student expectations, level of interaction, and student preference.

Student expectations: Three participants stated that student satisfaction would be dependent on the needs and expectations of the students. For graduate business students who required the flexibility that online education offers the satisfaction could be on par with in class instruction. As well, it was noted that the benefit of flexibility decreased with synchronous online course delivery.

Level of interaction: Four participants believed that student satisfaction would be less in an online program. This was mainly attributed to the decrease in face-to-face interaction.

Student preference: For courses where the student has not chosen to take the online course but had to do so as the course was only offered online, student satisfaction was perceived to be lower. Therefore, the majority of participants felt that overall student satisfaction could be linked to how the student prefers to learn and receive their education.

5.7.2 Ideal format for graduate program delivery.

Amongst the participants, the clearly preferred format was face-to-face delivery:

Does online education even remotely begin to approximate what in-person education can do? I don't believe so, not ever.

Despite the majority of participants preferring in class delivery over online education, there was an overall feeling that the adoption of online education in some form or another was inevitable; however, not for a number of years:

A fully online, it is not going to happen today. I tried to launch a certificate in XX and no one was interested.

Business school 2 to date does not currently offer any graduate programs online, only a few courses at the undergraduate level. In the future, there are no concrete plans on establishing an online graduate business program, but there is some encouragement from the academic institution as a whole towards online education that may in time facilitate the process. In addition, there has been a committee struck to explore this option at the business school level.

Given the above, the participants were asked to describe the ideal medium(s) for the delivery of graduate business education. Four out of seven participants believe that a fully face-to-face graduate business program is preferable to a hybrid or a fully online program. This is not surprising given the overall comparison by the participants of the quality of online versus in class delivery. The other three participants proposed the hybrid model as they could see some benefit in its ability to take advantage of the benefits of both delivery mediums. None of the respondents stated that the ideal format would be a fully online program.

Even though the hybrid format was ranked higher than fully online programs by the participants, the preference when asked was still for a face-to-face program. Some participants also pointed out that the hybrid format limited the online education benefit of extending the business school's reach:

For me, using a hybrid model helps to ameliorate some of the losses of distance education. However, from the point of view of the students that is not always easy because the hybrid model means if you are reaching a national audience there is significant costs associated with trying to use it. So, from the standpoint of students, a hybrid model is not ideal. If they want a distance program, they want it to be a full distance education program.

If the hybrid model was employed, it was proposed that the online portion would best be suited for knowledge transfer and quantitative based courses. Finally, the majority of the participants were in agreement that offering a graduate business program that was fully online would not be of benefit in terms of increasing enrolment or differentiating the business school.

5.7.3 Factors contributing to faculty resistance of online education.

Due to the role that faculty play at Business school 1 in the approval of program changes through the committee structure as well as the delivery of the programs themselves, they hold the majority of the power in program decision making as a collective. Therefore, they can be viewed as the strongest stakeholder influence on adoption. Overall, the participants were unanimous in the belief that there would be mixed reactions in terms of faculty being in favour of online education or opposed to it with a greater proportion of overall faculty being resistant. As one participant provided:

So, would people be keen on it? It's like any new innovation that you are going to have some that are early adopters, some that never want to adopt and some that kind of get dragged into it more or less reluctantly as they may not have any choice. In a large group of people you are going to have the whole range.

The resistance was believed to be stronger for a fully online graduate business program than a hybrid program. It was also abundantly clear, that Business school 2 would not consider replacing their fully face-to-face MBA program with a fully online program. The main reason cited by the participants for the lack of enthusiasm by some faculty with respect to online education is the perception of inferior quality due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. However, there was general consensus that if one faculty member wanted to launch a online course on his or her own initiative, other faculty members would not oppose:

On the whole, I would guess that most faculty would be resistant when considering it for themselves. But, let me put it this way, if another faculty member wanted to do something, I don't think there would be any big opposition to it. I may not want to do something myself, but if you wanted to do it, I wouldn't come and say "no don't do it".

It was also acknowledged that most faculty have not taught an online course or have been introduced to the advantages or opportunities that online education possesses. Besides concern over the quality of online education, other potential factors contributing to faculty resistance were:

Table 13

Factors Contributing to Faculty Resistance of Online Education

Factor	Number of participants cited
Fear of the unknown	4 out of 7
Resistance to change	3 out of 7
Lack of incentive to pursue online education (other priorities)	2 out of 7

Fear of the unknown: With the introduction of online education, the traditional role of the faculty member in the classroom is changed and therefore, there is the fear of the unknown. Namely, how will the technology work? How much time will it take?

Resistance to change: The participants cited that the reason some faculty were resistant was due to resistance to change in general, which they believed was not limited to the adoption of online education but any major initiative or program change. This resistance is mainly attributed to the change in how education is delivered by the faculty member. For some, they have taught in a classroom for over 20 years and to now introduce online education (which changes the dynamics of teaching), may be too big of a shock to be easily accepted by some. For example:

Because you cannot take what you do and just put it online. You have to rethink your whole approach. Your whole pedagogical approach. And that is time-consuming for people to invest in that type of thing. To understand what makes an online course work, to find example, cases, exercises that work in that context, to prepare the lectures.

Lack of Incentive to pursue online education (other priorities): Given all that faculty are interested in, a few participants felt that faculty felt their time was better suited to other endeavours, such as research.

For example:

One of the reasons that people choose to be academics is because they have sense that if I go this direction I will have a lot of control over my life. I can be in the classroom six hours a week and other than that I can do what I want as long as I am doing it. I have to do research, but I can do it when I want. I can collaborate with whoever I want. And with regard to teaching, okay, you know I have to teach some courses but I have a lot of latitude even within the course.

Factors perceived by the participants to have little or no influence on faculty resistance to online education:

Generational resistance: The majority of participants stated generational resistance could be a factor contributing to faculty resistance, but also at the same time the participants were able to provide examples of senior faculty members who were very much in favour of online education.

For instance:

It's easy to say that it is a senior versus junior faculty who are more comfortable with technology. But I can think of a number of senior faculty that are quite comfortable with doing things online and some junior faculty that are very resistant.

Comfort with technology: Only two participants felt that comfort with technology contributed to faculty resistance. Rather, the disadvantage perceived was the time and effort required to learn the new software and adapt their courses to the online environment. For example:

I think some people are more conservative or more risk averse. Less willing to put the time to figure something out. I think that is more the criteria as opposed to the stage of career.

5.7.4 Facilitators to increase faculty acceptance of online education.

Given the findings presented so far for Business school 2, it has become quite clear that the adoption of online education would not be feasible without the support of faculty as they hold as a collective a considerable amount of influence on the approval of proposed program changes or initiatives within their business school. As such, how could senior administration facilitate and increase acceptance amongst faculty for online education? The top four facilitators identified by the participants were:

Table 14

Facilitators to Increase Faculty Acceptance of Online Education

Facilitator	Number of participants cited
Understanding of the advantages of online education	5 out of 7
Incentives and rewards	5 out of 7
Instructional and technical support	4 out of 7
Peer leadership	4 out of 7

Understanding the advantages of online education: Understanding and proving the benefits to online education is one of the key facilitators to adoption. As stated previously, most faculty have not taught an online course and so are unaware of the benefits. There is a feeling amongst the participants that once the advantages become known, resistance may lessen when the opportunities are experienced. Furthermore there is the need to justify to faculty how the introduction of online education would benefit and differentiate their program to other online programs (i.e. the demand would be there). Acceptance requires presentations and a plan for faculty to consider this option:

Show me a good program, explain to me how you are going to do it, and explain to me how you are going to connect with those students even though it is online, or electronic. If so, then I'll go with it, but I want to see in detail how it's going to happen before I sign up... Well if I don't know much about online learning and you want me to do it, well then maybe you need to be sending me out in order to get exposed to that.

Incentives and rewards: Another facilitator cited was incentives and rewards. As described above, some faculty perceive that the introduction of online education would increase their workload. What some of the participants cited as a means to gain support was through various incentives, monetary or workload. For example:

I think you need a reward infrastructure that makes it appealing to faculty to do this. That the time you spend creating an online course is somehow valued and you get credit for it.

As well as:

Some form of incentives. It does not have to be financial but it needs to be very clear. What is it that you are supposed to spend your time on? ... So, you are going to have to find some way to signal what is it as an institution, as a school, (that you are) supposed to focus on and so the incentive can be just a pat on the back or they get access to innovative things or you get to go to conferences to learn.

Instructional and technical support: One of the main disadvantages cited by the participants is the fear that online education would increase their workloads. One strategy taken that would help to alleviate this concern would be support. In particular, instructional design support to aid the faculty member in designing and converting their courses to an online platform:

We need some expert instructional designers who have experience in distance education. We have to make sure the technological infrastructure is in place and its local, so it's not just that we have people at the University level, but that we have people in the school who can help support that. We need to find a way of managing our workload system that incorporates that because right now it doesn't. Our workload system is based on research productivity it's not based on what method you are using to teach.

Peer Leadership: It was expressed over and over throughout the interviews that directions from senior administration would not be taken well by faculty. Rather, it is viewed that successful initiatives take place through peer leadership (i.e. peers speaking to peers to gain and grow support and approval). Peer pressure in other words, is a very effective strategy:

Peer pressure. It is about realizing that people are doing this and your falling behind. Cause I maintain that there are a lot of courses that can be targeted that way. Especially hybrid. You don't have to move away from the face-to-face but you can scale back because a lot of the stuff you can do in a classroom you can do more effectively in a video.

5.8 Summary of Main Findings for Business School 2

Business school 2 participants described the current business school environment as rapidly changing, which has caused a number of challenges for business schools today. Namely: business schools' ability to balance stakeholder demand and interests when there is a decrease in demand for traditional MBA programs; maintaining legitimacy and graduate business program relevance given the changing needs of the business community; increasing competition for domestic students due to the overall decrease in demand for graduate business education; concerns

over the quality of students being enrolled in graduate business programs; and finally decreased provincial funding when the cost of delivering education is on the rise. The main opportunities reside in attracting different student populations domestically and abroad by refocusing graduate business program portfolios and offering different program options that meet the needs and expectations of different student markets. Thus, business schools are realizing that it is a competitive landscape and maintaining the status quo is no longer a viable option.

The main strategy applied by Business school 2 to respond to the current business school environment has been to apply a differentiation strategy by building upon its core strengths: international focus, innovation and responsible management. Furthermore, they have implemented various initiatives in relation to their graduate business programs offerings to attract to students and increase enrollment. They offer various graduate business program concentrations to cater to different student markets in the hope of expanding their market share and expanding their international presence through international recruitment and partnerships. In addition, Business school 2 is continuously in the progress of considering various options, including the potential for online education. The participants view their newly awarded AACSB accreditation as a facilitator of Business school 2's overall competitive strategy.

In terms of the influence of various external stakeholders, the maintenance of AACSB accreditation was found to have the strongest influence on the overall graduate business program offerings as this accrediting body was viewed by the majority of participants to be vital to Business School 2 due to the visibility and reputation of excellence this accreditation brings. Since the current AACSB accreditation standards are not focused on delivery medium but learning outcomes, the AACSB would have a low influence on whether or not Business school 2 pursued online education, as its adoption would not impact their status with the AACSB. However, if the AACSB standards were to change in the future, whereby the adoption of online education could jeopardize Business school 2's accreditation status they would most likely not pursue this option. Business school rankings were found to have a low influence due to the subjective nature of the rankings. Leading business schools had a medium influence on overall graduate business program rankings due to the benchmarking of their programs that takes place, however, as Business school 2 did not view the leading business schools as being their direct competitors or having the same resources, their influence on adoption is considered low. The opinions of employers and students, especially the members on the Business Advisory Board had a strong influence on overall graduate business program offerings and a medium influence on the adoption of online education by

Business school 2 due to the need to recruit students and to receive donations from employers. It is believed by the participants that employers still hold a slightly negative perception of fully online graduate business programs.

Accordingly, the business school environment offers various opportunities and challenges. On the one hand senior administration would like to address the needs and expectations of the market, but are constrained by various internal environmental factors that could stall or render the process unattainable. It was unanimously articulated by the participants that senior administration at Business school 2 could not unilaterally impose a major program change or initiative, as they do not have the power or authority to do so. Major program decisions are determined and approved through the committee approval structure (consensus driven voting structure). Therefore, for any major program change or initiative faculty as a collective holds the majority of the power as they form the committees. As such, senior administration could not impose a major change to a program without faculty support. Major program changes take a considerable amount of time due to the number of committee levels the initiative or program change requires approval from before it is implemented. Consequently, this constrains the business school 2's ability to adapt their graduate business programs quickly to the rapidly changing business environment.

The greatest benefit cited for faculty was flexibility and convenience. Flexibility in that the course is not regulated to a specific location or time. For faculty it provides them with additional tools to use to deliver their courses and take better advantage of classroom time (in a hybrid format) to focus on experiential exercises. For senior administration it provides them with the potential for market expansion by broadening their prospective student base, which could further build upon Business school 2's international strategy of establishing international joint programs. Finally, online education could provide the possibility of gaining infrastructure and cost savings.

Correspondingly, the strongest disadvantages for faculty was the loss of face-to-face interaction they felt they needed for their own engagement and satisfaction in the course; concerns over the extra time needed to develop an online course; and copyright ownership over the course when it is streamed in multiple sections over the Internet. For senior administration the main disadvantage cited was the cost of developing an online program and the need to attract more students to their online programs in order for online education to be cost efficient.

Overall, the participants believed that their faculty would be mixed (with a higher percentage resistant) to the adoption of online education. However, it was acknowledged that most faculty members have not taught an online course nor have they been introduced to the advantages

or opportunities associated with online education. Consequently, there was the firm belief by the participants that a fully online graduate business program could not match the quality of a fully face-to-face (the ideal format) or a hybrid program based on the quality measures of relevance, learning outcomes or student satisfaction due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. The perception was that these factors were also dependent on the quality of the instruction and pedagogy employed to deliver the program. Online education if employed was most suitable for knowledge transfer and the delivery of quantitative type courses. In terms of student satisfaction, the main influencing factors were student expectations and preference for receiving education.

The greatest contributing factors to faculty resistance, aside from quality concerns due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, were: fear of the unknown; resistance to change in general; and time and effort focused on other initiatives and priorities leaving little time to consider the adoption of online education. In order to overcome resistance, the participants believe that peer leadership is required, an incentive/reward system be established to compensate faculty for the extra work required to develop online courses, a demonstration of the benefits to online education be provided and strong instructional and technical support in the form of hiring internal instructional designers that are easily accessible. It is noteworthy that many of the facilitators provided by the participants were also held to have application in multiple contexts where senior administration was attempting to gain support and acceptance from faculty members towards a certain initiative or program change.

Chapter Six – Individual Case Findings for Business School 3

6.0 Introduction

The findings for Business school 1 of this qualitative research study are presented in this chapter. This case will begin with the context for Business school 3, followed by an in depth description of the findings for this business school divided by the following six categories:

- External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment
- Response to Business School Environment by Business School 3
- Influence of Various External Stakeholders on Business School 3
- Influence of Various Internal Environmental Factors on Business School 3
- Participant Perspectives of Online Education in Business School 3
- Faculty Acceptance of Online Education in Business School 3

6.1 Case Context

Business school 3 is a medium Canadian AACSB accredited business school offering undergraduate and graduate business programs. Enrollment at the undergraduate level ranges approximately 2,500 students (full-time or part-time) and 650 students at the graduate level (full-time or part-time). At the graduate level, Business school 3 offers an MBA with options; one specialized Master's in business, one interdisciplinary Master's and a PhD program as well as various professional certificates. According to the participants, the main medium of program delivery is face-to-face in a classroom environment. In addition to lectures, the most cited pedagogical methods utilized are instructional case studies and experiential learning exercises. Business school 3 also has a large co-op program. In terms of online education, Business school 3 only offers a few courses at the graduate level online. However, their interdisciplinary (joint with another Department) Master's program is offered fully online.

According to the Participant Profiles collected, the seven individual participants representing Business school 3 hold, the following characteristics:

- *Gender*: Five males and two females participated.
- *Stage of career*: Two at the Associate level; and five at the Full level (four of the participants have held a senior administrative role over the course of their careers).
- *Tenure*: Three with 6-15 years; and four with 16+ years of tenure.
- All the participants work on a computer on a daily basis.
- *Computer proficiency*: Four rated at above average; and three rated their computer proficiency as excellent.
- *Level of acceptance of technology to deliver course content*: Three rated it as average; two rated it above average; and two rated their level of acceptance of leveraging technology to deliver course content as excellent.
- *Prior experience in teaching online*: Three with experience; and three without experience in teaching online. One participant declined to respond.
- *Option of teaching online*: Five participants answered they would like the option to teach online and one responded they would not like the option. One participant declined to respond.

6.2 External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment

All participants were asked to describe the current business school environment. The responses focused on the various external environmental factors placing pressure on business schools. The top four cited external environmental factors in the business school environment were:

(continued on next page)

Table 15

External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment

Factor	Number of participants cited
Concerns over graduate business program relevance	7 out of 7
Balancing stakeholder demand and expectations	7 out of 7
Increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market	6 out of 7
Decreased provincial funding	4 out of 7

6.2.1 Concerns over graduate business program relevance.

All participants raised the importance of maintaining the relevance of their graduate business programs given the changing nature of business and with that the changing nature of today's manager. Directly linked to concerns over program relevance is how each business school participant defines the purpose of graduate business education. This definition facilitates the design and delivery of the business school's graduate business programs and helps to ensure that their programs are "relevant" to today's managers. Ultimately, the main responses referred to the graduate business program's ability to develop the competencies and skills needed in their students and graduates to effectively manage organizations and people to lead well performing organizations. As summed up by one participant:

The main opportunities, is probably offering a curriculum that has features that employers are seeking. I think, even though it may not be a popular term by academics, I think we have to accept that particularly at the Masters level a business education is business. That is not to say that students are necessarily customers but nonetheless business schools do rely on their intake of Masters level students in order to pay the bills.

Relevance was found by the participants to be a difficult task due to the extent of knowledge that a manager and effective leader needs to possess to not only be a generalist but also a specialist in certain areas. Thus, the majority of participants found the challenge for business schools was to be able to train these future leaders in generalist and specialist material within a two year program. Given the above, many participants believed that relevance could only be

achieved through interdisciplinary work and by re-establishing partnerships and linkages with employers.

6.2.2 Balancing stakeholders demand and expectations.

All seven participants commented on the extent and influence of balancing various stakeholder needs and expectations in order to continue to compete in the current business school environment. According to a few participants, employers are seeking graduates who possess the skills needed to be effective and successful managers. As such, the opportunity and challenge for business schools is their ability to deliver the graduates employers are seeking. This skill set includes, developing technology related skills to work in the diverse, technologically driven international business world of today. Lastly, there is the legitimacy challenge, whereby the business school attempts to balance the perceptions and expectations of being in the academic stream and meeting the needs of the business community and students. In essence, the balance between being a professionally based versus an academic based business school.

6.2.3 Increasing competitiveness of the business school environment.

Six out of seven participants commented on the increasing competitive of the graduate business education market. This competitiveness was attributed to two main factors:

Firstly, the increase in the number of different types of graduate business programs available (from generalist to specialist) for students to attain graduate business education, which according to the participants reinforces the position that simply offering the traditional face-to-face MBA is no longer a viable option:

I think business schools are realizing especially in Canada that the status quo is not going to work anymore. There is a lot of sentiment especially among faculty that have been here for a long time that we've always done it this way and the students will come and it's worked, so why do we have to think about changing? It's a struggle for them that business schools are also businesses and don't just assume that doing the same thing the students will always come and will always have guaranteed jobs so to speak.

According to the participants, due to the similarity between graduate business programs, it has become a challenge for business schools to differentiate themselves to gain a competitive advantage. For the most part, business schools in Canada have sought to make up for the decreasing number of domestic students through the recruitment of international students. However, this is proving more difficult today, due to the number of business schools offering high

quality graduate business programs outside of North America, especially from emerging countries like India and China entering the market. Such as:

And there is increasing competition for students because in addition to the domestic market most business schools look abroad for students. On the one hand, other countries like China, whose business schools are growing rapidly, are offering opportunities to students comparable to what their young people might see in North America.

Secondly, the number of alternative options available to prospective students to attain management development and training apart from traditional bricks and mortar type of academic institutions. These options include but are not limited to: non-educational institutions, in-house corporate management training programs, online universities (such as Athabasca University), and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs).

6.2.4 Decreased provincial funding.

Four out of the seven participants brought forward the biggest impediment to maintaining relevance and balancing stakeholder interests as decreased provincial funding. According to these participants, the alternative to provincial funding is for business schools to gain private donations; however, this is more difficult in Canada as private donations are less prevalent than in U.S. business schools. Hence, there is now more focus on introducing sustainable programs, for example:

Much more concern with revenue driven programming and creating cost efficiencies. Well, on the revenue driven side, programs that allow us to charge a premium in tuition.

6.3 Response to Business School Environment by Business School 3

Participants from Business school 3 were asked how their business school has responded to the current business school environment. No participants from Business School 3 stated that their business school has not responded to the business school environment (i.e. maintained status quo). The top three responses to the business school environment by Business school 3 were:

Table 16

Response to Business School Environment – Mechanisms for Differentiation

Response	Number of participants cited
AACSB accreditation	7 out of 7
Expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings	6 out of 7
International recruitment and partnerships	1 out of 7

The main differentiation strategy applied by Business school 3 in response to the current business school environment have been to apply an expansion strategy by building upon its core strengths and by aggressively recruiting international students to their graduate business programs.

6.3.1 AACSB accreditation.

All participants discussed AACSB accreditation in terms of its significance for their business school. The main reasons cited for the importance of AACSB accreditation for Business school 3 were:

6.3.1.1 Remain competitive.

Four out of seven participants clearly stated that AACSB accreditation was sought not to differentiate Business school 3 in the business school environment, but rather as a means to remain competitive. In fact, not having AACSB accreditation could lead to a disadvantage due to the expectation of many stakeholders that business schools need to be AACSB accredited, given the number of business schools in Canada that are already AACSB accredited. For example:

I think the difficulty is that a school that doesn't have it becomes conspicuous by the fact that they don't have it. You know if you have it and you are the only school that does, you are the tallest puppy in the field. But if everyone else has it and you don't, well of course you somehow disappear under the radar. You know there are so many schools that are accredited; you don't want to be not accredited because I think it can be negative. I think students and faculty just expect you to have that. So it may be a concern that not to have it would send the wrong signal to all stakeholders.

6.3.1.2 Increased international reputation and visibility.

AACSB accreditation was perceived by the participants to elevate the reputation of Business school 3 and aids in increasing their international presence as AACSB accreditation is globally recognized (AACSB – is the largest accreditation body for business schools in the world). Given that a large portion of Business school 3's graduate business students are international students, AACSB accreditation supports Business school 3's expansion strategy as it lends visibility and credibility on the international stage. In this sense, AACSB accreditation is more important for international presence than for domestic visibility:

It is something that, especially if you are looking at the international space, if you are looking at bringing in international students, it is important to their decision making.

6.3.1.3 Quality and legitimacy.

Another major reason cited by the participants for attaining AACSB accreditation is to achieve legitimacy in terms of stakeholder perception. There is the belief amongst participants that AACSB accreditation demonstrates to stakeholders and especially prospective students that their programs are of "high quality."

6.3.2 Expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings.

Six of the seven participants discussed new programs as well as various other program delivery initiatives that have been launched by Business school 3 to respond to the external environmental factors of the business school environment and the various needs and expectations of different student types, such as:

- Master of XX program: This specialized program was first launched in 2013-2014. It provides a response for the need identified for specialist programs at the graduate business level.
- MBA options: Aside from offering their graduate MBA program in full-time and part-time options, Business school 3 is now offering an accelerated MBA program to cater to those students who already possess a business or commerce undergraduate degree.

- Interdisciplinary graduate programs: Business school 3 has partnered with a few other Departments within their academic institution to offer interdisciplinary programs at the Master's level.
- PhD program: Business school 3 has also expanded its PhD programs in terms of student intake and the number of areas a PhD candidate can conduct their research in.

In sum, Business school 3 has responded by expanding their current program offerings and focusing on self sustaining programs:

We responded by bringing on new programs ... they are self-sustaining programs that actually create a profit for us. As opposed to programs that are dependent on government funding, and therefore have caps on their tuitions.

6.3.3 International recruitment and partnerships.

One participant discussed Business school 3's history of working with partner institutions abroad to broaden their international presence. However, these relationships have not been very successful in the past due to funding and political instability. Nonetheless, Business school 3 has been very successful with international student recruitment, particularly in China. According to a few participants this student population makes up a high percentage of the graduate business student body at Business school 3.

6.4 Influence of Various External Stakeholders on Business School 3

All participants were asked the extent to which various external stakeholders (AACSB accreditation, business school rankings, leading business schools and employers and students) influenced Business school 3's decision making for their overall graduate business program offerings, which includes content, structure and delivery (the adoption of online education).

(continued on next page)

Table 17

Degree of Influence of Various External Stakeholders

External stakeholder	Degree of influence on:	
	Overall program offerings	Online education
AACSB accreditation	Strong	Low
Business school rankings	Low	Low
Leading business schools	Medium	Medium
Employers and students	Strong	Medium

Degree of influence on Business 3's organizational decision making: strong, medium, low

6.4.1 AACSB accreditation.

All participants cited AACSB accreditation as having a strong influence on Business school 3 in terms of their overall graduate program offerings. According to the participants, AACSB accreditation raises accountability and acts as a constraint if suggested program changes do not meet the AACSB accreditation standards. For example, AACSB accreditation standards impact hiring practices as it requires a high percentage of instructors to be full-time instructors with a PhD:

It plays an important role. So, like everything we do we look at the impact on the accreditation processes. So, if you want to offer a program and you don't have the faculty complement to deliver it, you're going to hire sessional instructors, would they be academically or professionally qualified or not, because that would have implications for the accreditation of the school.

In order to achieve AACSB accreditation and maintain it, a considerable amount of work and close scrutiny of the business school's processes and learning goals and objectives is required. In essence, participants viewed the maintenance of AACSB accreditation as a continuous process of program improvement as it requires consistent review of their learning objectives and outcomes (Assurance of Learning framework).

For example:

We are going through this again now for our MBA. I think this has more potential for traction because we are also accountable to our accreditation agencies, so if you can really leverage that accountability too, we have to do this. We are going to report when we do our next maintenance cycle and if we don't do this we might lose accreditation that seems to be hitting that sore spot in allowing things to go through more than it has in the past.

Thus, if adopting online education would jeopardize their AACSB accreditation, Business school 3 would probably not pursue it. However, this is likely not the case, given the fact that AACSB accreditation standards focus on the attainment of learning goals and outcomes as opposed to delivery medium:

I think as long as we can demonstrate that we are meeting the standards that the learning is happening. Then I think it would not jeopardize. If there is a compromise in the education, compromise in the transfer of knowledge, then it would.

As well...

AACSB used to be pretty rigid but they are in competition with the European accrediting bodies, which are more flexible and they are both vying for the international accreditation market. So, AACSB as a result has become much more flexible and open to "tell us what your strategy is and we will evaluate in terms of how well you are delivering that strategy."

Interestingly, not all faculty were very impressed or necessarily saw the benefits to AACSB accreditation. Overall, it seemed that it is senior administration that has placed more value on AACSB accreditation than faculty in Business school 3. Therefore, the participants felt that in terms of their overall programs offerings AACSB accreditation had a strong influence. However, since the AACSB's accreditation standards do not take into account delivery medium, their influence on whether or not Business school 3 decides to adopt online education is considered low.

6.4.2 Business school rankings.

All participants discussed the influence of business school rankings. Various publications rank business schools, such as MacLean's or Forbes magazine. They affect Business school 3 in the sense that some stakeholders determine the quality of a particular business school and its programs by its ranking. Business school 3 has not been very successful in reaching a high ranking, which was brought forward for many reasons, bias, political reasons and criteria used. In

other words, participants viewed rankings as highly subjective although there was a caveat that they would like to be ranked higher. However, Business school 3 does use rankings as a performance measure, even though there is some skepticism amongst participants in terms of its value as a measure. Rather, the sentiment is, focus should more readily be placed on student outcomes. Therefore, the influence of this external stakeholder on Business school's decision making in terms of their overall graduate program offerings as well as the adoption of online education was deemed to be low.

6.4.3 Leading business schools.

All seven participants discussed the impact and influence the major and most prestigious business schools have on Business school 3 in terms of their graduate business program offerings and the decision of whether or not to adopt online education. Surprisingly, the program offerings and initiatives launched by the leading business schools such as Harvard, Yale and Chicago business schools have little direct impact on the program decisions made by Business school 3. Rather, these business schools serve more as part of their benchmarking and program review process:

I think that when we are designing a new program this is like due diligence. One looks at other successful schools. And what kind of offerings do they have. Do we have the same resources as they have to offer those or not? For example, Harvard can do something or Stanford can do something that looks great but their budgets are so phenomenal...so much bigger than ours that we say, "that is wonderful but we can't do it." So, it's a matter of you use these top tier schools to see what is happening out there and then you look at, Ok." "Am I designing this program generally right?" "What can I learn from them?"

Along the same vein, if Business school 3 were to implement an online program, they would look at other schools that have successfully launched an online program to mimic and gain ideas on how best to roll out such a program. The participants viewed the most prestigious schools as the trendsetters in the field, but recognize that Business school 3 is not in the same category as these schools and do not necessarily have the same resources (e.g. financial, human) to launch the same program options. Instead, Business school 3 really focuses on competing directly with the business schools in the same category they are in.

For example:

I mean, we know we are not in that competitive space. But we look at them as examples of some best practices. You know somewhere where we might be able to aspire to...I don't want to say steal certain ideas but aspire to bring certain experiences that they might be able to offer in our own XX way. So, we will look at schools within Canada that we think are the top schools that we are comparable to and that's where we do the direct benchmarking comparison. But when you are looking at the Harvard's, Stanford's, and MITs we look for best practices ideas basically.

A few participants mentioned that faculty often make arguments using the most prestigious schools to extend their point. Therefore, rather than as a whole, the most prestigious schools tend to influence the opinions of individual faculty members. Correspondingly, if the leading business schools made public declarations as to the inferiority of online education to classroom based delivery, the majority of participants stated that Business school 3 would at least consider it and challenge the legitimacy of online education in the view of stakeholders. Lastly, there is high doubt amongst the participants, that the most prestigious schools would ever make such a declaration as many of them have already adopted online education (i.e. MOOCs). Therefore, leading business schools have a medium influence on both overall graduate business program offerings as well as whether or not Business school 3 adopts online education.

6.4.4 Employers and students.

The main external stakeholders cited by participants were prospective and current students, and employers and alumni. Business school 3 also has a Business Advisory Council composed of business leaders from the private and public sectors. The mandate of the Advisory Council is to advise Business school 3 with regard to its strategic choices and to provide information, which will permit the evaluation of the relevance, quality and effectiveness of its current and new programs. This Advisory Council, the participants felt had the greatest overall external stakeholder influence on overall program decisions, including the adoption of online. For instance:

So, with our XXX program delivery, we have a Business Advisory Council as I think most business schools would have. And we pass new ideas for programs often through the Council. Right now we are in the process of XX development and we've drawn just as much input from business professionals as we have from students and faculty here who would be front and centre in putting together the curriculum. So, a huge influence actually.

In general, the majority of participants believed that employers would be fairly positive with online education. However, there would also be some who viewed online education negatively as well. With a more favorable view by stakeholders for the hybrid format:

I think if it is a blended program, they are totally for it. I think employers see the value to that. If it's pure online I still think they would perceive more value to the in class than the pure online.

This may be reinforced by some of the pure online schools that are not as well regarded as most bricks and mortar types of academic institutions. A few of the participants mentioned that they believed that there is a demand out there by students for more online education due to the flexibility that it provides. Thus, if there was demand by student and employers, that could act as an incentive to introduce more online programs at Business school 3.

With respect to the actual influence and impact that students' opinions and employers have on Business school 3's program offering decisions, the participant views were divided by the short term and long term direction of the business school. From a day-to-day basis, employer and student perceptions had little impact as the faculty member, as they are viewed as the expert on the subject matter for the courses they deliver. However, over the long term employer and student perceptions (particularly those on the Business Advisory Council) have a greater influence, due to their financial impact. Put simply, if Business school 3 were to offer a program that employers did not want to hire graduate from, enrollment would decline and the program would fail. Therefore, their views on online education also have a medium influence on whether Business school 3 chooses to adopt online education.

6.5 Influence of Various Internal Environmental Factors on Business School 3

The participants for Business school 3 were asked a number of questions related to their internal governance processes. The findings are described below.

6.5.1 Program evaluation.

Business school 3's graduate business programs are continuously evaluated informally and formally. Such as:

Informal measures: business school rankings on various listings (Financial Times, MacLean's magazines; student feedback, peer evaluations, various standardized test scores for our students, job placements, student/alumni satisfaction, number of applications, student questionnaire feedback; and student focus groups and informal feedback.

Informal evaluation is continuous through course and instructor evaluations throughout the year.

Formal measures: AACSB accreditation and the accreditation maintenance process (conducted by the AACSB), and provincial reviews (occurs every five to seven years – conducted by internal and external academics).

In order to maintain AACSB accreditation, the AACSB sends external evaluators every five years or so to evaluate the curriculum of Business school 3's graduate business programs. The focus is on the achievement of learning goals (Assurance of Learning). The most formalized program review process is initiated by the provincial Ministry of education. This program review process takes place every seven years or so and is mandated by the Quality Assurance Council. The province through external evaluators previously handled this process, however the business school has now taken over the process with oversight and reporting remaining with the provincial Ministry of education.

For existing programs a committee is formed combining a number of different stakeholders. The process is conducted utilizing a number of steps and is finalized with the issuance of a report with recommendations for consideration. Finally, these recommendations facilitate changes to the various business programs offered by Business school 3. The main difference between the AACSB review process and the provincially mandated program review process is that the provincial review is less standardized and more flexible. Therefore, Business school 3 continuously evaluates their business programs both internally and externally by consulting with multiple stakeholders and utilizing multiple evaluation measures.

6.5.2 Internal governance – approval structure.

From the program evaluation data collected, recommendations for program changes often occur. Program changes are approved through the various committees employing a consensus driven voting structure. However, striving for consensus is not always easy, which results in the committee having to hold a majority vote from time to time.

For instance:

Well, a lot of these committees go through discussions. And eventually they vote. And most of things in academia happen largely by consensus. Because that is the type of environment it is. But that doesn't mean that differences do not exist between different faculty members and so on and eventually there is a vote.

The number of committees that a certain program change (or new initiative) requires approval from is dependent on the change itself. For example, for a completely redesigned or new program, the requirement is to seek approval all the way up to the province (provincial Ministry of education). Currently, within Business school 3 there are four committees and approximately seven external committees up to the provincial Ministry of education. For a delivery medium change (without program content or structure change), the process would end at the internal business school level. For individual course changes, the individual faculty member has a fair bit of freedom in the structure of their individual course. For example:

Now, if you are looking at just one course and it is an individual instructor that is really passionate about this and wants to push this through and is willing to put their time and effort for this one course that is not as contentious. It has been. Like I have seen individual course proposals raked over the coals, for really no reason. But that is something that tends to go through fairly easily through the approval process.

However, if they were to undertake the development of a fully online course, approval or department support would still need to be sought:

Now, the other thing that happens is individual faculty members could turn their particular course, if they took the initiative to convert their course into an online course. But if it were fully online it would probably have to be approved by the department and the curriculum committee and so on. If they were just doing refinements of the course and turning it into say a hybrid course, probably they could just go ahead and do it as long as they talk to their colleagues about it.

Committees are chaired by senior administration. It is also important that buy in from committee members is facilitated at each committee level as one cannot proceed to the next committee for approval without having gained approval at the previous level first. Therefore, given the number of committee approval levels, major program changes could take up to one year to take place.

6.5.2 Faculty participation in program changes.

Faculty hold a primary role when it comes to program changes and the launching of new programs or initiatives as they sit on the committees. As well, senior administrative positions are primarily faculty members assigned to those positions. For example, the Dean and Associate Deans are all Business school 3 faculty members first and foremost. Initiatives are usually launched by senior administration (i.e. the program's Associate Dean or Director). However, suggestions for program changes can also come from individual faculty with the support of their department. The role of the Dean and senior administration is that of oversight and direction setting as opposed to decision making in terms of programs. A senior administration does not have unilateral decision making authority to approve programs. Thus, faculty as a whole has a lot of power with respect to the direction graduate business programs take through their participation on committees. For instance:

The committees are made up of faculty. So faculty certainly has to be on board with regard to these initiatives. The Dean is not powered in that way (to solely approve program initiatives). They need to bring the faculty on board because there has to be approvals by the curriculum committees within the business school but also it then goes to the school of graduate studies who also has to approve.

6.6 Participant Perspectives of Online Education in Business School 3

All participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages for delivering a graduate business programs online for faculty or senior administration.

6.6.1 Advantages.

Table 18 below describes the number of Business school 3 participants that believed the benefit listed below could be realized for faculty members or senior administration with the adoption of online education.

(continued on next page)

Table 18

Advantages of Online Education for Faculty and Senior Administration

Advantage	Number of participants cited	
	Faculty	Senior administration
More effective use of class time	4 out of 7	N/A
Increased flexibility	2 out of 7	N/A
Enhanced student monitoring	2 out of 7	N/A
Increased faculty engagement	2 out of 7	N/A
Respond to student demand	NA	5 out of 7
Market expansion opportunities	N/A	4 out of 7
Cost and infrastructure savings	N/A	3 out of 7

6.6.1.1 Perceived advantages for faculty.

More effective use of class time: The majority of participants suggested that if their courses were partly online (hybrid), the online component could be for the purpose of knowledge transfer and then the time in class better utilized for instructional case studies and other experiential learning exercises. For example:

I think for some content, it makes sense to offer it online and then when you come into the classroom ... do the experiential learning in the classroom, applying and making decisions and using the theory. So, I can see that being a huge benefit in the MBA area.

Increased flexibility: Once the faculty member is proficient in delivering courses online, it can be convenient for them as well because they are able to teach their course from anywhere in the world (given that it is a fully online course). Alternatively, in a hybrid format the amount of time on campus could also be reduced.

Enhanced student monitoring: Since everything is noted in an online environment and tracked, the instructor is better able to assess each individual's contribution, participation and effort in the course. In an online environment since the instructor is better able to track the students' work, it

also facilitates the student to be more accountable and contribute to group discussions (online) and group work.

Increased faculty engagement: Interestingly, for faculty with some experience teaching online, participants felt that they were more engaged in the course as there was the need for constant interaction with students, not just on a weekly basis. However, the caveat is that this only works in an online class, which is small in size (for example 20 students).

6.6.1.2 Perceived advantages for senior administration.

Respond to student demand: Five out of seven participants mentioned that they are aware that their students are interested in taking more courses online and therefore, adoption would address this demand. For instance:

Whether we like it or not students are different these days. So we have a cohort of students who don't really understand why they have to be physically present in a classroom that has about 100 or more students; because they feel like, "why should I go if I can listen to this in a podcast. Or see it online. I'm not going to talk to the prof anyways. I am one of 100 or more people." But the bottom line is this generation of students does not learn in the same way as the previous generation.

However, there is the acknowledgement amongst the participants that many students do want and appreciate some face-to-face instruction. For example:

I think students are demanding more and more to be online. And I think they would be more satisfied with an online flavour. Not totally. I think some students find there is some value to having some face-to-face interaction and being on campus and all the social aspects of students making friends.

Market expansion opportunities: Online education provides in general a broader reach, as students do not necessarily have to be local. Rather, students from around the world could enroll and take part in graduate programs (applicable to fully online programs only). Thus, there is an opportunity to attract international students (without relocation) and increase enrollments numbers by appealing to a broader geographical student market. For instance:

We could also recruit students further afield. You don't just have to be geographically based locally. It could attract students from around the world. There is no physical restriction about me teaching in a different time zone. Inversely we could offer a course and market to whomever and get more revenue from course enrolment. It would be a moneymaker, I think.

Cost and infrastructure savings: Online education could be an advantage if the technology allows for a greater number of students to be enrolled in the business school's graduate programs, thereby reducing the cost per student to deliver the program. However, this advantage is dependent on the ability to attract increased class sizes to achieve economies of scale. In addition, there is the perception that there's savings in terms of classroom space:

We don't have the space to take in more students and we are continuously being pressured to accept more students. And there is no budget to hire more faculty or to have space to deliver more education in the traditional sense

The addendum to this advantage is that consideration needs to be made with respect to the labour intensiveness required to deliver a course online with increased student enrolment. As online delivery occurs over the Internet there is a savings in terms of classroom space on the part of the university. In addition, the ability to have more students enrolled in one course or program. Even with the hybrid format of delivery there could be the benefit of infrastructure savings.

6.6.2 Disadvantages.

Table 19 below describes the number of Business School 3 participants that believed the disadvantage listed below could be realized for faculty members or senior administration with the adoption of online education.

Table 19

Disadvantages of Online Education for Faculty and Senior Administration

Disadvantage	Number of participants cited	
	Faculty	Senior administration
Lack of face-to-face interaction	4 out of 7	N/A
Increased workload	3 out of 7	N/A
Loss of control and adaptability	2 out of 7	N/A
Development and delivery cost	N/A	4 out of 7

6.6.3.1 Perceived disadvantages for faculty.

Lack of face-to-face interaction: Many participants cited that they would miss the face-to-face interaction component of teaching in the classroom. By going fully online some participants felt that they would not be able to build the same relationships with their students as they do currently. For instance:

It is also when you get into these higher levels of education the interaction between the students is often in business anyways is often very important. So, it is not only that the learning is occurring from the instructor to the student but also from student-to-student. Like I always learn something new from my students because I insist that we have discussions in class in relation to what I am presenting on any given day. And that kind of interaction helps to engage in active learning. And learn from each other through experiences. Especially in a business program like an MBA where students come from different backgrounds. Then that enriches the class that much more.

Increased workload: Three out of seven participants cited the worry that teaching an online course would increase their workload in terms of the effort required to design and build their courses to be online compatible. This also includes extra time to learn the technology, and greater written feedback to students. One participant provided that it was also more time consuming to manage the course when it is running:

I think they also recognize that online is difficult. It is not just putting up your PPTs onto a website. So, by telling them “oh you only have to be in the classroom two hours a week” they also realize that it is a lot more work behind the scenes.

Loss of control and adaptability: Some participants felt that they had less control over the learning experience in an online environment. In addition, the faculty member has a better opportunity to adapt their pedagogy in order to better engage the students in the classroom environment.

6.6.3.2 Perceived disadvantages for senior administration.

Development and delivery cost: From a senior administration point of view, to bring in a new initiative such as online education there is the perception (some from experience) that there is a fairly high upfront cost and higher ongoing delivery cost due to the technology and additional support (i.e. additional teaching assistants to accommodate larger class sizes) that is needed to set up an effective online program. Although, this could lead to an advantage if the technology allows for a greater number of students to be enrolled in the business school’s graduate programs,

reducing the cost per student to deliver the program. Correspondingly, this advantage is dependent on the business school's ability to attract increased class sizes to achieve economies of scale without sacrificing the overall quality of instruction and delivery. For instance:

One of the arguments that I have heard made in relation to online education is that it is less expensive. It's a way of meeting the burning needs of larger number of students and reducing costs. I don't doubt that there are ways to which online education can be delivered that are very cost effective but you know the old saying "you get what you pay for." So, I also suspect the learning that goes on in the low cost alternatives.

6.7 Faculty Acceptance of Online Education in Business School 3

Given the general advantages and disadvantages cited by the participants for the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery, participants were asked directly how they perceived acceptance amongst faculty. Overall, the participants at Business School 3 believed that faculty were mixed (with a higher percentage being opposed) to the adoption of online education. With one participant describing it as more "skepticism" than outright resistance. Such as:

But to answer your more general question, yes, I would cautiously suggest that I don't know if it is resistance so much or some skepticism about the value of online education.

However, it was acknowledged that most faculty at Business school 3 have not taught an online course nor have they been introduced to the advantages or opportunities associated with online education:

Maybe 5 or 10% (have experience in teaching online). Experience gained either with our programs or with one of our joint programs or elsewhere.

6.7.1 Overall quality perceptions associated with online education.

All seven participants were questioned on the quality of online education in the context of various quality measures such as relevance, learning outcomes and student satisfaction. Specifically:

- For the perception of quality and effectiveness of online education: Two participants rated it below average; one at average; two at above average; and one at excellent.
- Three participants had experience in teaching an online course during their careers. One

participant declined to respond.

- Five participants responded that they would like the option to teach online, and one responded that they would not like the option. One participant declined to respond.

6.7.1.1 Relevance.

The majority of the participants attributed relevance to the content of the course or program as opposed to the actual delivery medium chosen. In other words, online education facilitates the delivery of the content and the pedagogy in innovating and interesting ways but does not necessarily make the program relevant by its use. For the participants that did address the relevance of online education as a delivery medium they saw it as relevant in the sense of its ability to take advantage of up to date technology to delivery education to engage students. In addition, some participants felt that as the technology becomes better adapted, online education would have the ability to be an effective way of teaching.

6.7.1.2 Learning outcomes.

In general, participants believed that students could achieve average to great learning outcomes while employing online education. However, this was less achievable with a fully online program as opposed to a hybrid delivery format. According to the participants, the learning outcomes achieved were dependent on two main factors:

Nature of course or learning outcome sought: In general there was an overall feeling by the participants that certain types of courses were not as easy to teach in an online environment as in the classroom due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. In particular, courses related to behavioural skills such as negotiation and leadership skills were best suited to be learned in the classroom environment as well as certain interpersonal skills. For example:

There are certain skills sets that are really difficult to develop and evaluate online. Certain things that might be uncomfortable for students when they have to stand up and present and defend their ideas and this is what they will be facing in the real world, right ... It's really difficult to simulate that in an online environment. So, that is where I see the disadvantages that certain skill sets are really difficult to effectively develop and evaluate in online environments. Especially, some of the softer skill sets.

However, online education could be very effective for direct knowledge transfer. However, a small minority in favour of online education acquiesced that generally the technology is not there yet to be able to simulate some in class activities, but there may come a day that it might be able to match face-to-face communication

Quality of design: The participants felt that the design of the course was the main determinate of the effectiveness of the course. A course that was poorly designed would render poor learning outcomes regardless of delivery medium chosen. This is coupled with the quality of the instruction, not the media used that determined learning outcomes (all else being equal).

Lack of face-to-face interaction: By far the most heavily cited disadvantage was the lack of face-to-face interaction between the students and the instructor. Many cited that it would be hard to teach certain types of behavioural courses (i.e. negotiation skills and leadership skills) fully online. The participants felt that face-to-face interaction builds stronger bonds to the university itself, which would be lost in an online environment. With advancements in technology, this may become less and less an impediment. However, the view is that the technology is not quite there yet. In addition to faculty member-student interaction, some participants perceived that students in an online environment would miss out on the benefit of the peer-to-peer learning that often takes place in graduate courses during classroom discussions, group work and experiential learning exercises that is often hard to replicate in an online environment.

6.7.1.3 *Student satisfaction.*

Next, the participants were asked if they believed students would be positively satisfied with an online course or program. The participants felt that from the courses that have been offered online at Business school 3 to date, the student course evaluations seem to be on par with their face-to-face counterparts. In addition, the overall perception is that satisfaction would be high as there is a demand for some online delivery by their students. This is especially true among the new generation who are very comfortable with technology. However, the main finding articulated by the participants was that there was the belief that students would not be satisfied with a fully online program. Rather, they would be more satisfied with the hybrid format that mixes both mediums of delivery. It is important to note that the largest offering at the graduate business level

is for the full-time co-op program; therefore there is an expectation of value in face-to-face interaction with the faculty member.

6.7.2 Ideal format for graduate program delivery.

Not surprisingly, given the responses above, the majority of participants were in favour of the hybrid model for delivering graduate business education over a fully online program. The hybrid model was chosen by the majority of the participants for the simple reason that without a face-to-face component, the learning environment would not be as effective or rich. As well, the use of online education has to serve a purpose and be well managed in order to add value. The portion of the course or program best suited for online delivery for direct knowledge transfer to the student. Although, as the Internet and technology develops, the future use of online could come to replicate the classroom environment even more closely. However, it still may take a few years.

6.7.3 Factors contributing to faculty resistance of online education.

Due to the role that faculty in Business school 3 play in the approval of program changes through the committee structure as well as the delivery of the programs themselves, they hold the majority of the power in terms of overall program decision making as a collective and by extension they have the strongest stakeholder influence on whether or not their business schools adopts online education.

Yes, faculty has a lot of power as a group. The Dean could not direct faculty to teach online, especially if you are approaching someone who is tenured unless that person is really interested in doing it or that faculty member might say, “what can you give me in return.” “I want this this and this.” So, there is a negotiation that happens.

Overall, the participants were unanimous in the belief that there would be mixed reactions in terms of faculty being in favour of online education or opposed to it, with a greater proportion of overall faculty being skeptical rather than resistant. The main reason cited by the participants for the lack of enthusiasm by some faculty with respect to online education is the perception of inferior quality due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. Interestingly, there would be little resistance if the faculty member was not directly impacted or if the adoption of online education did not change their workload:

I think as long as the majority of the faculty can still do what they are currently doing, like it is not replacement of, it is in addition to...It's all about “if I don't have to change what I am doing, go ahead.

By extension, it was abundantly clear that faculty would be heavily resistant to replacing the current MBA program with a fully online program. Such as:

I don't think they would be open to a whole online program as a substitute for our current program. I think there would be more acceptance of the notion of adding more online elements to our current program. I think most people would say yes. But that would be some elements, but the basic structure required for the program would remain the same.

Besides concern over the quality of online education, the main factors identified contributing to business schools faculty resistance to online education were:

Table 20

Factors Contributing to Faculty Resistance of Online Education

Factor	Number of participants cited
Resistance to change	7 out of 7
Fear of the unknown	2 out of 7

Resistance to change: In addition to the disadvantages described above, the main reason the participants cited that some faculty were resistant was due to resistance to change in general, which they believed was not limited to the adoption of online education but any major initiative or program change. For online education, this resistance is mainly attributed to the change in how education is delivered by the faculty member. For some, they have taught in a classroom for over 20 years and to now introduce online education (which changes the dynamics of teaching), may be too big of a shock to be easily accepted by some. An example of this sentiment is:

I think they are very familiar with how they do it now. That's how they learned it. And they don't appreciate that there might be some value to doing it some other way. And there may be an ego thing there, "I am the professor. We professors are good at delivering knowledge. Computers can't do that. Therefore, we don't see a future for it.

Fear of the unknown: With the introduction of online education, the traditional role of the faculty member in the classroom is changed and therefore, there is the fear of the unknown. Namely, how will the technology work? How much time will it take?

Factors perceived by the participants to have little or no influence on faculty resistance to online education:

Comfort with Technology: Surprisingly, only one participant felt that comfort with technology contributed to faculty resistance.

Generational Resistance: The majority of participants stated that resistance could be heavier amongst senior faculty. However, there was some hesitation amongst the participants as in most instances participants were able to provide examples of older faculty embracing online education.

6.7.4 Facilitators to increasing faculty acceptance of online education.

Given the findings presented so far for Business school 3, it has become quite clear that the adoption of online education would not be feasible without the support of faculty as they hold as a collective a considerable amount of influence on the approval of proposed program changes or initiatives within their business school. As such, how could senior administration facilitate and increase acceptance amongst faculty for online education? The top four facilitators identified by the participants were:

Table 21

Facilitators to Increasing Faculty Acceptance of Online Education

Facilitator	Number of participants cited
Instructional and technical support	7 out of 7
Peer leadership	6 out of 7
Understanding the advantages of online education	5 out of 7
Incentives and rewards	5 out of 7

Instructional and technical support: One of the main disadvantages cited by the participants is the fear that online education would increase their workloads. One strategy taken that would help to alleviate this concern would be support. In particular, instructional design support to aid the

faculty member in designing and converting their courses to an online platform. This support was cited as the most effective enabler to adoption as faculty do not necessarily have the expertise in this area. For example:

Well, basically I think they need to give support to faculty, right. You can't just say go online. You have to make sure they have solid online infrastructure for people to use. So I think that is pivotal if you want the people to adopt the technology. So, to overcome that barrier I think the business school would need to invest in proper infrastructure for online education, technical support, and support for the design of the course online.

In addition, easily accessible training for all faculty and continuous support and internal peer leaders to mentor other faculty members willing or wanting to adopt their course to online education would be helpful. For instance:

You know you could have those key professors be the point of contact within the department that people could meet face-to-face. So this is how you record a session, this is how you post a video. I could just show them. It would probably be an easier sell with those that are not as comfortable with technology.

Peer leadership: It was expressed over and over throughout the interviews that directions from senior administration would not be taken well by faculty. Rather, it was viewed by the participants that successful initiatives take place through peer leadership. Without peer leaders explaining the case for the initiative and the advantages, other faculty are not as likely to get on board and the initiative would fail. For example:

Well, you know I think it is a matter of getting people within the faculty who are perceived as leaders, who have respect, who have credibility, who agree with the Dean's direction and then presenting a compelling case to others within the faculty that this is a reasonable way to go. "The status quo is a situation going to make us fall farther and farther behind other business schools. You can't stand still, it is a very competitive landscape but separately from the competition, the students, key stakeholders want us to be up to date with the instruction and the way instruction is delivered."

As well...

So, again I think that the facilitators of change are people within the faculty who are respected by their colleagues, who have already embraced this technology and can reach out to their colleagues saying, "look this is an incredible initiative and worthwhile and of value and something we should be doing."

Strategies proving successful included:

- Having the idea generated from faculty as opposed to senior administration:

The idea needs to come from the professors. So the administration has to find a way to make it appear as if the professors thought of it. I mean, the natural instinct of a professor is when asked to do something is no. But if the idea comes from them, well then it is quite different.

- Holding discussions and gaining support prior to committee meetings:

It takes a lot of politicking. Meaning, meeting people in advance of committee meetings, selling an idea on the ground. Going around to different offices, talking to people, trying to find champions. You know if you can get a few champions from senior management, a few key people who are respected at the business school. If you can get them to stand up and really support your idea.

- Engaging support and collaboration of faculty at each and every level of the development and implementation process:

So the process of ensuring there is buy-in and engagement around the vision entails bringing in faculty at each stage of the process. It involves collaboratively coming up with an agreed sense of direction. And that entails actually putting together the committee, bringing the new program initiatives championed by leaders within the faculty, which may include the Deans, “think this may be a great move and niche and this is how it aligns with our agreed upon strategic directions.” The details need to be flushed out in the committees.

- Without peer leaders explaining the case for the initiative and the advantages, other faculty are not as likely to get on board and the initiative would fail:

Top down, forget it. That doesn't work in a university. But if it is bottom up and its peer-to-peer and if it is people that are perceived to be political influencers, even though they might not hold any official title. Then that would have more of an impact on behaviour than anything coming down from the top.

Understanding the advantages of online education: As stated previously, most faculty have not taught an online course and so are unaware of its benefits. There is a feeling amongst the participants that once the advantages become known (through peer leadership), resistance would decrease. Furthermore, there is the need to justify to faculty how the introduction of online education would benefit and differentiate their program to other online programs (i.e. the demand

would be there). This would require presentations and a plan for faculty to consider this option. In other words, evidence based examples are required to convince faculty. For instance:

I don't think a dean can impose any initiative on the faculty, when the faculty are the front soldiers who deliver the program. So, where they are not engaged, it just won't happen. That doesn't dismiss that the Dean can be highly influential in bring into a program the operationalization of his vision in the way of any new program initiatives, but that person will fail miserably if they don't enact the process to ensure that the people who are going to be delivering are taking some ownership. They have to see that this is not only good for the school but good for them. It's good for the students, good for the program but also good for them.

As well...

Every vision has people that will subscribe to it. So, it is really the ability of the Dean to articulate the value of the elements of the vision and what it means for the faculty. If you can convince a substantial amount of your constituents to support your vision, by showing the value of what you are proposing, then people go for it.

Incentives and rewards: As described previously, some faculty perceive that the introduction of online education would increase their workload. Some of the participants cited as a means to gain support was through various incentives, monetary or workload. This includes funding for experimentation and individual incentives from monetary to course reduction for faculty in recognition of the efforts in pursuing online education.

In sum:

So, to entice them money speaks. Like if you tell them, we will pay you \$10,000 for a development contract or you'll get double the credit for that course. So instead of having to teach four courses, you only have to teach three courses. That would speak to them. But it is also something that a lot of schools can't do just because of where we are.

As well as ...

So it needs to be more of an incentive system and this works here by a socialized learning that is supporting all these new initiatives and providing funding for exploring different methods of pedagogy including online.

6.8 Summary of Main Findings for Business School 3

Business school 3 participants described the current business school environment as offering various opportunities and challenges. The main challenges include: concerns over

ensuring the relevance of their graduate business programs given the rapidly changing nature of business; competing in the increasingly competitive graduate business education market due to the increasing number of graduate business programs available; difficulty in differentiating between graduate business programs due to their similarity to gain a competitive; and decreased provincial funding. The main opportunities reside in attracting different student populations domestically and abroad by refocusing graduate business program portfolios and offering different program options that meet the needs and expectations of different student markets. Correspondingly, re-establishing partnerships with the business community and focusing on offering sustainable programs.

To respond to the pressures exerted by the environmental factors in the business school environment, Business school 3 has attempted to differentiate themselves by building on their core strengths and aggressively recruiting international students to come to their graduate business programs. In the future, participants expressed that Business school 3 will be continuing their current expansion strategy with a focus on self sustaining programs and possibly capitalizing on online delivery and other technologies to broaden their student base and access. The maintenance of AACSB accreditation is viewed as a facilitator of Business school 3's overall strategy.

In terms of the influence of various external stakeholders, the maintenance of AACSB accreditation was found to have a strong influence on the overall graduate business program offerings at Business school 3 as this accrediting body was viewed by the majority of participants to be vital due to the visibility and reputation of excellence this accreditation brings. However, given the current AACSB accreditation standards, they hold low influence on whether or not Business school 3 pursues online education as its adoption would not impact their status with the AACSB. However, if the AACSB were to change their standards in the future and the adoption of online education would jeopardize Business school 3's accreditation they would most likely not pursue this option. Business school rankings were found to have a low influence due to skepticism amongst participants in terms of its value as a measure. Leading business schools have a medium influence on overall graduate business program offerings due to the benchmarking of their programs that takes place. If Business school 3 were to implement an online program, they would look at schools that have successfully launched an online program to mimic and gain ideas on how best to roll out such a program. Business school 3 is influenced mainly by the business schools that they compete directly with. However, if the leading business schools made public declarations as to the inferiority of online education, the majority of participants stated that Business school 3 would at least consider it as their view challenges the legitimacy of online education. The opinions

of employers and students, especially the members on their Business Advisory Council have a strong influence on overall graduate business program offerings and a medium influence on the adoption of online education by Business school 3 due to the need to recruit students and to receive donations from employers. It is believed that employers still hold a slightly negative perception of fully online graduate business programs. In general, the majority of participants believed that there is still an overall negative stigma associated with online education by stakeholders in general.

Even though Business school 3 participants have cited various opportunities and challenges given the business school environment, they are limited in their ability to react. On one hand senior administration would like to address the demand and expectations of the market, but are constrained by various internal environmental factors that could stall or render the process unattainable. It was unanimously articulated by the participants that senior administration could not unilaterally impose a major program change or initiative, as they do not have the power or authority to do so. Major program decisions are determined and approved through the committee approval structure (consensus driven voting structure). Therefore, for any major program change or initiative faculty as a collective holds the majority of the power as they form the committees. As such, senior administration could not impose a major change to a program without faculty support. Major program changes take a considerable amount of time due to the number of committee levels the initiative or program change requires approval from before it is implemented. Consequently, this constrains the business schools' ability to adapt their graduate programs quickly to the rapidly changing business environment itself.

The greatest benefit cited by the participants for faculty members was more effective use of class time in that the time in class (hybrid format) would be focused on instructional case studies and discussion, rather than content transfer. Other advantages for faculty included: increased flexibility and time management, enhanced student monitoring, and enhanced faculty member engagement. For senior administration it provides the opportunity to respond to student demand for more online education; potential for market expansion by broadening their prospective student base, including international students and the possibility to gain infrastructure and potential cost savings.

The participants felt the biggest disadvantage to online education were quality concerns due to the lack of face-to-face interaction many felt was needed for student engagement and satisfaction as well as the instructors own engagement and control of the course. In addition,

participants felt that to deliver an online course would require additional time compared to a traditional face-to-face course. For senior administration there was the added pressure to attract more students to their online programs in order for it to be cost efficient.

Overall, the participants at Business School 3 believed that faculty were mixed (with a higher percentage being opposed) to the adoption of online education. The majority of participants did not believe that a fully online graduate business program could match the quality of a fully face-to-face or hybrid program due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. Furthermore, most participants viewed online education as a format for delivery with little impact on actual relevance as this measure was mainly associated with content not delivery medium. Learning outcomes were dependent on the quality of the design of the course with online education being best suited for the delivery of direct and theoretical knowledge transfer. Finally, there is the perception that there is a demand for more online education by the students; however, they would be less satisfied with a fully online program than a hybrid or fully face-to-face program. Not surprisingly, given the responses above, the majority of participants were in favour of the hybrid model for delivering graduate business education over a fully online program. It was also abundantly clear that faculty would be heavily resistant to replacing the traditional MBA program with a fully online program.

The main reason cited by the participants for the lack of enthusiasm by some faculty with respect to online education is due to the perception that online education is of inferior quality. Other factors contributing to faculty resistance identified were: fear of the unknown and resistance to change. Interestingly, there would be little resistance if the faculty member was not directly impacted or if the adoption of online education did not change their workload. In order to overcome resistance, the participants believe that peer leadership is required; an incentive/reward system be established to compensate faculty for the extra work required to develop online courses; a demonstration of the benefits to online education be provided and strong instructional; and technical support in the form of hiring internal instructional designers that are easily accessible. It is noteworthy that many of the facilitators provided by the participants were also held to have application in multiple contexts where senior administration was attempting to gain support and acceptance from faculty members towards a certain initiative or program change.

Chapter 7 – Individual Case Findings for Business School 4

7.0 Introduction

The findings for Business school 1 of this qualitative research study are presented in this chapter. This case will begin with the context for Business school 4, followed by an in depth description of the findings for this business school divided by the following six categories:

- External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment
- Response to Business School Environment by Business School 4
- Influence of Various External Stakeholders on Business School 4
- Influence of Various Internal Environmental Factors on Business School 4
- Participant Perspectives of Online Education in Business School 4
- Faculty Acceptance of Online Education in Business School 4

7.1 Case Context

Business school 4 is a medium Canadian AACSB accredited business school offering undergraduate and graduate business programs. Enrollment at the undergraduate level ranges approximately 2,100 students (full-time or part-time) and 600 students at the graduate level (full-time or part-time). At the graduate level, Business school 4 offers an MBA with options, an EMBA, a specialized Master's in Business, a PhD program as well as various professional certificates. According to the participants, the main medium of program delivery is face-to-face in a classroom environment. In addition to lectures, the most cited pedagogical methods utilized are instructional case studies and experiential learning exercises. Business school 4 also has a large co-op and international exchange program. In terms of online education, Business school 4 currently does not offer any courses or programs either in the hybrid format or fully online at the graduate level.

According to the Participant Profiles collected, the eight individual participants representing Business school 4 hold the following characteristics:

- *Gender*: Six males and two females participated.
- *Stage of career*: Two at the Assistant level, two at the Full level; and three participants did not specify (three of the participants have held a senior administrative role in the last year). One participant declined to respond.
- *Tenure*: Three with 1-5 years; three with 6-15 years; and two with 16+ years of tenure.
- All the participants work on a computer on a daily basis.
- *Computer proficiency*: One rated at average; four rated at above average; and three rated their computer proficiency as excellent.
- *Level of acceptance of technology to deliver course content*: One rated it below average; three rated it above average; and four rated their level of acceptance of leveraging technology to deliver course content as above average.
- *Prior experience in teaching online*: None of the respondents have had any prior teaching experience in online education.
- *Option of teaching online*: Three participants answered they would like the option to teach online; and five responded they would not like the option.

7.2 External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment

All participants were asked to describe the current business school environment. The responses focused on various external factors placing pressure on business schools. The top four cited external environmental factors in the business school environment were:

(continued on next page)

Table 22

External Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment

Environmental factor	Number of participants cited
Balancing stakeholder demand and expectations	8 out of 8
Decreased provincial funding	5 out of 8
Increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market	5 out of 8
Concerns over graduate business program relevance	3 out of 8

7.2.1 Balancing stakeholder demand and expectations.

All eight participants commented on the extent and influence of balancing various stakeholder needs and expectations in order to continue to compete in the current business school environment. According to a few participants, student demand is moving away from the generalist MBA towards more specialized graduate business programs. Business schools are paying attention because if an individual business school does not offer graduate business programs that stakeholders believe are of high quality and relevant, enrollment decreases as well as donations, which negatively impacts the business school financially. Lastly, balancing stakeholder demand has also resulted in raised interest by business schools to offer business courses to non-business students as well as a greater openness to interdisciplinary programs and research.

7.2.2 Decreased provincial funding.

Five out of eight participants cited a challenge for publicly funded business schools in Canada and academic institutions in general as decreased provincial funding. For instance:

Well, the university environment as a whole is becoming less publicly funded and more co-funded. So, governments in general seem to be reducing the amounts they are willing to pay and universities of course are responding by trying to find other sources of revenue. So, that is happening at my university and I believe that is happening in general. Business schools are part of the university and so there is a trickle down effect.

However, there was the feeling amongst the participants that business schools are in a better position than some of their other academic counterparts to receive external funding as they have deeper ties with the business community. The main outcome of the funding formula is that business schools are seeking, more than ever before, expansion opportunities to increase market share. A strategy promoted to address decreased funding is to increase enrolment numbers. For example:

I think business schools are under pressure because they have raised prices so substantially that it is becoming prohibitive to go online at the same time. But I don't think that online is stealing so much as it is engaging a new category of people.

7.2.3 Increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market.

Five out of eight participants touched on the increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market, which they attributed to the stagnant domestic market as well as increased competition. Such as:

I think there are far more competitors with respect to business schools. So, a growing number of schools who are expanding their offerings. Specifically, (at) the Masters level whether it's trying to grow or expand their programs, but more so in specialized Master's programs. Especially in North America there is basically a stagnant market for MBA programs. Many MBA programs are growing their programs from international students, rather than domestic students. Schools are looking to expand programs and effectively expand revenue of business schools by adding specialized Masters programs.

This landscape has led business schools to:

- Expand their graduate business program offerings to increase enrollment domestically. As well, actively recruiting international students to their graduate business programs.
- Seek international opportunities and partnerships to expand their reach and increase revenue. However, partnership and expansion opportunities also pose a challenge for business schools in their ability to find successful partnerships and maintaining them.

7.2.4 Concerns over graduate business program relevance.

Three out of eight participants raised the importance of attention to ensuring that their graduate business programs content and delivery were relevant given the changing nature of

business and correspondingly, the changing nature of the role of today's manager. In other words, balancing theory versus practice:

I think one of the main challenges, which has always been a challenge is negotiating theory versus practice. And I think that is one of the biggest questions not just for business schools but for professional schools in general. To kind of figure out how to translate those things and make the theory relevant and useful and then give people the skills to apply it in their particular fields or jobs or wherever they happen to go.

According to the participants, relevance includes investigating and including new fields of business in program curricula that is relevant to today's manager (e.g. entrepreneurship). As well, along with content come various new delivery mechanisms to enhance the learning environment. In addition, each participant was asked to define the main purpose of graduate business education. The main responses included:

- To provide students with critical thinking skills and foundational business knowledge to understand and successfully oversee and manage complex organizations.
- To help students to learn to be better managers and workers in organizations and to have more successful careers.
- To help develop the knowledge, skills and abilities relevant to a career in management (e.g. business fundamentals, teamwork, problem solving, communication, ethics, global awareness, etc.).
- To make students aware of challenges and requirements of business and to provide students with assorted tools to deal with them.

In sum, the participants felt that the main purpose of graduate business education is to prepare and develop future graduates to be successful leaders and managers in the global business world.

7.3 Response to Business School Environment by Business School 4

Participants from Business school 4 were asked how their business school has responded to the current business school environment. No participants from Business School 4 stated that their business school has not responded to the pressures in the business school environment (i.e. maintained status quo). The top three responses to the business school environment by Business school 4 were:

Table 23

Response to Business School Environment – Mechanisms for Differentiation

Response	Number of participants cited
AACSB accreditation	8 out of 8
Expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings	6 out of 8
International recruitment and partnerships	4 out of 8

The main strategy applied by Business school 4 in response to the business school environment have been to apply a differentiation strategy by building upon its core strength in research and pursuing an international focus by aggressively recruiting international students to their graduate business programs.

7.3.1 AACSB accreditation.

All participants discussed AACSB accreditation in terms of its significance and importance for Business school 4. For example:

AACSB is constantly being discussed and fulfilling their requirements for remaining accredited and all that. So, yes it is important.

The participants provided three reasons for the importance of AACSB accreditation to Business school 4, as follows:

7.3.1.1 Part of history and identity.

Business school 4 is one of the first business schools in Canada to be AACSB accredited. As one of the longest AACSB accredited business schools in Canada, AACSB accreditation has become part of their culture and identity. In addition, Business school 4 relies heavily on its AACSB accreditation to form part of its marketing strategy in the recruitment of students. In fact, participants stated that not having AACSB accreditation could lead to a disadvantage due to the expectation of many stakeholders that business schools should be AACSB accredited due to the number of business schools in Canada already holding AACSB accreditation.

7.3.1.2 Increased international reputation and visibility.

AACSB accreditation elevates the reputation of Business school 4 and increases its international presence as this accreditation is globally recognized (AACSB – is the largest accreditation body for business schools in the world). Given that a large portion of Business schools 4's graduate business students are international students, AACSB accreditation supports their international strategy as it lends visibility and credibility on the international stage. In this sense, AACSB accreditation is more important for international presence than for domestic visibility:

Well, first of all there is the marketing aspect. We believe rightly or wrongly that students from around the world, so the international student, that they use this as a selection method. And so we think it affects our market. And our draw and therefore the number of students we get, the whole thing. So, that is why it matters. And that is why we go through all the hoops.

7.3.1.3 Quality and legitimacy.

Another major reason cited for attaining or maintaining AACSB accreditation is to achieve legitimacy in terms of stakeholder perception in general. There is the belief amongst participants that AACSB accreditation demonstrates to stakeholders and especially prospective students that their programs are of "high quality."

7.3.2 Expanding and modifying graduate business programs offerings.

Six of the eight participants discussed new programs as well as various other program delivery initiatives that have been launched by Business school 4 to respond to the business school environment and the various needs and expectations of different student types, such as:

MBA Options: Aside from offering their graduate MBA program as full-time and part-time options, Business school 4 is now offering an accelerated MBA to cater to those students who already possess a business or commerce undergraduate degree.

More electives: In addition, Business school 4 is now offering more elective course offerings to meet different student interests, which better allows the students to cater their program to their

needs. This also includes increased joint programs and interdisciplinary work with other Departments within the academic institution:

I think they are similar at kind of the fundamental level. There are basic skills and basic sets of knowledge that are needed no matter what school you go to. I mean there are differences in how rigorous they are, how difficult it is and the level of competence you need to display. But you need to know the basics of accounting, finance and marketing, etc.

Most participants were in agreement that on a fundamental level most graduate and especially MBA programs are similar. But where they differ is in specializations:

Well, we have grown the program a little bit, which I think is a good thing. What that means for us is offering more courses then we used to. And I think that is a good thing to. More electives in particular. I think that is good because it allows students to customize their programs a little bit more. And choose what they are really interested in and useful for them.

7.3.3 International recruitment and partnerships.

Multiple participants discussed how Business school 4's's international recruitment and expansion initiatives have translated into efforts to develop partnerships through joint programs in other areas of the world, thereby increasing Business school 4's international presence.

7.4 Influence of Various External Stakeholders on Business School 4

All participants were asked the extent to which various external stakeholders (AACSB accreditation, business school rankings, leading business schools and employers and students) influenced Business school 4's decision making for their overall graduate business program offerings, which includes content, structure and delivery (the adoption of online education).

(continued on next page)

Table 24

Degree of Influence of Various External Stakeholders

External Stakeholder	Degree of influence on:	
	Overall program offerings	Online education
AACSB accreditation	Strong	Low
Business school rankings	Low	Low
Leading business schools	Medium	Low
Employers and students	Strong	Medium

Degree of influence on Business school 4's organizational decision making: strong, medium, low

7.4.1 AACSB accreditation.

All participants cited AACSB accreditation as very significant for Business school 4. Firstly, it is important to understand how accreditation affects Business school 4's internal processes and decisions with respect to their graduate business program offerings. In order to achieve AACSB accreditation and maintain it the participants state a considerable amount of work and close scrutiny of the business school's processes and learning goals and objectives is required:

It's an exhaustive process, very detailed with 100s of questions, 100s of pages of data we have to provide, interviews with students, profs staff and interviews with management.

In essence, participants viewed the maintenance of AACSB accreditation as a continuous process of program improvement as it requires consistent review of their learning goals and outcomes (Assurance of Learning framework). Thus, if adopting online education would jeopardize their AACSB accreditation, Business school 4 would probably not pursue it. However, this is likely not the case, given the fact that AACSB accreditation criteria focuses more on the attainment of learning goals and outcomes as opposed to delivery medium.

For example:

I think that the AACSB recognizes that there is a huge growth in online education. A number of the strong schools have online MBA programs as well as their face-to-face programs. I think what they have said, “what is important in terms of assessment of learning.” In other words, “can we make sure that students still have the same learning outcomes that they do in a face-to-face program?” And really if you have a designed a really good online program it should pretty closely mirror the face-to-face one anyhow. And so I think you could still require the same or expect the same learning outcomes.

Rather, AACSB accreditation is something that has long been institutionalized within the school since it has been a part of Business school 4 for so long. However, if they weren’t accredited, the question would be, would they pursue it? It seems that the overall perception is that it is better to have AACSB accreditation than not having it. For example:

I actually see more value of the accreditation in the reality check that it gives us. When we go through a re-accreditation exercise and do the work to maintain our accreditation, we are doing more than just box ticking for the accreditation organization. I really see it as an opportunity for us to look at what we are doing and make sure that we are being purposeful and proactive in reviewing our curriculum and in reviewing both of the learning objectives for our students and all those things associated with our core mission, which we all think is important but what we might not do if it weren’t for the accreditation exercise.

However, a very small minority of participants contemplated whether all the work associated with maintaining AACSB accreditation was worthwhile. However, no participants stated that the business school “should” or “would” let their AACSB accreditation expire. Such as:

Personally, I think being accredited is probably better than not being accredited. Do I think there is real value to that? I am not so sure. We are accredited and we have been for a very long time and I know whatever the cycle is there is always an effort to gear up to make sure that when they (AACSB) are coming through, we have the information to answer their questions. I think it would be a bad thing to lose.

Therefore, the participants felt that the AACSB had a strong influence on overall graduate business program offerings, but low influence in terms of the adoption of online education on Business school 1’s decision making due to the current AACSB standards in place for maintaining membership.

7.4.2 Business school rankings.

Business school rankings do not seem to have much impact on program decisions or the adoption of online education on Business school 4. However, they do value and place ranking as something they endeavour to achieve. Even though rankings are a desired outcome, there is recognition amongst Business school 4 participants that unlike the accreditation process there is no direct and formal work that needs to be conducted to achieve it. Rather, its value is based on the criteria used to determine ranking and they are very subjective. Rankings are viewed as a symbol by external stakeholders of the prestige and quality of the business school as well as a key decision maker for students in which business school to attend. For instance:

I believe that rankings are seen as of value. But there is also an appreciation that when there's only 100 spots and there is 100s of thousands of business schools, it does not necessarily allow for all business schools to be properly measured. So I think that rankings are important especially to international students looking to determine whether they should spend their life savings on business education or not but I think from other external stakeholders point of view there is a recognition that the rankings are not a perfect measure.

Therefore, the influence of this external stakeholder on Business school's decision making in terms of their overall graduate program offerings as well as the adoption of online education was deemed to be low.

7.4.3 Leading business schools.

All eight participants were asked and discussed the impact and influence the major and most prestigious business schools have on Business school 4 in terms of their graduate business program offerings as well as decision of whether or not to adopt online education. Surprisingly, the program offerings and initiatives launched by the leading business schools such as Harvard, Yale and Chicago business schools have little direct impact on the organizational program decisions made by Business school 4. Rather, these schools serve more as part of their benchmarking and program review process, as summed up by one participant:

It is all about benchmarking. You don't want to be too different. You don't want to be too innovative. Because if you make a mistake, you don't look good.

As such, the participants did feel that there was some indirect influence in terms of best practices, as the best practices established at the leading business schools tend to trickle down to other business schools. For instance:

There must be some because as you say I use Harvard materials, now and then. And I use Ivey materials. So, there is some trickle down effect. There is some influence through professors as well. Some of us have been trained at Harvard. So, they start to work here and they bring those methodologies, right. So, that is an effect.

Along the same vein, if Business school 4 were to implement an online graduate business program, they would look at other schools that have successfully launched an online program to gain ideas on how best to roll out such a program. For example:

So, for me in doing changes it is important to legitimize activities. So, in that way yes. What MIT does is important to us in our activities in the sense to the degree that we want to do the same things. We can legitimize them.

The participants viewed the most prestigious schools as the trendsetters in the field, but recognize that Business school 4 is not in the same category as these business schools and do not necessarily have the same resources (e.g. financial, human) to launch the same program options. Instead, Business school 4 really focuses on those business schools in the same category they are in. For instance:

I would say most certainly, yes. They are certainly something that we look at. But we also have to look at what is being offered among our peer group. So we would look more so at our peer group.

It was however voiced multiple times by the participants that even though the most prestigious business schools in the field set the standards of best practices, Business school 4 really caters to the market they are serving and what they feel is the best way to proceed. As suggested by one participant:

And so, it is a very long-winded answer to your question but we are certainly aware of what goes on at a lot of other business schools, not just the Harvard's and the London business schools of the world. But we don't try to mimic or copy them because we have our own brand, our own identity and our own clientele.

In terms of the adoption of online education, there was high doubt amongst the participants, that the leading business schools would ever make a declaration as to the inferiority of online education as many of them have entered this very market. Correspondingly with many of

the most prestigious business schools now offering online graduate programs, they have raised awareness and a higher level of acceptance for this medium of delivery. In other words, they have normalized online education as an option to deliver education. Some examples provided include:

At Harvard or these top schools they develop the MOOCs and that they will go heavily into the online to use their brand to capture the market share. And we, at the university level are responding with our own MOOCs. But that is at the undergraduate level. There is not enough numbers at the graduate level to do this.

Therefore, since leading business schools are used by Business school 4 for benchmarking purposes they do have a medium influence on their overall graduate business program offerings, but given limited resources their influence on the adoption of online education is viewed as low.

7.4.4 Employers and students.

The main external stakeholders cited by participants were students, and employers and alumni. Business school 4 also has a Business Advisory Council composed of respected members of the business community (local and international). This Council regularly offers leadership and advice to senior administration on their business programs, and as such they can be considered to have great influence on Business school 4's overall program direction. For instance:

It has an impact. At the Business Advisory Council level it has a strong impact. The Dean goes there, they advise the Dean and he sits there and he listens to what they have to say. He presents to them, here is what we are doing, here's what we are thinking, what do you think? And there is like 15-18 people there and they give frank advice.

In general, the majority of participants believed that employers would view a fully online graduate business program to be of lesser quality than its on campus counterpart:

I think a lot of people's impression of online programs (gut instinct impression) is that they are not as good. That online means that it is lower quality. Maybe because they perceive that there is less screening if you do online courses. 1000s of people are taking the online courses that are currently available. So, I think that would be their initial reaction. I think you would probably have to prove to them otherwise that the caliber of students is the same. That the work that they are producing is the same. That their skill set is the same.

This perception may be related to the newness of the delivery medium compared to the traditional classroom learning environment in traditional bricks and mortar academic institutions that most employers are used to.

For instance:

It is newer, so I am going to take a guess and say the reputation has not gotten there quite yet. But give it 20 years and maybe everything's online. Maybe we evolve there. I still think not. I think there is the place for the residency. But maybe the residency part is much smaller than it is now. It's a reasonable possibility.

Even though the stigma may currently be of lower quality, this could change over time.

One factor cited that does impact perception and acceptance of online programs is the established reputation of the university itself. Some participants felt that the higher the reputation of the business school, the more likely that stakeholders would accept their online graduate business program. For example:

I think there is still a stigma. And I think there is still a ranking of programs based on delivery. But the reputation of the school makes a difference. So, for example, if Harvard put out a fully online MBA program, the corporate community would not look at that as being lesser than a face-to-face one. So, I think acceptance has to do with reputation.

Interestingly, the hybrid format is looked upon more favourably than the pure online format due to its ability to include face-to-face interaction. In addition, dependent on the number of courses offered online, employers would not be aware that courses were offered online as the majority of the program was still in class. For example:

First of all (employers) wouldn't know. Most stakeholders don't have a clue how most of these courses are delivered. What's delivered in what method? They don't know. But then there is the blended model you talked about earlier. Let's say the XX has 20 courses and two of them are online. Those will not be asterisked on their transcripts. So, no one will know. So, it will be invisible.

With respect to the actual influence and impact that students' and employers opinions have on Business school 4's program offering decisions, the participant views were based on the short term and long term direction of the business school. From a day-to-day basis, employer and student perceptions had little impact as the faculty member is seen as the expert on the subject matter for the courses they deliver. For instance:

I teach what I think is important for students to know when they graduate. And I think most professors think of it that way. We are experts in our field and I think we are probably (if not us), I don't know who would be the best people to recognize where education should go.

However, over the long term employer and stakeholder perceptions (particularly those on the Business Advisor Council) have a greater influence. For example:

We tend to listen more to employers in terms of what the program should be about or what would prepare people best for business success. We tend to listen to students more in how we implement it. We do of course ask them what they think should be in the program. But we spend more time talking to them about say, “this course in accounting, it’s not being rated very high, what’s the problem with it?” We would be much less likely to ask the business community that question. So, we do take both seriously but we just tend to ask them different kinds of questions.

As well...

We are certainly open and attentive to employers because we realize that since our students are our products then the employers are the ultimate customers. We do need to think about the value proposition for employers. What do our students bring to them in terms of being productive employees and so on? So, of course we need to be aware of that and at the same time recognize that we are not a trade school so we are not teaching with all due respect welding, how to weld. We are teaching them how to think critically, know to communicate and manage projects that require higher-level learning that can be applicable in a range of situations.

7.5 Influence of Various Internal Environmental Factors on Business School 4

The participants for Business school 4 were asked a number of questions related to their internal governance processes. The findings are described below.

7.5.1 Program evaluation.

Business school 4’s graduate business programs are continuously evaluated informally and formally. Such as:

Informal measures: business school rankings on various listings (Financial Times, MacLean’s magazines; student feedback, peer evaluations, various standardized test scores for our students, job placements, student and alumni satisfaction, number of applications, student questionnaire feedback, and student focus groups and informal feedback.

Informal evaluation is continuous through course and instructor evaluations throughout the year.

Formal measures: AACSB accreditation and the accreditation maintenance process (conducted by the AACSB), and provincial reviews (occurs every five to seven years – conducted by internal and external academics). In order to maintain AACSB accreditation, the AACSB sends external evaluators every five years or so to evaluate the curriculum of Business school 4's programs. The focus is on the achievement of learning goals (Assurance of Learning). For example:

What they want is that each school sets goals of what they want to achieve. And then you have to put a place in place of how you will achieve these goals that you have set for yourself in place. Then you have to measure how well the students have performed against your plan. Real measurements, not professors claiming performance. It has to be some outside measurement and then deficiencies are noted. Then you have to have a plan to address those deficiencies.

The participants were mixed in their view on the value that AACSB accreditation brings; even so they did see the benefit in participating in the process by way of bringing in a structured review of the business schools internal processes. Therefore, Business school 4 continuously evaluates their business programs both internally and externally by consulting with multiple stakeholders and utilizing multiple evaluation measures.

7.5.2 Internal governance – approval structure.

From the program evaluation data collected, recommendations for program changes often occur. Program changes are approved through the various committees employing a consensus driven majority voting structure approach. Initiatives for program changes can come from senior administration or from individual faculty members. The support of the Dean is usually required as it relates to the strategic direction of the business school.

The number of committees that a certain program change (or new initiative) requires approval from is dependent on the change. For example, for a completely redesigned or new program, the requirement is to seek approval all the way to the provincial Ministry of education. Internal to the business school there is approximately three committees and three committees external to the business school up to the provincial Ministry of education. Within individual courses, the faculty member has a fair bit of freedom in terms of the structure of their individual course. In fact, most faculty would be unhappy if they were directed how to teach as many value the academic freedom that academia provides. In practice it is also something the Dean or Senior administration would never do, as they need faculty support to deliver Business school 4's programs.

Committees consist of senior administration (who are also faculty) and faculty with some student representation. Decisions within committees are made by majority vote; however there is concern if the vote is close. In practice, the goal is a consensus driven voting structure. To ensure committee approval a large amount of preparation work takes place prior to the initiative being presented at committees. Therefore, given the number of committee approval levels, major program changes could take up to one year to take place:

It takes at least a year. And if it is a new program it goes to the province. It has to go to the XX. You have to go internally through XX's three or four committees and then it would go through the province and they would decide.

7.5.3 Faculty participation in program changes.

Faculty members hold a primary role when it comes to program changes and the launching of new programs or initiatives as they sit on the committees. It was unanimously articulated by the participants that senior administration could not (or would not) unilaterally impose a major program change or initiative, as they require the support of faculty to successfully launch any new initiative or major program change:

My guess would be probably not because without faculty support you are not going to be successful in delivering a program. That's just common sense. It is the faculty that delivers the program. And so, if you do not have faculty that wants to do things online or a hybrid, it's going to be very difficult to get that through.

As well, senior administrative positions are primarily faculty members assigned to those positions. For example, the Dean and Associate Deans are all Business school 4 faculty members first and foremost. The role of the Dean and senior administration is that of oversight and direction setting as opposed to decision making in terms of programs.

During the interviews, participants were asked if the Dean could unilaterally impose a major program change if he/she wanted to? The response received was technically no, however the Dean has a great amount of leverage in terms of the direction the business school takes and a new program would most likely not be approved without his support. Rather, senior administration acknowledges that the business school is at its best when faculty and senior administration are aligned with initiatives and the future direction of the school. Consequently, change is slow within academic institutions due to internal barriers and constraints that can move various initiatives forwards in a timely manner.

7.6 Participant Perspectives of Online Education in Business School 4

All participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages associated with delivering graduate business programs online for faculty and senior administration.

7.6.1 Advantages.

Table 25 below describes the number of Business school 4 participants that believed the advantage listed below could be realized for faculty members or senior administration with the adoption of online education.

Table 25

Advantages of Online Education for Faculty and Senior Administration

Advantage	Number of participants cited	
	Faculty	Senior administration
More effective use of class time	3 out of 8	N/A
Access to multiple teaching tools	2 out of 8	N/A
Increased flexibility	2 out of 8	N/A
Market expansion opportunities	N/A	4 out of 8
Cost and infrastructure savings	N/A	3 out of 8

7.6.1.1 Perceived advantages for faculty.

More effective use of class time: Multiple participants suggested that if their courses were partly online (hybrid), the online component would be applied for direct knowledge transfer in the place of the lecture. Then, time in class better utilized for instructional case studies and other experiential learning exercises. For example:

In my mind, offloading some of the technical bits that are straight forward but cumbersome time wise and doing higher order things even if it is just doing problems or discussions and what not in the class makes a lot of sense.

Access to multiple tools: Online education provides the faculty member with the option of leveraging technology to enhance the learning experience of students, thereby expanding their pedagogical delivery options.

Increased flexibility: Once the faculty member is proficient in delivering courses online, it can be convenient for them as well because they are able to teach the course from anywhere in the world (given that it is a fully online course). Alternatively, in a hybrid format the amount of time on campus could also be reduced.

7.6.1.2 Perceived advantages for senior administration.

Market expansion opportunities: Online education provides in general a broader reach, as students do not necessarily have to be local. Rather, students from around the world could enroll and take part in graduate programs (applicable to fully online programs only). Thus, there is an opportunity to attract international students (without relocation) and increase enrollments numbers by appealing to a broader geographical student market. In sum:

A great benefit of online education is that you can reach a whole lot of people. And it is a form of distributed learning. You can bring people together from different areas. Faculty in one place can meet with students in another place. So, students don't have to travel. So for people who live in remote areas, they don't have to travel to get an education. People don't have to disrupt their home lives per se.

Cost and infrastructure savings: Online education could be an advantage if the technology allows for a greater number of students to be enrolled in the business school's graduate programs, thereby reducing the cost per student to deliver the program. As online delivery occurs over the Internet there is a savings in terms of classroom space on the part of the university:

Cost-savings. Office and classroom space is limited. Maybe they have not thought about it yet. But who knows what the next budget cuts will bring.

Even with the hybrid format of delivery there could be the benefit of infrastructure savings. However, this advantage is dependent on the ability to attract increased class sizes to achieve economies of scale, including efficiency in reaching a broad and large student base when needed. The addendum to this advantage is that consideration needs to be made with respect to the labour intensiveness required to deliver a course online with increased student enrolment.

7.6.2 Disadvantages.

Table 26 below describes the number of Business school 4 participants that believed the disadvantage listed below could be realized for faculty members or senior administration with the adoption of online education.

Table 26

Disadvantages of Online Education for Faculty and Senior Administration

Disadvantage	Number of participants cited	
	Faculty	Senior administration
Increased workload	8 out of 8	N/A
Lack of face-to-face interaction	7 out of 8	N/A
Development and delivery cost	N/A	4 out of 8

7.6.3.1 Perceived disadvantages for faculty.

Increased workload: Unanimously, all participants cited the worry that teaching an online course would increase their workload in terms of the effort required to design and build their courses to be online compatible. As well, the participants felt that it would be more time consuming to manage the course when it is running. This also includes extra time to learn the technology, and increased written feedback to students. For instance:

Because you know, you bring 10 students into a room for a three-hour seminar that is actually pretty easy. Everybody shows up, they sit down and everybody starts talking. You have a break. It is just not that hard. For online, you've got to coordinate, you've got to set tasks. Everybody's got to write something and post it on a bulletin board. It just gets complicated.

Lack of face-to-face interaction: Many participants stated that they would miss the face-to-face interaction component of teaching in the classroom. By going fully online some participants felt that they would be unable to build the same relationships with the students as they do currently. However, this disadvantage is all dependent on the size of the class and the level of the class.

For example, in large classes even in the classroom there may be a loss of face-to-face interaction:

Well, from a faculty point of view, face-to-face can be very expensive. So, if you have a 70 or a 200 person class, face-to-face contact is not something that you miss because it's hugely burdensome.

7.6.3.2 Perceived disadvantages for senior administration.

Development and delivery cost: From a senior administration point of view, to bring in a new initiative such as online education there is the perception (some from experience) that there is a fairly high upfront cost due to the technology and support that is needed to set up an effective online program. In spite of upfront cost, this could lead to an advantage if the technology allows for a greater number of students to be enrolled in programs, thereby decreasing cost per student. However, this advantage is dependent upon the ability of the business school to attract increased class sizes to achieve economies of scale. For instance:

To create those courses, it is super expensive. That is why it is done at the undergraduate level. You needed masses to make the scale factor. Without scale, it is pointless. If you have a class with 10 students, it is pointless. It is three times more expensive.

Furthermore, the upfront and continued cost is not perceived as worth the advantages due to the some participants' skepticism over the future viability of this delivery medium in traditional business schools. In sum:

Yes, we are looking at some now, although I still don't expect us to be incredibly active in the online space at least in the near future. And part of that reason is just the cost associated with it. As you know it is expensive and I am not sure that the cost is worth the benefits at least not in the near term. I think the jury is still out in terms of the viability, the value proposition of some of the things that are going on and I frankly don't see how universities are going to monetize sufficiently in the world of MOOCs.

7.7 Faculty Acceptance of Online Education in Business School 4

Given the general advantages and disadvantages cited by the participants for the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery, participants were asked directly how they perceived acceptance amongst faculty. Overall, the participants at Business school 4 believed

that most faculty would be opposed to a fully online graduate business program. Examples from participants include:

I would expect to see some resistance to the proposal to an online MBA program. I believe a lot of people would share my views that I expressed to you earlier, that a program that was totally online would be much harder to ensure that the same quality and learning objectives as is our residential program.

As well as ...

My guess would be that the overall reaction would be slightly negative. And I think it goes back to the quality idea. That we wouldn't be able to deliver an online program with the same degree of quality. And even if we could, people (stakeholders) would infer that it wasn't of the same quality.

However, it was acknowledged that most faculty have not taught an online course nor have they been introduced to the advantages or opportunities associated with online education.

7.7.1 Overall quality perceptions associated with online education.

All eight participants were questioned on the quality of online education in the context of various quality measures such as relevance, learning outcomes and student satisfaction. Specifically:

- In terms of the overall quality comparison between the two delivery mediums (online versus face-to-face), the results favoured face-to-face delivery.
- For the perception of quality and effectiveness of online education: Three participants rated it below average; and two at average. One participant cited it depended on the course and two participants did not provide a response within their Participant Profile.
- None of the participants had any previous teaching experience in online education. Correspondingly, of the eight participants, only three cited they would like the option to deliver a course online.

7.7.1.1 Relevance.

The majority of the participants attributed relevance to the content of the course or program as opposed to the actual delivery medium chosen. It can be said that online education is akin to the

relevance of textbooks. In other words, online education facilitates the delivery of the content in innovating and interesting ways but does not necessarily make the program relevant by its use. Lastly, relevance can be determined or identified by the needs of the students themselves.

7.7.1.2 Learning outcomes.

In general, participants believed that online education did have some benefits. However, it was unanimous amongst the participants that in class instruction was by far superior in terms of learning outcomes and overall quality due to factors that online education could not emulate. Overall there was a feeling by the majority of participants that certain types of courses were not as easy to teach in an online environment as in the classroom due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. Especially courses related to interpersonal skill development, such as leadership or team-work skills. For instance:

Well, for the whole campus experience, the social networking, the public speaking, the teamwork side, you sort of miss out on that experience.

Although, online education could be very effective for direct knowledge transfer. In particular, technical material would be useful to be placed online to make more effective use of class time. In addition, the participant felt that in an online program, students would miss out on the campus experience and networking and learning opportunities that come with interactions with their peers. For instance:

When I did my MBA (many) years ago what happened was and I think my Profs did a good job but I leaned much more from students as I did from my Profs. So, if everyone is sitting in front of his or her computer in his or her own home or wherever, that part doesn't happen. Or it happens less. So, I am concerned about the loss. I mean part of the reason you go and do an MBA is to consult with managers with experience. So, when does that happen online.

7.7.1.3 Student satisfaction.

Next, the participants were asked if they believed students would be positively satisfied with an online program. To a large extent the perception is that satisfaction is subjective and dependent on the individual student. Student satisfaction is believed to be linked to the student's preference for acquiring education and the amount of choice the student possesses in either taking courses online or in the classroom as well as individual student circumstances and lifestyle.

However, students who prefer the online route for education typically do not attend a traditional bricks and mortar academic institution but rather enroll in academic institution that specialize in fully online education (such as Athabasca University).

7.7.2 Ideal format for graduate program delivery.

Not surprisingly, given the responses above, the majority of participants were inclined to favour a fully face-to-face program in a classroom environment due to the benefits it provides that is seen to be lacking in the online environment. Many of the participants did see the value in the hybrid format of delivery. As well, the use of online has to serve a purpose and be well managed in order to add value and flexibility for the students. Lastly, certain students may more readily embrace online education over others. For example, online education in the participants' point of view was better suited for the part-time or EMBA students due to their work commitments. In sum:

I don't see our school doing a fully online program without some type of face-to-face content. So, I think that it would have to be a hybrid model. But I don't see that in the near term. I can see hybrid courses. I can see some online courses.

7.7.3 Factors contributing to faculty resistance of online education.

Due to the role that faculty play at Business school 4 in the approval of program changes through the committee structure as well as the delivery of the programs themselves, they hold the majority of the power as a collective and by extension they act at the stakeholder with the strongest influence on whether or not their business schools chooses to adoption online education. On the whole, the participants were unanimous in the belief that the majority of faculty would be resistant to the adoption of a fully online graduate program. By extension it was abundantly clear that faculty would be heavily resistant to replacing the current MBA program with a fully online program. For instance:

But keep in mind that even though they (leading business schools) may be offering a fully online MBA program, they also offer their face-to-face MBA program. So, I think the answer is that at this time, I for one, would not suggest that we should scrap our full-time or part-time MBA program that is face-to-face and with it to an online program.

In addition, one participant provided that at their business school there was enough demand for the traditional MBA program:

No. Because I think there is enough demand for the traditional MBA program. And lots of people are comfortable teaching in the regular MBA program in a class setting.

The main reason cited by the participants for the lack of enthusiasm with respect to online education is the perception of lack of quality. Due to the overall perception that this medium of delivery is inferior to classroom training, participants felt that there was no real incentive to pursue online education further. These opinions are based on the belief that the current system of classroom based education works well and therefore, there is no reason to change. It was acknowledged that most faculty have not taught an online course or have been introduced to the advantages or opportunities that online education possesses. In sum:

There would be an element to that (resistance to change). There would be serious questions of the quality of the educational experience. The time commitment to invest in a whole new method of learning that clearly or that most would perceive as inferior. So, why go down that path for the sake of going down that path? Unless there was some really take away that was otherwise being missed.

Besides concern over the quality of online education, the main factors identified as contributing to faculty resistance were:

Table 27

Factors Contributing to Faculty Resistance of Online Education

Factor	Number of participants cited
Resistance to change	6 out of 8
Lack of incentive to pursue online education (other priorities)	5 out of 8

Resistance to Change: One of the main reason the participants cited that some faculty were resistant to online education was due to resistance to change in general, which they believed was not limited to the adoption of online education but any major initiative or program change. This resistance to change is also linked to the disruption that online education would cause in how education would be delivered by the faculty member. For some, they have taught in a classroom

for over 20 years and to introduce online education (which changes the dynamics of teaching), may not be easily accepted. Thereby, providing faculty with the power to accept or reject the proposition to teach an online course:

I think they would be mostly unenthused. But faculty are not enthused about anything. Because we have constructed lives that are quite nice and we like them the way they are. And whenever you say we are going to do something new, our reaction is going to be, "I don't think so."

Lack of incentive to pursue online education (other priorities): Given the current rewards system focused on research success, adopting online education for an individual faculty member poses little advantage to take on such an initiative.. Or technology is generally not of interest to most faculty in a research-intensive university. For example:

We currently don't get any type of benefit from developing new ways of online teaching. The budgets don't necessarily improve by developing new ways of online teaching (either). If it takes away from where faculty feels they are most valuable. Which is on the creating new knowledge side of things as opposed to delivering courses. So, there is not a lot of interest basically fighting the inertia of creating new ways of getting measured on teaching when your interest is on research and you are also measured on it and you are also measured on the existing way of delivering the traditional way of teaching.

In addition, some participants stated that it comes down to that online education is not of interest to some faculty and they would rather spend their time on their research priorities. For instance:

I just don't think it is of interest to them. I think how faculty deliver generally is not of interest to them. I think that the reason faculty do adopt technology is because they are bored in delivering the same content over and over again every single year and so they want to make the classes more fun. People who are more interested with technology will do that. People that are not concerned will just grind through it.

Factors perceived by the participants to have little or no influence on faculty resistance to online education:

Comfort with technology: All participants were asked their perception of comfort with technology as a potential barrier to adoption for faculty. The overwhelming response was somewhat, but it was dependent on the individual faculty member, their acceptance of technology for education delivery, as well as the type of technology adopted and the associated technological support.

For example:

I don't think it is a comfort with technology issue. From what I have seen it is a technology issue. And it's a let's get it right type of issue. Cause I have seen a lot of distance education that has been tried and it has been tired with crappy technology. It doesn't work.

Generational resistance: The participants views were mixed on whether or not a factor in faculty resistance amongst faculty was due to generational issues. Interestingly, of the seven participants, most rated online education favourably. However, there were some participants that could believe that younger faculty members were more open to online education than older faculty members.

7.7.4 Facilitators to increasing faculty acceptance of online education.

Given the findings presented so far for Business school 4, it has become quite clear that the adoption of online education would not be feasible without the support of faculty as they hold as a collective a considerable amount of influence on the approval of proposed changes or initiatives within their business school. As such, how could senior administration facilitate and increase acceptance amongst faculty for online education? The top four facilitators were:

Table 28

Facilitators to Increasing Faculty Acceptance of Online Education

Facilitator	Number of participants cited
Incentives and rewards	7 out of 8
Instructional and technical support	5 out of 8
Understanding the advantages of online education	5 out of 8
Peer leadership	4 out of 8

Incentives and rewards: At Business school 4 to gain support senior administration will typically seek volunteers and in the absence of volunteers they will provide incentives to recruit volunteers. As described above, some faculty perceive that the introduction of online education would increase their workload. Some of the participants cited as a means to gain support was through various incentives, monetary or workload. The incentives that work are dependent on individual

faculty preferences. Individual incentives can range anywhere from monetary to course reduction.

For example:

Could be monetary. Could be additional support. Could be course buy-out so they can have time to prepare ... to re-evaluate/revamp what they do to fit with the new learning model.

The incentives that work best are dependent on individual faculty members' preferences:

People respond to different incentives for different reasons. So, when you ask someone to prepare a new course sometimes you make it easier by giving them a teaching release a year ahead of time. That in principle gives them time to devote to prepare the course. Sometimes, some of our teaching is supplemental to load so that means that people get paid incrementally for teaching a special course, maybe in XX. But it kind of depends on the real nature of the trade-off.

Instructional and technical support: One of the main disadvantages of online education cited by the participants is the fear that its adoption would increase their workloads. One strategy taken that would help to alleviate this concern would be support. In particular, instructional design support to aid faculty in designing and converting their courses to an online platform. This support was cited as a very effective enabler to adoption as faculty do not necessarily have the expertise. In particular, easily accessed training for all faculty and continuous support. In addition, internal peer leaders to mentor other faculty members willing or wanting to adopt their course to online education. In essence, internal points of contacts faculty could seek help from. For instance:

I am not sure for faculty how much interest there would be. Like I have never taught online. But I would think that it is more administrative than just simply teaching. Therefore, without a sufficient level of support, which there typically is not, you know you might have some push back from professors.

Understanding the advantages: Understanding and proving the benefits to online education is one of the key enablers to adoption. As stated previously, most faculty have not taught an online course and so are unaware of its benefits. There was the feeling amongst the participants that once the advantages become known (through peer leadership), resistance would decrease. Furthermore, the participants felt that there is the need to justify to faculty how the introduction of online education would benefit and differentiate their programs from other online programs (i.e. the demand would be there). Without peer leaders explaining the case for online education (other any other initiative) and its advantages, other faculty are not as likely to get on board and the initiative would fail. What is needed are strong examples and experience with the technology for online

education to be accepted. This would require presentations and a plan for faculty to consider this option (i.e. evidence). For example:

So, unless it was being really encouraged top-down, in creating a real value for the faculty, I don't see it happening. So, where's the champion in doing that? It might be the Dean. It might be the Director of the MBA, who says there is real opportunity here to tap into markets that are unexploited. That kind of thing. We could have a first mover's advantage.

As well as ...

Usually data. Like X number of students have asked for it. I imagine you would have to do a pilot project. And you could get some faculty to try it out. And tell others that it wasn't terrible. Feedback that would compare the online and classroom. Show them that you could deliver the same experience. That students were just as satisfied.

Peer leadership: It was expressed over and over throughout the interviews that directions from senior administration would not be taken well by faculty. Rather, it is viewed that successful initiatives take place through peer leadership. Without peer leaders explaining the case for the initiative other faculty are not as likely to get on board and the initiative would fail. As such:

There would need to be buy-in from a peer-to-peer level from our faculty to be able to make this happen. But they would need to have time to think about it, to explore it, to look at successes, to understand it, and to understand what kind of support would be needed and provided. Again, it's about being successful in what they do. You know teaching and delivering the courses is a big part of what they do at the university. Teaching, research and service. So, teaching is a huge component.

7.8 Summary of Main Findings for Business School 4

Business school 4 participants described the business school environment as offering various opportunities and challenges. The main challenges pertain to: balancing stakeholder interests due to student demand moving away from the generalist MBA to specialized graduate programs; competing in the increasingly competitive graduate business education market, which they attributed to the stagnant domestic market as well as increased number of competitors; decreased provincial funding (however, there is a feeling that business schools are in a better position than some of their other academic counterparts to receive funding as they have ties with the business community); and ensuring graduate business program relevance given the changing nature of business and correspondingly, the changing nature of the role of today's manager.

The main opportunities cited reside in attracting different student populations domestically and abroad by refocusing graduate business program portfolios and offering different program options that best meet the needs and expectations of different student markets. In addition, developing stronger partnerships with the business community and seeking alternate sources of revenue. Lastly, balancing stakeholder demand has also resulted in raised interest by business schools to investigate new fields of business and to offer business courses to non-business students as well as a greater openness to interdisciplinary programs and research.

Business school 4's response to the business school environment has been to offer various MBA program specializations as well as a number of interdisciplinary graduate business programs to cater to different student markets in the hope of expanding market share. Business school 4 also focuses heavily on recruiting international students to their graduate business programs. In the future, they are continuing their current competitive strategy with a focus on self-sustaining programs and capitalizing on executive education and certificate programs to generate additional revenue. The maintenance of AACSB accreditation is viewed as a facilitator of Business school 4's overall strategy due to its benefits of increasing their international reputation and identity and enhancing the quality and legitimacy of their business school in the view of stakeholders.

In terms of the influence of various external stakeholders, the maintenance of AACSB accreditation was found to have a strong influence on the overall graduate business program offerings at Business school 4 as this accrediting body was viewed by the majority of participants to be vital due to the visibility and reputation of excellence this accreditation brings. In addition, Business school 4 takes considerable effort in maintaining their accreditation. However, since the current AACSB accreditation standards do not focus on delivery medium, they hold a low influence on whether or not Business school 4 pursues online education as its adoption would not impact their status with the AACSB. However, if the AACSB were to change their standards in the future and the adoption of online education would jeopardize Business school 4's accreditation they would most likely not pursue this option. Business school rankings were found to have a low influence due to skepticism amongst participants in terms of its value as a measure. Leading business schools had a medium influence on overall graduate business program rankings due to the benchmarking of their programs that takes place. The participants did feel that there was some indirect influence in terms of best practices, as these best practices tend to trickle down to other business schools. As well, there was high doubt amongst the participants, that the leading business schools would ever make a declaration as to the inferiority of online education as many of them

have entered this very market. Correspondingly with many of the most prestigious business schools now offering online graduate programs, they have raised awareness and a higher level of acceptance for this medium of delivery. According to the participants, the opinions of employers and students, especially the members on their Business Advisory Council, have a strong influence on overall graduate business program offerings and a medium influence on the adoption of online education. From a day-to-day basis, employer and student perceptions had little impact as the faculty member is seen as the expert on the subject matter for the courses they deliver. However, their influence is quite present in long-term program planning and delivery. Overall the participants felt that the majority of employers view online education as inferior to the face-to-face or hybrid delivery mediums due to the relative newness of the delivery medium.

Even though Business school 4 participants have cited various opportunities and challenges given the business school environment, they are limited in their ability to react. On the one hand senior administration would like to address the needs and expectations of the market, but are constrained by various internal mechanisms that could stall or render the process unattainable. It was unanimously articulated by the participants that senior administration could not (or would not) unilaterally impose a major program change or initiative, as they require the support of faculty to successfully launch any new initiative or major program change. Major program decisions are determined and approved through the committee approval structure (consensus driven voting structure). Therefore, for any major program change or initiative faculty as a collective holds the majority of the power as they form the committees. As such, senior administration could not impose a major change to a program without faculty support. As well, major program changes take a considerable amount of time due to the number of committee levels the initiative or program change requires approval from before it is implemented.

The participants felt that the benefits for faculty with the adoption of online education included: in the hybrid format – the online component could best serve for the purpose of knowledge transfer and then the time in class better utilized for instructional case studies and other experiential learning exercises; additional tools to deliver their courses and take better advantage of classroom time (in a hybrid format) to focus on experiential exercises and instructional case studies; and flexibility in that the course is not regulated to a specific location or time. For senior administration it provides them with the potential for market expansion by broadening their prospective student base, including international students and the possibility to gain infrastructure and cost savings.

The participants for Business school 4 unanimously quoted the biggest disadvantage for faculty was in terms of the increase in their workload needed to design and build their courses to be online compatible. A close second was the loss of face-to-face interaction between the student and the instructor and between students. This is a great loss as according to the participants, online education in its current format cannot begin to replicate the peer learning, networks and relationships that are developed in a campus based program. For senior administration the greatest disadvantage is the cost to develop an online program. In addition, the added pressure for senior administration to attract more students to their online programs in order for it to be cost efficient, which could hinder overall quality.

On the whole, the participants were unanimous in the belief that the majority of their faculty would be resistant to the adoption of a fully online graduate program. The main reason cited by the participants for the lack of enthusiasm with respect to online education is the perception of inferior quality due to lack of face-to-face interaction. Due to the overall perception that this medium of delivery is inferior to classroom training in terms of relevance, learning outcomes, and student satisfaction, participants felt that there was no real incentive to pursue online education further. These opinions are based on the belief that the current system of classroom based education works well and therefore, there is no reason to change. It was however acknowledged that most of their faculty have not taught an online course or have been introduced to the advantages or opportunities that online education possesses.

However, some participants did see the value in the hybrid format of delivery for content delivery and to add some flexibility for their students. Other factors contributing to faculty resistance included: resistance to change in general; online education not aligning with their research interests; and lack of incentive to pursue online education. In order to overcome resistance, the participants believe that peer leadership is required; an incentive/reward system be established to compensate faculty for the extra work required to develop online courses; a demonstration of the benefits to online education be provided; and strong instructional and technical support in the form of hiring internal instructional designers that are easily accessible. It is noteworthy that many of the facilitators provided by the participants were also held to have application in multiple contexts where senior administration was attempting to gain support and acceptance from faculty members towards a certain initiative or program change.

Next, in chapters Eight, Nine and Ten, the findings from the cross-case analysis will be presented and discussed with each chapter representing one of the three research questions guiding

this research study. In order to answer the research questions, an extensive cross-case analysis was conducted between the four individual cases (business schools). The purpose of the cross-case analysis was to compare and contrast the findings of the four business schools to explore the differences and in particular to identify strong and consistent similarities and themes across the cases. This method allowed for certain assertions and generalizations based on the findings to be feasible in order to respond to the research questions.

Chapter Eight – Cross-Case Findings and Discussion – Research Question 1

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings from the cross-case analysis as they relate to research question 1. Before presenting these findings a comparison of these four business schools will be provided to highlight some of their similarities and differences and to provide an overall context to the cross-case analysis.

8.0 Background between Business Schools

To begin, a comparison of the background between the four business schools that took part in this research study will be provided to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences between the four Canadian AACSB accredited business schools that participated in this research study.

(continued on next page)

Table 29

Comparison of Background between Business Schools

Characteristic	Business School 1	Business School 2	Business School 3	Business School 4
Size of business school	Large – approximately 4,300 students at the undergraduate and graduate level.	Small – approximately 2,100 students at the undergraduate and graduate level.	Medium – approximately 3,150 students at the undergraduate and graduate level.	Medium – approximately 2,700 students at the undergraduate and graduate level.
Availability of online graduate courses/programs	One graduate business program offered in the hybrid format with more online offerings expected to be launched in the future.	No online courses or programs offered fully or partially online at the graduate level.	One fully online joint (interdisciplinary) graduate program offered between the business school and another department.	No online courses or programs offered fully or partially online at the graduate level.
Number of participants with prior experience in teaching online	Three out of seven participants.	Two out of seven participants.	Three out of six participants. One participant declined to respond.	Zero out of eight participants.
Number of participants who would like the option to teach online	Six out of seven participants.	One out of five participants. Two participants declined to respond.	Five out of six participants. One participant declined to respond.	Three out of eight participants.
Participants' perceptions on the quality and effectiveness of online education	Four participants rated it as average; and three rated it above average.	Four participants rated it at below average; and three rated it as above average to excellent (dependent on the type of course and learning outcomes desired).	Two participants rated it below average; one at average; two at above average; and one at excellent.	Three participants rated it below average; two at average and one felt it was dependent on the type of course. Three participants declined to respond.

From the outset, the four business schools were similar in that they were all Canadian publicly funded AACSB accredited business schools offering graduate business programs. In addition, each business school held as their flagship graduate business program, the Master of Business Administration (MBA) with the main medium of delivery as face-to-face in a classroom setting. The main pedagogical strategies employed in the classroom, were lectures, and instructional case studies with some experiential learning exercises. However, each business school held various differences in terms of the size of their student population, the variety of graduate programs offered, the extent of their adoption of online education, and participant characteristics.

What is most interesting in Table 29 is the attitude and perception of the participants given the small number of participants who have actually had any first hand experience with the online medium of delivery. Of the 29 participants, only eight (28 percent) definitively had direct experience with this delivery medium. Although, this is not surprising given the limited adoption of online education amongst these AACSB accredited business schools. Correspondingly, the two business schools (1 and 3) who offered some form of online education had slightly higher overall acceptance or regarded the quality of online education as average or higher more frequently, in comparison to business schools (2 and 4) who did not offer any online education. With this in mind the findings of the cross case analysis as it relates to research question 1 will be presented.

8.1 Response to Research Question 1

The first research question guiding this research study was: *To what degree do the various enabling and constraining forces identified in the current business school environment influence Canadian AACSB accredited business schools' decision of whether or not to adopt the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs?*

8.1.1 External environmental factors in business school environment.

Firstly, to begin to be able to respond to Question 1 context needs to be established. Namely, the external environmental factors in the business school environment that are placing pressure on business schools in terms of their graduate business program offerings. A summary of the findings is provided in Table 30 below.

Table 30

Comparison of Environmental Factors in the Business School Environment

Environmental Factor	Business School 1	Business School 2	Business School 3	Business School 4	Total Participants:
Balancing stakeholder demand and expectations	7 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	8 out of 8 participants	29 out of 29 (100 percent)
Increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market	6 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	6 out of 7 participants	5 out of 8 participants	22 out of 29 (75.9 percent)
Concerns over graduate business program relevance	6 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	3 out of 8 participants	21 out of 29 (72.4 percent)
Decreased provincial funding	3 out of 7 participants	4 out of 7 participants	4 out of 7 participants	5 out of 8 participants	16 out of 29 (55.2 percent)

The current business school environment can be summarized as follows: business schools attempting to address different stakeholder demand and expectations; sustaining market share in a highly competitive market; ensuring graduate program relevance given the rapidly changing world of business; and continuing to operate and maintain quality standards with decreased provincial funding. These environmental factors according to a participant from Business school 3 are forcing business schools to respond in order to survive:

And that is juxtaposed against the fact that society is changing so quickly. There are so many things that change all the time today that keeping up is really a chore. And not keeping up can become a serious problem. In fact, an organization that does not adapt constantly, one day it will find that it has to do a complete overhaul if it wants to survive.

With this context in mind, the next section looks at how the business schools that formed part of this research study have responded to the external environmental factors in the business school environment. Their responses are provided next.

8.1.2 Response to external environmental factors in the business school environment.

All four business schools indicated that they have responded to the external environmental factors by pursuing a differentiation strategy. However, pursuing this type of strategy in and of itself is proving challenging:

(The) challenge is to differentiate from others. You know, all management programs are close as they offer basic courses in management. So they want to differentiate and it is the same thing for every school. They want to have their own colour, their own visibility, their own reputation (Business school 1 participant).

Table 32 provides a comparison of their responses. It is important to note that none of the four business schools have stated that they have not responded. To be included in the Table below at least two of the four business schools would have had to of responded in a similar fashion.

Table 32

Comparison of Responses to Business School Environment

Response	Business School 1	Business School 2	Business School 3	Business School 4	<i>Total Participants:</i>
Accreditation	7 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	8 out of 8 participants	<i>29 out of 29 (100 percent)</i>
Expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings	7 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	6 out of 7 participants	6 out of 8 participants	<i>26 out of 29 (89.7 percent)</i>
International recruitment and partnerships	0 out of 7 participants	6 out of 7 participants	1 out of 7 participants	4 out of 8 participants	<i>11 out of 29 (37.9 percent)</i>

Table 32 displays a summary of some of the most consistent findings of this research study. Consistent in that each of the four business schools that took part in this research study have responded in a similar way, namely: accreditation (AACSB); expanding and modifying their current graduate business program offerings; and international recruitment and partnerships. Correspondingly, it is also strongly suggested that the remainder of the 21 Canadian AACSB accredited business school have also responded in a similar fashion. This assertion is based on a review of their overall graduate business program offerings (see Appendix A). Each response will be explored more fully next.

8.1.2.1 Accreditation.

All four business schools and their participants unanimously (100 percent) stated that they have responded to the external environmental factor of increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market by maintaining or attaining AACSB accreditation. As stated previously, Business school 2 is newly AACSB accredited business school and Business school 1 possesses in addition to their AACSB accreditation two other international business school accreditations. Business school 3 and 4 are long term members of the AACSB. To compete in this environment all four business schools have stated that they have attempted to “differentiate” themselves in the market to recruit students to their programs. The reason that the participants viewed AACSB accreditation as an integral part of their business school’s organizational strategy is due to the following reasons:

Remaining competitive: Across business schools, the participants voiced that AACSB accreditation today does not necessarily differentiate their business school domestically, but rather “not” having this accreditation would be viewed as a competitive disadvantage due to the number of business schools in Canada who already have attained AACSB accreditation.

International recruitment and visibility: During interviews it was uncovered that a high percentage (40 + percent) of the graduate students at these business schools were international students. As such, AACSB accreditation was vital in their view to aid in recruiting international students to their graduate business programs due to the increased visibility and international presence that AACSB accreditation provides to them. Therefore, AACSB accreditation according to the

participants across business schools facilitates their international strategies, which is noted that all four business schools are pursuing to various extents.

Quality and legitimacy: The participants viewed AACSB accreditation as an international symbol of quality to stakeholders, thereby enhancing their legitimacy in the view of stakeholders. For instance:

Because being an accredited business school means that it is a signal to individuals from the outside. So whether it is faculty, potential faculty, potential students, or the community at large. It is a way to look at and understand whether or not there is a level of quality that the institution has attained (Business school 4 participant).

8.1.2.2 Expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings.

Secondly, all four business schools have expanded and modified their current graduate business program offerings. In total, 89.7 percent of participants interviewed provided examples of how their business school has responded by offering specialized programs or expanding their graduate program electives and/or concentrations in order to differentiate themselves in the market. Where they have made attempts to differentiate is to offer different specializations and options to prospective students. The expansion strategies per business school are as follows:

Business school 1 has responded by offering a full-time or part-time MBA program as well as offering one of their main graduate business programs in a part-time hybrid format to cater to the time commitments of the non-traditional student. In addition, they offer various specialized graduate business programs catered to local market industries.

Business school 2 does not offer any online programs but does offer their MBA program on a part-time basis to cater to the needs of the non-traditional student as well as an accelerated option for students who already hold an undergraduate business degree. In addition, they have various concentrations as well as a work-study option.

Business school 3 offers the most options to prospective students in that they offer their MBA program on a full-time, part-time and accelerated basis as well as a co-op option. In addition, they offer various interdisciplinary and joint graduate business programs catered to local market industries. Correspondingly, one of their interdisciplinary programs is offered fully online.

Business school 4 offers no online education option but does offer their MBA program on a full-time, part-time and accelerated basis to respond to the needs of various market segments. They also offer various specialized graduate business programs.

As such, much of the expansion in program offerings by these business schools has been to appeal to a broader market (i.e. the non-traditional student) through a hybrid program (Business school 1) or by offering programs at an accelerated or part-time basis (all business schools). In addition, all four business schools are offering more specialized programs to address student demand for these types of programs and to address the decrease in demand for the traditional generalist MBA.

8.1.2.3 International recruitment and partnerships.

Finally, three out of the four business schools have stated that they actively recruit international students (primarily from Asian countries) to come to their business school. This strategy is used to offset the decline in demand by the domestic student market and to combat the increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market. It is noted that even though, no participants from Business school 1 mentioned this response to the business school environment, this business school does have a high percentage on international students enrolled in their graduate business programs, which leads to the suggestion that they do recruit international students as well.

In sum, these business schools responses to the business school environment lend further support to the idea that there is a high degree of homogeneity in the business school environment. Furthermore, there is confirmation that the option chosen by these business schools to respond is not first and foremost the adoption of online education. Rather, what is seen is that they have attempted to respond to the business school environment not by embracing online education but by expanding their current program options by establishing different market niches, while maintaining face-to-face delivery for the most part for the delivery of their programs. As such, Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are maintaining their current structures, processes and practices in response to the business school environment. However, since there is some adoption of online education and differentiation in specializations, there is now the small introduction of heterogeneity in this institutional field. With these findings, the analysis will proceed to investigate the enabling and constraining forces towards the adoption of online education by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools.

8.1.3 Enabling forces.

Enabling forces are suggested to be the advantages or incentives for a Canadian AACSB accredited business school to adopt the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs in response to the environmental factors in the business school environment. Table 31 below provides a summary of the number of participants that cited the specific enabling force. To be included in the Table below, at least two of the four business schools would have had to of cited the enabling force to be considered significant to this research study.

Table 31

Comparison of Enabling Forces

Enabling Force	Business School 1	Business School 2	Business School 3	Business School 4	<i>Total Participants:</i>
Market expansion opportunities	5 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	4 out of 7 participants	4 out of 8 participants	<i>18 out of 29 (62.1 percent)</i>
Cost and infrastructure savings	4 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	3 out of 7 participants	3 out of 8 participants	<i>15 out of 29 (51.7 percent)</i>
Respond to student demand	4 out of 7 participants	2 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	0 out of 8 participants	<i>11 out of 29 (37.9 percent)</i>

Table 31 demonstrates that the most frequently cited enabling forces to adopt online education are: the market expansion opportunities provided; the cost and infrastructure savings attributed to the adoption of online education; and the ability of the business school to respond to student demand for more online education.

8.1.3.1 Market expansion opportunities.

Market expansion opportunities were cited by 62.1 percent of participants as the most frequently cited enabling force for business schools to adopt online education due to its potential to respond to the environmental factors of increasing competitiveness of the graduate business

education market and decreased provincial funding. The benefit resides in the opportunity for business schools to attract new and different market segments to their programs – such as international and non-traditional students. As a result of the increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market, traditional bricks and mortar business schools (all 21 Canadian AACSB accredited business schools fall within this category) are seeking new ways to compete to survive as they no longer hold the monopoly position on graduate business education delivery. This is due to students having more options than ever before to attain management training, which leaves business schools with no other alternative but to find new strategies to attract students to their graduate business programs. The participants provided two main reasons why the adoption of online education could provide market expansion opportunities:

Firstly, the ability to recruit students internationally without the need for them to relocate. In face-to-face on campus graduate business programs, students are required to live in the local area to attend classes. It is interesting to note that three of the four business schools did provide that they actively recruit internationally and that almost half of their students are international students who have relocated to the local area to attend their business school. Therefore, offering a fully online graduate business program provides the ability for business schools to expand substantially their area of selection for students.

Secondly, offering a hybrid or fully online graduate business program could provide the opportunity to attract potential students that would not have otherwise continued with their education due to work and life commitments (AACSB, 2002; Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011). These types of students are more commonly known as non-traditional students (Folkers, 2005). Therefore, this enabling force was viewed by the participants across business schools as the main reason for them to adopt the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs due to this medium of delivery's potential for market expansion opportunities and its ability to attract different student market segments.

8.1.3.2 Cost and infrastructure savings.

The cost and infrastructure savings associated with online education was cited by 51.7 percent of participants as an enabling force for business schools to adopt online education due to its potential ability to respond to the environmental factor of decreased provincial funding. With the cost of delivering education in general on the rise, and a cap on the percentage increase tuition can be raised in public academic institutions (as legislated by each provincial government), what

has arisen is that business schools are seeking cost efficiencies and alternate sources of revenues (Eastman & Swift, 2001). Cost savings in the sense that there is the potential to decrease the cost of education delivery per student as more students could be enrolled in the same course or program (economies of scale) compared to face-to-face courses or programs (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Chao & Chen, 2009; Dibiase, 2000; DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Yagamata-Lynch, 2014). With the adoption of the hybrid mode of online delivery, the participants across business schools felt that cost efficiencies would not necessarily be realized, as there was still a residency component. However, savings could be made in terms of classroom space, as the program's students would not be meeting as often on campus (Chao & Chen, 2009).

To realize these cost savings, the business school would need to be able to attract larger class sizes to realize efficiencies. As such, a few participants felt that cost savings and revenue generation were more applicable at the undergraduate level than at the graduate level, due mainly to the fact that undergraduate programs have a stronger tendency to comprise large class sizes (i.e. introductory undergraduate courses where it is not uncommon to have 300 students enrolled in one course). This perspective is supported by a review of the total number of graduate business students enrolled (across all graduate programs) between the four business schools, where the total student body averages only 600 students. Therefore, this enabling force even though cited by the majority of participants does not appear to be directly translatable at the graduate business level, unless their business school was able to increase enrollment by a considerable amount to realize cost efficiencies. As such, this enabling force may not respond to the environmental factor of decreased provincial funding as much as initially anticipated.

8.1.3.3 Respond to student demand.

The increasing demand by students for more online education offerings was cited by 37.9 percent of participants as an enabling force for business schools to adopt online education due to its potential to respond to the environmental factors of: balancing stakeholder demand and expectations; increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market; concerns over graduate business program relevance; and decreased provincial funding. Three out of the four business schools cited that they believed that prospective and current students would be interested in more online education offerings at the graduate business level. Business school 4 did not provide this as an enabling force towards adoption. The participants cited the following reasons for the increase in demand by students for more online education options:

Firstly, the new generation of student (Generation Y and Z) are used to technology. Unlike the Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, these students grew up with the Internet and communicating through technology. Some may even say that this generation is more comfortable communicating by text and email than they do face-to-face. For some participants, this has caused them to believe that there needs to be a new way of teaching to keep students engaged.

Secondly, the increased flexibility that online education provides to students (particularly the non-traditional student), as it requires less time to be at a specific place and time. Of course this advantage is dependent on if the course or program is fully online or in the hybrid format or if the course is offered synchronously or asynchronously. In essence, this medium of delivery provides accessibility to education for a different student marks, and therefore, it has the potential to attract more students to the business schools' graduate business programs.

It is important to note that the participants believed that their students would like "more" online education option, but this may not correspond to fully online graduate business programs as there is a strong belief that their students still appreciate some face-to-face interaction. Furthermore, some participants did state that if students wanted a fully online program they would most likely apply to business schools that specialize in this particular medium of delivery. Therefore, this enabling force can be viewed as an incentive to adopt "more" online education options, but not necessarily the adoption of fully online graduate business programs.

One contrast in the findings is that no participants from Business school 4 offered responding to student demand for more online education as an enabling force to adoption. How can this be explained? It is suggested that of the four business schools the participants that had the most negative reaction to online education was Business school 4. Therefore, this perception by the participants may translate to not identifying student demand for more online education as an enabling force towards adoption.

8.1.4 Constraining forces.

The constraining forces are suggested to be the disadvantages or barriers for business schools to adopt the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs. Table 32 below provides a summary of the number of participants that cited the specific constraining force. To be included in the Table below, at least two of the four business schools would have had to of cited the constraining force to be considered significant to this research study.

Table 31

Comparison of Constraining Forces

Constraining Force	Business School 1	Business School 2	Business School 3	Business School 4	Total Participants:
Lack of face-to-face interaction	5 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	4 out of 7 participants	7 out of 8 participants	21 out of 29 (72.4 percent)
Delivery and development cost	3 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	4 out of 7 participants	4 out of 8 participants	16 out of 29 (55.2 percent)

Table 31 provides the most frequently cited constraining forces to adopt online education as: the lack of face-to-face interaction between the student and the faculty member in an online environment; and the delivery and development cost associated with an online program.

8.1.4.1 Lack of face-to-face interaction.

The lack of face-to-face interaction with online education was cited by 72.4 percent of participants as the most frequently cited constraining force towards the adoption of online education by business schools as it does not respond to the ability to meet student demand and expectations as well as concerns over program relevance. In other words, online education does not hold the same level of perceived quality by stakeholders as face-to-face classroom delivery.

Besides loss of interaction between the faculty member and students, the participants felt there was great value in the face-to-face interaction between students, which results in peer-to-peer learning. Along with the benefits of in class face-to-face interaction, in an online environment the students would miss out on the campus experience, which provides valuable opportunities for networking and other benefits that the campus experience provides. However, the quality of interaction was dependent on the size of the class. For larger classes, even in the classroom there is a loss of face-to-face interaction. In addition to the benefit of face-to-face interaction for the student, many participants across business schools felt that they would miss the face-to-face interaction that a classroom environment brings to them. As such, this constraining force was cited as the number one reason a business school would decide not to pursue online education for the

delivery of their graduate business programs due to the perceived lack of quality of this delivery medium as a result of the loss of face-to-face interaction. It is noted, that this constraining force applies mainly to fully online graduate business programs as there is face-to-face interaction in hybrid programs.

8.1.4.2 Development and delivery cost.

The perceived development and delivery cost associated with online education was cited by 55.2 percent of participants as a constraining force towards the adoption of online education by business schools given that initiatives that are not sustainable would be difficult to implement due to decreased provincial funding. In other words, the cost to develop a “quality” online course or program would require substantial upfront and continued investment.

One of the advantages cited for online education was cost efficiencies, however upon closer examination it was suggested that the cost efficiencies were more readily available at the undergraduate level due to larger class sizes. The current finding that the participants felt (some by experience) that there is a considerable cost to deliver online education at the graduate level further supports that the advantage of cost efficiencies is not realistic at the graduate level. This results in development and delivery cost actually being a significant constraining force towards adoption, especially when considering current budgetary restraints.

The overall sentiment by the participants across business schools was that to offer a fully online graduate business program would not in fact be a revenue generator but rather costly to develop as there is no current platform in place. Furthermore, unless the program was developed in a high quality standard there was no purpose in pursuing this option. In addition, some participants from Business school 4 placed doubt in the fact that there would even be sufficient demand for a fully online program unless they identified a niche market. In other words, to enter the online MBA market the business school would need to bring something different to attract students. Therefore, if the sentiment above holds true that business schools would not want to invest in online programs unless they could do so in a quality manner, and the cost of doing so was high, given their current concerns over budgets, business schools may be constrained from pursuing fully online or hybrid programs unless it could be “guaranteed” that these programs could attract sufficient students to these programs to become cost effective. As such, this constraining force is a significant barrier to the adoption of online education by business schools for the delivery of their graduate business programs due to budgetary limitations.

Thus far this cross-case analysis has identified a number of enabling and constraining forces towards the adoption of online education. Due to the limited adoption of online education by the majority of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools, it must be concluded that the constraining forces are stronger than the enabling forces towards adoption. This finding is further supported upon review of these business schools' response to the environmental factors in the business school environment. As such, how can the extent of the influence these enabling and constraining forces have on adoption be determined? Institutional theory discusses the power of "actors" in an institutional field and their influence on changing and maintaining institutional practices (Casile & Davis-Blake, 2002; DiMaggio, 1988; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Scott, 1987). This also includes stakeholders' ability to place pressure for transformation and deinstitutionalization (Ahmadjian & Robinson, 2001; Clemens, 1993; Greenwood et al., 2002; Oliver, 1992). These "actors" perspectives on online education are suggested to lend influence to these enabling and constraining forces. The influence of external stakeholders will be explored further next.

8.1.5 Influence of external stakeholders views on the adoption of online education.

To determine the influence of the enabling and constraining forces discussed above, all participants were asked the extent to which various external stakeholders (e.g., the AACSB; employers and students; leading business schools; and organizations that rank business schools) influence their decision of whether or not to pursue the adoption of online education for their graduate business program delivery. Table 33 provides a summary of their influence.

(continued on next page)

Table 33

Comparison of Influence of External Stakeholders

External stakeholder	Business School 1	Business School 2	Business School 3	Business School 4	<i>Overall Influence</i>
AACSB	Low/Strong	Low/Strong	Low/Strong	Low/Strong	<i>Low/Strong</i>
Employers and students	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	<i>Medium</i>
Leading business schools	Low	Low	Medium	Low	<i>Low-Medium</i>
Organizations that rank business schools	Low	Low	Low	Low	<i>Low</i>

The findings in Table 33 indicate that of the four external business school stakeholders, the AACSB has the strongest influence on adoption (however also rated as low – to be discussed further). This finding is followed by employers and students who have been deemed to have medium influence; leading business schools with low-medium influence; and the organizations that rank business schools to have the least perceived influence on the adoption of online education. Each of these findings will be elaborated upon in more depth next.

8.1.5.1 AACSB.

The influence of the AACSB accrediting body was considered by the participants across business schools to be the external stakeholder with the greatest influence on whether or not their business school pursued the option of the adoption of online education. Alternatively, this stakeholder was also identified as having a low influence on the adoption of online education. The reasons for this divergent response will be further explained next.

Firstly, the AACSB was identified as having a low influence due to the current AACSB standards for maintaining accreditation. At this point in time, the AACSB is primarily concerned with the achievement of learning goals, not necessarily the medium of delivery employed to achieve them. As such, business schools could remain AACSB accredited if they chose to adopt online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs. A few participants cited as

evidence of their position by providing that the top AACSB accredited business schools in the U.S. offer online programs. It is interesting to note, that some participants did state that the AACSB has become less rigid in terms of its standards as a result of increasing competition in their own environment (an increase in the accrediting bodies, especially from Europe).

However, the AACSB has also been categorized as having a strong influence on the adoption of online education due to their influence in general. Each of the four business schools stated that they have responded to the business school environment by attaining and maintaining AACSB accreditation. In addition, the participants across business schools (96.6 percent) expressed that if a time came, whereby the AACSB changed their accreditation standards to not favour the adoption of online education, it would have a strong negative influence on their business school's decision to adopt or continue to offer online education. The main reason for this is related to the value that these business schools place on AACSB accreditation as part of their competitive strategy. As described above, the domestic market for students is saturated; therefore, these business schools are heavily relying on international student recruitment to remain sustainable. Thus, the AACSB's perspective on online education has a direct impact on whether or not this medium of delivery is perceived as legitimate. At the moment, since the AACSB does not explicitly favour or disfavour online education their influence is considered to be low.

8.1.5.2 Student and employer perceptions.

The influence exerted by student and employer perceptions or views on online education were considered by the participants to have medium strength given that they felt that on a day-to-day or individual course basis the faculty member had the greatest influence on whether or not they wanted to adopt online education for their course. However, in the long term, particularly the employers and students that participate on the business school's Business Advisory Council (or Board) have a great influence. Each of the four business schools promoted on their website that they had a Business Advisory Council. It can also be confidently stated that most AACSB accredited business schools in Canada also have a similar type of council. The main purpose of this council is to provide advice and guidance to the business school on its current programs and in particular the future direction current and new programs should take. In this sense, they are directly involved in ensuring that the business schools' programs remain current and relevant so that the program's graduates have the competencies needed to be viewed as employable by future employers.

This is not surprising as the business school environment is becoming increasingly competitive for students and these business schools also need donations from employers to respond to decreased provincial funding. Along the same vein, if business schools do not offer programs that meet student and employer expectations, student applications and employer donations will go elsewhere. As such, the opinions of employers and students on online education are an important consideration for business schools on whether or not they decide to pursue online education. Subsequently, what are their views on online education?

Three out of the four business schools cited that they believed that prospective and current students would be interested in more online education offerings at the graduate business level. This comprises 37.9 percent of participants. The perceived student demand by participants for more online education was mainly attributed to the flexibility that it provides to students, particularly the non-traditional student. For the majority of participants, given the students' comfort with technology and the needs of the non-traditional student, the hybrid format is suggested to be the ideal format to follow in the future, as noted by 58.6 percent of participants. The hybrid format mixes online education delivery with face-to-face interaction. The percentage that is delivered online has tended to vary from web-facilitated to residency requirements a few times a year. The main advantage of the hybrid format according to the participants across business schools is that it mixes the best of both worlds. In addition, there was some general agreement amongst participants that online education was best applied for direct knowledge transfer or quantitative based courses with softer skills requiring face-to-face interaction. Finally, any program whether fully online, face-to-face or hybrid needs to be well designed to be relevant, to engage effective learning outcomes and render high student satisfaction. The findings above also provide an explanation for why Business school 1 has decided to pursue a hybrid format for one of its graduate business programs and more so in the future. Furthermore, each of the four business schools has stated that they are investigating online education for possible offerings in the future.

Overall, there was the perception amongst participants across business schools that there would not be a high level of acceptance by employers of a fully online graduate business program compared to a traditional graduate business program delivered face-to-face. In fact, 58.6 percent of participants described employer's reactions to offering a fully online MBA program as "leery", "poor cousin" and "stigma." Of the remaining participants, none of them stated that employers would be overly enthused with a fully online MBA program, but rather they did not respond or

provided their response in a different context. The top reason cited by participants for the overall negative reaction to a fully online graduate business program by employers was the perception that a face-to-face MBA program was of better quality than a fully online program.

However, in the future this may not be the case as there is some belief amongst participants (particularly from participants who have adopted some online education like Business school 1 and 3) that this perception may be breaking down as the technology further develops. One factor that does seem to impact employer's perceptions on the quality of online graduate business programs is the reputation of the business school offering the online program. With all else being equal, one could say that the greater the reputation of the business school, the greater the acceptance by employer's for that business school's fully online graduate business program. Another interesting finding, was that the perception of quality by employers was different for the hybrid format. The participants felt that most employers would either embrace this format or not even know that the program was offered partially online.

In sum, the lack of perceived quality of this delivery medium compared to face-to-face delivery by employers and possibly students may be counter-balancing student demand for online education. It is also acknowledged that even though there is increased student demand for more online education this does not equate to students automatically being in favour of fully online programs, but rather more online elements. As such, this is the reason that the majority of participants were in favour of hybrid programs (except Business school 4 participants) as there is still an element of face-to-face interaction. Given the above statements, it can be said that if employers, especially those on the Business Advisory Council were to strongly voice their concern and not support a fully or hybrid online graduate business program, the business school would heavily consider their advice and guidance in their decision making. It comes down to the fact that the business school needs to offer programs that attract students, especially given the current competitive graduate business education market. Consequently, if employers are not supportive of a particular program, students will not apply to this program, which results in the program failing.

8.1.5.3 Leading business schools.

Leading business schools perception or views on online education was categorized as having a low to medium strength of influence. Business school 1, and 2 and 4 categorized their influence as low strength, while Business school 3 categorized their strength as medium. This finding was confirmed by 75.7 percent of participants across business schools, when they agreed

that that their business school would still consider online education for their graduate program delivery, even if the leading business schools (such as Harvard, Yale, and Columbia) declared their disagreement for the application of online education as a delivery medium. This is albeit a hypothetical notion as these business schools have entered the online education market. However, what this hypothetical situation does demonstrate is leading business schools lack of direct influence over Canadian AACSB accredited business schools.

Furthermore, the reason that leading business schools' influence is at the low-medium scale is due to participants stating over and over that they are influenced most by the business schools they compete directly with as they don't consider themselves in the same category as the leading business schools as they do not have the same resources to work with. However, they do acknowledge that they do look at them for benchmarking purposes, so if they were to adopt online education they would more than likely look at these schools for best practices purposes.

Given the above, it is suggested that Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are influenced more by their own internal constraints and resources than by leading business schools. Therefore leading business schools are considered to have little direct influence on the adoption of online education for graduate program delivery within AACSB accredited business schools in Canada. On a final note, Business school 4 did rate leading business schools' influence at medium. It is suggested that leading business schools may have a greater influence on them than the other business schools as they view themselves in the same category as these leading business. Of the four business schools that participated in this research study, Business school 4 is the highest ranked, successful and most expensive.

8.1.5.4 Business school rankings.

Business schools rankings or rather the organizations that determine these rankings (such as Forbes or Maclean's magazine) were categorized as having a low strength of influence on whether or not Canadian AACSB accredited business schools adopt online education. This finding is attributed mainly to the fact that the participants felt that they had no control over the criteria used to determine their business school's ranking. However, all four business schools did express that they wished they could be higher in the rankings as it is one of the tools that potential students employ as part of their overall decision making to determine which business school to apply to.

8.2 Discussion of Findings

The purpose of Research question 1 was to determine the influence of enabling and constraining forces in the business school environment on Canadian AACSB accredited business schools decision of whether or not to pursue the option of online education. It was expected that by identifying the influence of these forces certain assertions would be feasible to aid in the understanding of the reasons for the limited adoption of online education amongst these business schools. The enabling forces identified in this research study were: market expansion opportunities (62.1 percent); cost and infrastructure savings (51.7 percent); and responding to student demand (37.9 percent). The enabling forces are suggested to respond to external environmental factors in the business school environment of: balancing stakeholder demand and expectations (100 percent); increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market (75.9 percent); concerns over graduate business program relevance (72.4 percent); and decreased provincial funding (55.2 percent). By contrast, the constraining forces were: the lack of face-to-face interaction (72.4 percent); and development and delivery cost (55.2 percent). These findings support most of the empirical studies published to date on the advantages and barriers to the adoption of online education in academic institutions (Beqiri et al, 2010; Bocchi et al., 2004; Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Cole et al., 2014; Marks et al., 2005; Myring et al., 2014; Yu & Kim, 2010).

Both this research study and the literature cite the main enabling force for the adoption of online education as the market expansion opportunities associated with this medium of delivery. The attractiveness of this advantage is mainly attributed to the opportunity for these business schools to attract students beyond local borders. This also includes access to different student markets such as the non-traditional student (Dykman & Davis, 2008b; Gibson et al., 2008; Kilburn et al., 2014; Martin & Kellermans, 2004; Srichanyachon, 2014; Omar et al., 2011), which is needed due to the maturity of the traditional MBA market (Herrington, 2010; Naudé et al., 2010).

Next, both the literature and this research study support that the perceived cost and infrastructure savings associated with online education as an enabling force towards its adoption. These cost savings are important for Canadian AACSB accredited business schools in their ability to operate with decreased provincial funding. Online education results in cost savings as it is supposed to result in higher student enrollment per program thereby decreasing overall cost per student, thus facilitating economies of scale (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Dibiase, 2000; DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Yamagatha-Lynch, 2009). However, the findings of this research study suggest that

cost savings may not be as responsive to the business school environment as initially expected at the graduate level. Myring et al. (2014) support this finding when they state that there is a fairly upfront and continuing cost to delivery online education in terms of acquiring the technology and the training of faculty. In addition, there would be minimal cost savings realized for hybrid programs as they mix both mediums of delivery. In a hybrid program it would not be feasible to enroll hundreds of students in one class as there is still a residency requirement. This means that more than likely the students enrolled in these programs would be local, limiting the business schools' market expansion opportunities.

Finally, the literature along with this research study indicate that another enabling force towards the adoption of online education is increasing student demand for online education at the university level (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Kilburn et al., 2014) due to the flexibility that it affords students especially when delivered asynchronously (Chao & Chen, 2014; Simon et al., 2013; Srichanyachon, 2014; Yamagatha-Lynch, 2014). However, this finding as an enabling force could be misleading as many of the participants felt that their students still wanted some face-to-face interaction. As well as the statements by multiple participants that if prospective students preferred fully online graduate business programs they would apply to business schools that specialized in this medium of delivery.

Contradictorily, this argument is much different for the hybrid format. There exists much ambiguity with the term hybrid format as the online component can fall anywhere in the range of 30 percent to 80 percent of the program if we accept Allen and Seaman's (2013) definition of the hybrid format provided in Chapter 2. For example, students could have different feelings towards a program that was offered 1/3 online as opposed to a program that was offered 80 percent online. As such, student preference for learning can add to the growing literature on factors that lead to greater student satisfaction with online education (Abel, 2005; Arbaugh, 2005; Beqiri, Chase & Bishka, 2010; Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Drennan, Kennedy & Pisarski, 2005; Estelami & Rezvani, 2011; Grandzol, 2004; Hunter, 2011; Marks et al., 2005; Martins & Kellermans, 2004; Peltier, Drago & Schibrowsky, 2003; Peltier et al., 2007; Williams, Duray & Reddy, 2006; Yu & Kim, 2010). Consequently, the findings of this research study suggest that a hybrid program would suit the student demand for more online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools while maintaining some face-to-face interaction.

Moving next to constraining forces, the most cited constraining force towards the adoption of online education by participants was the lack of quality of this delivery medium due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. Many researchers have supported this finding when they state that this is often the most frequently cited barrier to the adoption of online education (Robinson et al., 2008; Srichanyachon, 2014). This also includes the number of empirical studies that have cited the value and positive learning outcomes associated with face-to-face interaction (Arbaugh, 2005; Marks et al., 2005; Peltier et al., 2007). Another significant constraining force cited was the cost of developing and delivery a quality online program, which is a considerable barrier given current concerns over budgetary reductions.

Given the limited adoption of online education, it is suggested that the influence of the constraining forces are stronger than the enabling forces at this point in time. How can this assertion be justified? It is proposed that the influence and perceptions of online education by various external stakeholders cited by the participants, is what gives strength to the enabling and constraining forces. Since the participants felt that employers and students for the most part would view a fully online programs as inferior to fully face-to-face programs due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, it lends to the strong assumption that this constraining force contributes to the limited adoption of online education by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools due to the influence they exert on business schools' decision making (particularly those employers and students on these business schools' – Business Advisory Councils). Given this view, it is asserted that based on the findings of this research study that the constraining forces are placing a higher pressure on Canadian AACSB accredited business schools to not adopt online education, thereby maintaining the status quo of face-to-face delivery. This no more substantiated than when we review the four business schools' response to the environmental factors in the business school environment.

Canadian AACSB accredited business schools have responded as follows: Accreditation (100 percent); expanding and modifying graduate business program offerings (89.7 percent); and international recruitment and partnerships (37.9 percent). In reviewing the responses to the current business schools environment, the findings indicate that Canadian AACSB accredited business schools have responded by mainly expanding their current programs offerings (concentrations and courses). In addition, they have attempted to expand enrollment by introducing specialized graduate business programs and heavily recruiting international students to their programs. At the

moment, it is suggested that these responses have taken higher priority over the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery.

For instance, to balance stakeholder demand and expectations, AACSB accredited business schools have addressed the needs of the non-traditional student by offering more part-time and weekend program options to offer them more flexibility. This response by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools does not jeopardize their programs quality in the view of stakeholders. In addition, to respond to the declining demand for the traditional generalist MBA more specialized and interdisciplinary programs have become more common. Each of the four business schools has stated that they offer specialized programs. By making their programs more relevant these business schools are suggested to be increasing their competitiveness in the graduate business education market.

One of the main enabling forces towards online education is market expansion opportunities due to the fact that students do not need to be geographically local. Interestingly, three of the four business schools have stated that they have responded by actively recruiting international students to their programs. Therefore, they are recruiting their students (in particular from Asian countries) to move to Canada to attend their programs instead of offering online programs so that the students do not need to relocate. For example, at Business school 4 approximately 40 percent of their graduate students are international students in residence. As such, the environmental factors have placed enough pressure on the institutional structures, processes and practices to elicit a response from these AACSB accredited business schools; however it is suggested that the responses have been an extension of the current status quo.

Given the findings of this research study thus far, what reason can be given for these Canadian AACSB accredited business to have responded the way they have? The simple answer is that online education is but one option to respond to the current business school environment. When reviewing the responses provided by participants across business schools, it appears that some have opted to offer more online courses or hybrid programs (two out of the four schools), but really the business schools have pursued one main strategy: Expanding and modifying their graduate business program offerings – 89.7 percent of total participants. It is important to note that none of the business schools would even contemplate completely replacing their face-to-face graduate business programs with fully online graduate business programs. Rather, it would be adapting to a hybrid format as a first step, or in addition to their current program portfolio more online course selections for students.

Another interesting finding was that two of the business schools have adopted some online education due to the enabling forces described above and all four business schools have responded that the adoption of online education in the future is not out of the question. As such it does seem that online education amongst these business schools is gaining steam as it was acknowledged that they are all at least talking about. The main rationale being given is that whether business schools like it or not technology is taking over and the practice of online education delivery is here to stay. This sentiment was well articulated by one participant when he said:

Well, they (administration) want to be in play. They don't know how education will change in the future. And they need to be playing in that space to make sure they don't get left behind. In case it suddenly explodes (Business school 4 participant).

Thus, business schools are slowly adopting, but not at the pace of other disciplines in academic institutions, and as such it will be a slow process. This slow adoption is not surprising as many of the participants cited change in academic institutions as slow. For example:

Universities get a really bad rap because they are seen as so slow to respond to change. But if you worked in an academic institution, you understand the constraints under which they work. The security that is provided, and when you have that type of security ... you hire specifically faculty that are independent thinkers and a big part of that is to be critical in thinking and so you have the perfect stew here if you will to make it difficult to bring through change that all these independent thinkers are going to enthusiastically embrace. And so things move slowly in academic environments (Business school 3 participant).

As well...

Some of my colleagues would like to say we can do it in two years, I think that is unrealistic. I think we are probably looking at more realistically five years but I don't think 20 years is an option. I think we would have missed the opportunities (by then) (Business school 2 participant).

Lastly...

If we were wanting to do it in four or five years from now, we would have to have things set in motion now to start making those changes and adjustments. At this point in time that isn't the case. It is not a strategic direction that the school has decided to make. Could it change? It could. But today, it isn't there. And I think you need to have sufficient time to deliver a strong program. You have to have significant resources to make it happen quickly. Which, I don't believe we have. Or you need to have a timeline over many months so that you can appropriately put in all the quality measures to make it a successful program (Business school 4 participant).

Since the participants felt that employers views towards hybrid programs was fairly positive as they mix online education for content delivery with face-to-face delivery for peer-to-peer learning, instructional case studies, and discussions, this structure reconciles the benefits of both mediums of delivery. In addition, these business schools will not have to replace their current MBA programs with fully online programs. Given, decreased provincial funding, it is anticipated that Canadian AACSB accredited business schools view fully online programs as too much of a financial risk to replace one with the other and they are not in the financial situation like the leading business schools to be able to offer online programs or MOOCs in addition to their traditional programs. As such, it is predicted that Canadian AACSB accredited business schools will be offering more online education elements evolving into the hybrid format (30-80 percent delivered online) and fully online programs being the responsibility of business schools who specialize in online delivery. There will of course be exceptions with some schools offering some specialized or interdisciplinary programs fully online where there was determined with certainty that a market exists as is the case with Business school 3 who offers an interdisciplinary fully online program. This leads to the contention that although on its face these business schools have pursued similar strategies to respond to the business school environment, in their attempt to differentiate themselves by offering different programs catered to different market niches (for example, industries or type of student) as well the offering some online education, they have established a degree of heterogeneity between graduate business program offerings in the business school environment.

At this point in time the cross-case analysis has provided some insight to various enabling and constraining forces to the adoption of online education, however, to conduct a full exploration there is a need to go inside, internally into the academic institutions we are studying, in particular the role of faculty as they are the persons actually delivering these graduate business programs.

Chapter Nine – Cross-Case Findings and Discussion – Research Question 2

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings from the cross-case analysis as they relate to research question 2.

9.0 Response to Research Question 2

The second research question guiding this research study was: *To what extent can faculty play a role in influencing the potential adoption of online education for the delivery of graduate business programs in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools?*

The purpose of this research question is to explore the role that faculty plays in the adoption of online education. How do they feel about online education for graduate business program delivery? How much influence do they have on adoption? Research question 2 sheds light on this area and these cross-case findings are presented next. To begin, the findings related to the institutional role and power of faculty within business schools is presented.

9.1 Institutional Role and Power

To introduce a new program (such as a fully online MBA program), or to make changes (major or minor) to current programs, the initiative must receive approval from a number of academic committees (internal and external to the business school) before it can be implemented. The number of committee levels a change or initiative must seek approval from is dependent on the change itself. A member of senior administration usually chairs these committees; however, the majority of the members on the committee are faculty members.¹¹ Given the number of committees that a change or initiative requires approval from, it is not surprising that business schools are not able to respond to the rapidly changing business school environment as quickly as some would like them to. As one participant from Business school 3 said, it is a long process:

It's painful. What happens is, all universities have to handle quality assurance issues. So, we have an internal quality assurance mechanism. There are seven different approval levels that we have to go through in order to get a new program or major change. So, there is an extensive process of review and discussions and approvals before you can make any kind of changes. A minimum of a year-long process, if not longer.

¹¹ Senior administrative positions are most commonly held by faculty members appointed to the administrative position for a period of time.

Due to this internal governance structure, academic institutions differ greatly from traditional organizations. In traditional organizations, management sets the direction of the organization and advises employees of the changes and the effect these changes have on the organization's structure, processes and practices. However, in academic institutions, faculty in essence, plays the role of both management and employee with senior administration endeavoring to gain support from them in order for their initiative to come to fruition.

A second reinforcing mechanism supporting the influence of faculty as a collective is the concept of tenure and academic freedom. For tenured faculty, all else being equal, they have acquired a job that includes job security and strong protections for academic freedom. The result being, it would be difficult to release a tenured faculty member, which is suggested to provide the faculty member the freedom to oppose senior administration in their initiatives without fear of reprisal. This most definitely is a contrast from traditional organizations. As one participant from Business school 4 commented:

Well, a part of it is this whole concept of tenure. "I've got a job that supposedly guarantees a job for life, I just have to keep my head down, do my research, teach my courses, get acceptable teaching evaluations. Then, I will get my yearly raise and don't really have to do anything else." There is really little motivation for them. Again, I am speaking in huge generalities, because there are many individuals who want to make a difference. But for those that tend to hold the faculty at large back, those are the ones that say, "I've got tenure, I'm always going to be teaching this class. My focus is on my research. I do the teaching because I have to, and as long as I get like a 7 out of 10 on my course, I'm good."

In fact it is contended that faculty freely voicing opinions is an expectation and a characteristic of the academic environment. According to the participants across business schools, faculty power plays a very significant role in the adoption of online education. Therefore, business school faculty will have a very strong influence as a stakeholder on their Canadian AACSB accredited business schools decision of whether or not to pursue the option of online education. As such, what are the factors contributing to business school faculty resistance?

9.2 Factors Contributing to Business School Faculty Resistance to Online Education

Given the above, it is strongly suggested that all else being equal, if faculty are resistant to online education for graduate program delivery, adoption will not occur, despite any number of enabling forces in the current business school environment. This notion lends itself to the

following question: Is there resistance amongst faculty in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools? If so, how strong is resistance?

The results of this research study strongly suggest, that yes, there is strong resistance by business school faculty towards the adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery. Prior to reviewing the specific reasons for this resistance some overall findings will be highlighted. The participants across business schools 28 out of 29¹² participants (96.6 percent) provided that there would be mixed to heavy resistance by faculty for the adoption of a fully online MBA program with some participants more readily naming it as “skepticism” as opposed to outright resistance. None of the participants suggested that a fully online program MBA should replace their current face-to-face program at present or in the near future. However, there was general agreement amongst the participants that faculty would not be resistant to another faculty member adopting online education for the delivery of their individual course. The main caveat being, “as long as it does not affect what I am doing.” Furthermore, 17 out of 29 participants (58.6 percent) clearly expressed that the ideal structure for the delivery of their MBA program would be the hybrid format. By contrast, all participants from Business school 4 stated that the ideal format is still the fully face-to-face campus program. Finally, comfort with technology or generational resistance was not found to be a significant factor contributing to resistance by faculty.

Given the above, what are the main factors contributing to faculty resistance? Table 34 summarizes these findings across all four business schools below.

(continued on next page)

¹² One participant stated they “did not know” and therefore could not respond.

Table 34

Comparison of Factors Contributing to Faculty Resistance

Contributing Factor	Business School 1	Business School 2	Business School 3	Business School 4	Total Participants:
Inferior quality	7 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	8 out of 8 participants	28 out of 29 (96.6 percent)
Resistance to change	7 out of 7 participants	3 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	8 out of 8 participants	23 out of 29 (79.3 percent)
Increased workload	5 out of 7 participants	4 out of 7 participants	3 out of 7 participants	8 out of 8 participants	20 out of 29 (69 percent)
Fear of the unknown	5 out of 7 participants	4 out of 7 participants	2 out of 7 participants	0 out of 8 participants	11 out of 29 (37.9 percent)
Lack of incentive to pursue online education (other priorities)	0 out of 7 participants	2 out of 7 participants	0 out of 7 participants	5 out of 8 participants	7 out of 29 (24.1 percent)
Loss of ownership over intellectual property	2 out of 7 participants	2 out of 7 participants	0 out of 7 participants	0 out of 8 participants	4 out of 29 (13.8 percent)

Across business schools the main factors contributing to business school faculty resistance are: online education perceived to be of inferior quality compared to the face-to-face medium of delivery for graduate business education; resistance to change in general; fear of increased workload; fear of the unknown with the delivery medium; lack of incentive to pursue online education; and fear of loss of ownership over intellectual property. Each of these factors will be looked at in more detail next.

9.2.1 Quality of online education.

Almost unanimously, the participants across business schools (96.6 percent) felt that resistance was mainly attributed to the perception that online education was an inferior format of delivery in terms of learning outcomes achieved and overall student satisfaction. The participants

more often than not associated program relevance to the content of the course or program as opposed to quality. The primary reason for this perception given was related to the lack of face-to-face interaction (72.4 percent of participants). It is noted that this is the perspective that the participants were providing for overall business school faculty resistance, and as such it is not representative of the individual participant. This finding also does not apply to the hybrid format as the majority of participants (58.6 percent) clearly expressed that the ideal structure for the delivery of their MBA program would be the hybrid format. By contrast, all participants from Business school 4 stated that the ideal format is still the fully face-to-face campus program. It is also acknowledged that out of the four business schools, Business school 4 was the most resistant to the adoption of any form of online education.

Besides loss of interaction between the faculty member and students, the participants felt there was great value in interaction between students, which results in peer-to-peer learning. Along with the benefits of in class face-to-face interaction, in an online environment the students would miss out on the campus experience and networking opportunities. However, the quality of interaction was dependent on size of the class. For large classes, even in the classroom there is a loss of face-to-face interaction. In addition, many participants felt that they would miss the face-to-face interaction that a classroom environment brings to them.

Therefore, the participants across business schools felt that faculty still hold the perception that fully online graduate business program are inferior to their face-to-face counterparts. This resistance is mainly attributable to the loss of face-to-face interaction that most business school faculty felt was needed to develop soft skills in students, peer-to-peer learning, and networking opportunities that are important in business education. This finding is also similar to the finding of the perceived views of employers towards online education; however to a lesser extent. Therefore, the lack of perceived quality of online education is seen as the main factor contributing the business school faculty resistance to the adoption of online education.

9.2.2 Resistance to change – use of the case method.

Over and over the participants across business schools (79.3 percent) cited a major impediment to gaining faculty support for online education was resistance to change. Resistance to change was brought forward not just for online education but also for change in general. As described in the literature review (see Chapter 2) the introduction of online education changes the dynamics of the classroom from teacher centered to student centered, and some faculty are

struggling with this change in teaching environment (Arbaugh, Desai, Rau & Balakuntalam, 2010; Cole, Shelley & Swartz, 2014; Grandzol, 2004; Ilhan & Cetin, 2013; Lee, Yoon & Lee, 2010; and Neely & Tucker, 2010).

For example, aside from lecturing, instructional case studies are often cited as the most frequently applied pedagogical method to teach graduate business students how to become effective managers (Garvin, 2003; Gonzalez, 2011; Kimball, 1995; Liang & Wang, 2004; Mintzberg, 2005; Navarro, 2003; Rippin, Booth, Bowie, & Jordan, 2002; Shivakumar, 2012). Furthermore, this method of teaching has been in place for a long time and is taught in a classroom setting. Consequently, since faculty are comfortable to teach in this manner, to then convert to online education would result in faculty being required to rethink how to deliver their course to achieve the same desired learning outcomes. This may be especially difficult for a business faculty member who has been teaching face-to-face for over 20 years. Thus, the adoption of online education requires a complete shift in the business faculty members' paradigm in how to teach management education leading to their resistance to change.

9.2.3 Fear of Increased workload and lack of incentive to pursue online education.

Across business schools, the participants (69 percent) felt or feared that the adoption of online education would increase their already heavy workloads. This was exasperated in the sentiment by a few participants that they do not see any incentive to pursue online education (24.1 percent) or focus their energies in that direction when they already have their courses set up with positive student evaluations. The increase in perceived workload would be as a result of learning the technology and the time and effort required to design and build their courses to be online compatible. In addition, there is the perception amongst participants that it is more time consuming to manage these types of course when it is running.

In sum, it is generally accepted that faculty are busy individuals and most enter the field of academia to pursue their research interests. The introduction of online education changes the role of the business faculty member and takes their focus away from research. As such, there is no incentive in place (currently) in Canadian AACSB business schools reward systems for faculty to want to invest the time and effort to develop and implement fully online or hybrid courses at the graduate business level. Until such time as faculty are "incentivized" to pursue online education, it is anticipated that this resistance to the adoption of online education will continue.

9.2.4 Fear of the unknown and loss of ownership over intellectual property

Lastly, fear of the unknown (37.9 percent of participants) was provided by the participants across three of the four business schools (1, 2 and 3) as factor contributing to faculty resistance to online education. It is interesting to admit that due to the limited adoption of online education at the graduate level by Canadian AACSB business schools many of the perceptions provided representing the universe of faculty in AACSB business schools are held without direct knowledge or experience. Furthermore, of the 29 participants, only eight participants have had any prior experience with online education.

Given the findings of resistance to change in general, it is not surprising that there is also a certain level of fear of the unknown. In other words, since faculty have been teaching in a classroom for so long they lack experience in how to teach any other way. This raises questions, such as: How to deliver content and ensure the same learning outcomes? Would students still be engaged? Would student success and satisfaction suffer? Who owns the course material? In other words, the fear of loss of ownership over intellectual property – course content (13.8 percent of participants). As with resistance to change, fear of the unknown lives due to faculty inexperience and the uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding this medium of delivery. This is augmented by the dramatic change in some faculty's mind over the shift in teaching dynamics. With experience, however, this resistance factor is estimated to lessen over the course of time.

9.3 Facilitators to Increase Faculty Acceptance of Online Education.

In addition to the exploring the factors contributing to business faculty resistance in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools, the participants were probed further to provide insight in what senior administration could do to gain acceptance by business school faculty for the adoption of online education in their respective business schools. The main facilitators to increase faculty acceptance of online education are provided in Table 35 below:

Table 35

Comparison of Facilitators to Increasing Faculty Acceptance

Facilitator to Acceptance	Business School 1	Business School 2	Business School 3	Business School 4	Total Participants:
Instructional and technical support	7 out of 7 participants	4 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants	5 out of 8 participants	23 out of 29 (79.3 percent)
Incentives and rewards	3 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	7 out of 8 participants	20 out of 29 (69 percent)
Understanding the advantages of online education	5 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	5 out of 7 participants	5 out of 8 participants	20 out of 29 (69 percent)
Peer leadership	2 out of 7 participants	4 out of 7 participants	6 out of 7 participants	4 out of 8 participants	16 out of 29 (55.2 percent)

Across business schools the main facilitators to increase business school faculty acceptance of online education were cited as: instructional and technical support; incentives and rewards; understanding the advantages to online education; and peer leadership. A deeper understanding of these facilitators is provided next.

9.3.1 Instructional and technical support.

The main facilitator to increase faculty acceptance of online education was instructional and technical support (79.4 percent of participants). One of the main factors contributing to resistance by faculty was the fear that online education would increase their workloads. One strategy taken that would help to alleviate this concern would be instructional and technical support. In particular, instructional design and technical support to aid the faculty member in designing and converting their face-to-face courses to an online platform. Effective mechanisms to support business school faculty were found to be:

- Internal peer leaders to mentor other faculty members willing or wanting to adapt their course to online education. For example, internal points of contacts other faculty could seek help from.

- One-on-one training and exposure to the medium of delivery would be particularly beneficial for faculty with low levels of comfort with technology.

Therefore, to help decrease business school faculty's concerns over online education's adoption on their workload, instructional and technical support was seen by the participants as an effective facilitator to increase acceptance. Support also comes with the advantage that with instructional designers who specialize in this delivery medium, faculty may feel that they will be able to ensure the quality and effectiveness of their course.

9.3.2 Incentives and rewards.

Secondly, to increase faculty acceptance of online education instructional and technical support was cited by the participants (69 percent). One of the factors contributing to faculty resistance was the lack of incentive to pursue online education. As it stands the current incentive and reward system in place at most academic institutions for faculty members is based on research productivity as opposed to teaching quality (Fairweather 1995). Interestingly, Fairweather (1995) found that this was the case for faculty at academic institutions of all types of institutions (teaching and research focused). Consequently, faculty unless they really wanted to pursue online education out of interest would likely not pursue online education due to the perception of the amount of work it entails. Therefore, to increase acceptance of online education for the delivery of graduate business programs by faculty, senior administration would need to rethink their compensation package to include incentives (catered to the individual faculty member's preferences) to truly gain support for this initiative. An insightful quote from a participant in Business school 4 summarizes this facilitator when he states:

Research takes a long time. Teaching takes a lot of time. Tenure track profs, never in the history of the world ever has a single one of them ever been promoted because they are a good teacher. They get kicked out sometimes (rarely) if they are completely horrendous teachers. But it's a rare event. But basically if you are tenure track there is a box, teaching good enough and teaching atrocious. There is no gradation. So, there is very little incentive for a tenure track or a tenured faculty member to look at his course and say "you know what, I want to redo this whole thing and yes, I know it's going to take me two or three years to get it right." Why would they do that?

9.3.3 Understanding the advantages of online education.

Thirdly, another strong facilitator that may increase faculty acceptance of online education was having faculty understand the advantages to online education (69 percent of participants). For faculty to overcome their resistance to online education they would need to come to the opinion that the advantages to online education surpass their concerns. For example, to do so, senior administration could provide faculty with a justification on how the introduction of online education would benefit and differentiate their program from other online programs (i.e. the demand would be there). Interestingly, this facilitator gains strength through the enabling forces or advantages associated to faculty for the adoption of online education outlined, as follows:

Flexibility and convenience: Nine out of 29 participants (31 percent) across business schools saw that the flexibility and convenience afforded to students was also a benefit for faculty as they could benefit from not having to be physically present in class. Therefore, for example, a faculty member had to miss a class to attend a conference, without having to reschedule it.

More effective use of class time: Eight out of 29 participants (27.6 percent) across business schools felt that the time typically reserved for knowledge transfer (i.e. lecture) could be replaced with online education, which would then give the faculty member more time in class to focus on cases, experiential learning exercises, and discussions.

Access to more teaching tools: Six out of 29 participants (20.7 percent) across business schools stated that by adopting the option of online education, this could be viewed as one more pedagogical tool to utilize in teaching. However, this response was mainly attributed to the use of technology (i.e. web facilitated) than pure online courses. For example, the use of videos, podcasts, and other tools to enhance their face-to-face courses. Therefore, in this sense, the participants were not referring to online education as it is referred to in the context of this research.

As stated previously, only a handful of the participants have had any experience with online education, so they are unaware of the advantages that online education brings. Therefore, by outlining the advantages to online education to faculty, it is suggested that faculty acceptance will increase towards this medium of delivery. Interestingly, Allen and Seaman (2009) state that faculty lacking experience in delivering online courses tend to hold a higher negative perception of

online education than those who have experience with this mode of delivery. Their finding is fully supported by this research study.

9.3.4 Peer leadership.

Lastly, to increase faculty acceptance of online education, peer leadership was cited by the participants (55.2 percent) as an effective facilitator. It was expressed multiple times by the participants that directions from senior management would not be taken well by faculty. Rather, it is viewed that successful initiatives take place through peer leadership (i.e. peers speaking to peers to build support for the initiative). Without peer leaders explaining the case for the initiative and the advantages, other faculty are not as likely to get on board and the initiative would fail.

As stated previously, faculty are individual thinkers and simply being issued directions from senior management is not the most effective means to gain faculty support. Rather the nature of academia is debate, and therefore for senior administration to gain support they really need to become adept at convincing faculty for any type of change to occur. For example:

Professors are opinionated. They have rational arguments so you have to be really clever or articulate yourself well to get your idea across and sway others. It's so hard. It is really hard to get this type of change and sometimes it would be easier if we had like a CEO or the Dean who could say, "Here's my vision, here's what we are doing...the bus has left, we are doing this, no further discussion." You know let's do it and people would then just jump on board. The time for discussion is over (Business school 3).

The strategy of peer leadership to increase faculty acceptance entails identifying a few champions that are respected faculty members to support the initiative (i.e. online education) and then building support from within. Some specific strategies proving particularly, successful include: having the idea generated from faculty as opposed to senior administration; holding discussions and gaining support prior to committee meetings; and engaging support and collaboration of faculty at each and every level of the development and implementation process. Therefore, peer-to-peer leadership is a very effective facilitator. The reason that this facilitator is particularly effective is that academia is built upon collegial congeniality and respect. Put simply, if a respected faculty member were to approach other faculty members they are more likely to listen and consider the initiative than if readily imposed upon them by senior administration.

9.4 Discussion of Findings

One of the most explanatory findings of this research study is that the majority of business school faculty in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are resistant to the adoption of online education at the graduate level. This business school stakeholder also holds the greatest influence on whether or not their business school pursues this option in response to the business school environment. Their power as a collective lies in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools internal governance processes. In particular, business school faculty's participation on program committees that an initiative like a fully online graduate business program would need to receive approval from in order to come to fruition. Thus, without the support of business school faculty, the adoption of online education in their business school would not take place. This is an important finding, as it strongly suggests that no matter how strong other stakeholders voice their approval of online education or how favourably senior administration wants to pursue this option, if faculty do not provide their support, adoption will not occur. For example:

They do – collectively. Not individually. But collectively they do. And as I said before, faculty at our business school are very conservative. They don't like change so it's hard to implement something that is radical, unless everyone else is doing it (Business school 3 participant).

The factors contributing to business school faculty resistance include: the perception of inferior quality of this delivery medium for graduate business program delivery (96.6 percent); resistance to change (79.3 percent); fear of increased workload (69 percent); fear of the unknown (37.9 percent); lack of incentive to pursue online education (24.1 percent); and loss of ownership over intellectual property (13.8 percent). This study also identified various facilitators to increase acceptance amongst business school faculty towards the adoption of online education. They include: instructional and technical support; incentives and rewards; understanding the advantages of online education; and peer leadership. The extent of their effect will be dependent on the faculty member and the strategy employed by senior administration. It is also noted that senior administration are also mainly faculty. As such, it can be contended that some senior administrators also hold the same resistance towards online education as business school faculty.

Given the power that faculty have on whether or not their business school adopts online education, it can now be confidently stated that the strongest constraining force towards adoption is the perceived inferior quality of online education for graduate business program delivery as a

result of the lack of face-to-face interaction. Specifically, without face-to-face interaction participants felt there would be a loss of peer-to-peer learning, student engagement, networking, and the inability to develop soft skills that graduates need to be effective managers in the future. This is not a surprising finding as many researchers have also contributed the same assertion (Dykman and Davis, 2008b; Guthrie, 2012; Martin & Kellermans, 2004; Omar et al., 2011; Peltier et al., 2007; Robinson et al., 2008). This in spite of the growing evidence to support that online education and face-to-face delivery are on par in terms of learning outcomes and effectiveness (Arbaugh, 2000; Arbaugh et al., 2011; Cao & Sakchutchawan, 2011; Dirienzo & Lilly, 2014; Drago et al., 2005; Means et al., 2010; Rich & Derishiwsky, 2011; Vogel, 2010)

In addition, many of the other factors identified to be contributing to business school faculty resistance to online education are further substantiated within the literature, such as: resistance to change and fear of the unknown due to the change in teaching dynamics (Arbaugh et al., 2010; Cole et al., 2014; Neely & Tucker, 2010); and fear of increase in workload (Peltier et al., 2007; Omar et al., 2011). However, there was one area of contradictory findings. In the literature review, comfort with technology was presented as a potential factor contributing to faculty resistance (Dykman and Davis, 2008b). Contradictorily, this research study found that comfort with technology and generational factors do not have a significant impact on faculty resistance. A possible explanation for this finding is that technology in general has already been adopted in the classroom today. For example, even when this research study refers to face-to-face delivery, it is referring to web-facilitated delivery.

Across business schools, the participants felt that there would be higher resistance by faculty for fully online graduate business programs as opposed to hybrid graduate business programs as there would still be a face-to-face component. It was interesting to note that the least perceived resistance was by Business school 1 and 3, which is believed to be primarily due to the fact that these business schools have already adopted some online education. This lends support to the idea that with experience comes less fear of the unknown and by extension less resistance to the adoption of online education.

Allen and Seaman (2009) suggested that faculty members lacking experience in delivering online courses tend to hold a higher negative perception of online education than those who have experience with this medium of delivery. This research study supports Allen and Seaman's contention and suggests that business faculty perceptions leading to limited adoption in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools is based on strongly held prejudices towards online education

as opposed to real world experience. In addition, it is argued that as this medium of delivery becomes more and more adopted that resistance will move more from strong bias to mild skepticism. This assertion is supported by the work of Menchaca and Bekelo (2008) where they found that experience with a technology is a success factor in its application.

Building on the findings of this research study is business school faculty's concern over how to teach instructional case studies in an online environment. Aside from the lecture method, instructional case studies are the most prevalent and accepted practice by business school faculty to teach soft skills at the graduate business level (Garvin, 2003; Gonzalez, 2011; Kimball, 1995; Liang & Wang, 2004; Mintzberg, 2005; Navarro, 2003; Rippen et al., 2002; Skivakumar, 2012). This research study also substantiates this claim. By comparison, Business school faculty resistance was less dominant for hybrid programs or for technical material transfer with slightly over half of the participants (55.2 percent) stating that they felt that the hybrid format was the ideal structure to deliver graduate business programs. This assertion is believed to be fairly stable as this format allows for the lecture portion of the class (direct knowledge transfer) to be completed online and the classroom reserved for discussion and soft skill development. In essence, this format does not jeopardize the use of instructional case studies, which participants felt needed to be face-to-face to be effective. For example, as stated by a participant from Business school 4:

I think that, at this time, faculty would not switch from a fully face-to-face to an online program. Would there be potential for acceptance for some components of online? Yes. I think it is a process. Again it has to go with the strategic direction of the school. Individuals tend to be resistant to change. So you need to get the discussion out there. You know, "what's the value to online?" "What are the difficulties with online?" And have input from faculty before a decision is made as to whether or not it is a go or no go decision. It's a process. It's change management.

Therefore, based on the findings of this research study, business school faculty resistance to online education is still relatively high amongst Canadian AACSB accredited business schools due to a variety of factors, and given their influence on overall graduate business program offerings, this resistance acts as the strongest explanatory factor to explain the limited adoption of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools.

The final area of exploration for this research study was the use of the lens of Institutional theory to explain how institutional structure, processes and practices change. In particular, stakeholders representing isomorphic forces and their influence on institutional change. The findings of the cross-case analysis that respond to Question 3 are presented next in Chapter 10.

Chapter Ten – Cross-Case Findings and Discussion – Research Question 3

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings from the cross-case analysis as they relate to research question 3.

10.0 Response to Research Question 3

The third research question guiding this research study was: *How do the isomorphic forces (coercive, mimetic, and normative) as described by Institutional theory influence institutional change in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools?*

One of the main findings of this research study, as discussed in Research question 1, is that Canadian AACSB accredited business schools have responded in a similar fashion to the environmental factors in the business schools environment, namely: maintaining AACSB accreditation; expanding and modifying their graduate business programs offerings; and international recruitment and partnerships. In terms of online education, two of the four business schools (Business school 1 and 3) are offering more online education courses and programs. However, the main strategy applied by all four business schools is to offer more specialized programs, self-sustaining programs and to aggressively recruit international students, while maintaining the current institutional practice of face-to-face delivery.

However, in order to gain further insight into why there is limited adoption of online education, the study has proposed that there is a need to explore the problem through the lens of Institutional theory. Furthermore, this will help in understanding how institutional change can occur in the context of the adoption of online education, which is proposed for the purposes of this research study to be an institutional change. According to Institutional theory, the mechanism by which certain structures, processes and practices of organizations within an institutional field become institutionalized and homogenous is through isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As Hanson (2001, p. 653) states:

Institutional theory represents a body of thought that identifies, emphasizes, and explores the forces that constrain organizations from changing. For the field of education, the outcome is a greater understanding of why educational systems are so isomorphic (homogeneous) and commonly give the appearance of change without the reality of change.

What leads to this homogeneity in an institutional field that makes change so difficult? The three isomorphic forces that can help in understanding are: coercive, mimetic and normative. The next section explores the three isomorphic forces and reviews the extent of their influence on the overall graduate business program offerings of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. In particular, which isomorphic forces have the greatest influence? Why are they important? By doing so, further insights from an Institutional theory perspective will provide the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the limited adoption of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools.

10.1 The Influence of Isomorphic Forces.

The AACSB, leading business schools and business school faculty were selected to represent each of the three isomorphic forces as not only do they fit within the description of each of the isomorphic forces, but they also were deemed to be the stakeholders with the greatest potential to influence Canadian AACSB accredited business schools in general. Table 36 shows a summary of the isomorphic forces and their level of influence on overall graduate business program offerings in the four Canadian AACSB accredited business schools.

Table 36

Comparison of Influence of Isomorphic forces

Isomorphic force	Business School 1	Business School 2	Business School 3	Business School 4	<i>Overall Influence</i>
Coercive (AACSB)	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	<i>Strong</i>
Mimetic (Leading business schools)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	<i>Medium</i>
Normative (Business school faculty)	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	<i>Strong</i>

Table 36 summarizes the influence of the three isomorphic forces on overall graduate business programs offerings in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools as follows: the AACSB as a coercive isomorphic force is considered a strong influence; leading business schools as a mimetic isomorphic force is suggested to be of medium influence; and business school faculty as a normative isomorphic force is also considered to have strong influence. Their influence will be explored more fully next.

10.1.1 The influence of AACSB accreditation as a coercive force.

AACSB accreditation is presented here as a coercive isomorphic force with a strong influence on the overall graduate business program offerings on Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. Coercive isomorphic forces are:

...Formal or informal pressures exerted by external actors upon which the organizations are dependent or by cultural expectations. These pressures may be experienced by force, persuasion, or invitations to join (Budros, 2001, p. 223).

As stated previously, all four business schools that participated in this research study are AACSB accredited. However, where they differed was in terms of the length of time that they have each held this accreditation. Business school 2 is a newly accredited business school who has yet to go through the re-accreditation process; Business school 3 and 4 have been long time AACSB accredited members; and Business school 1 has also been a long time AACSB member but also holds other international accreditations. The participants across business schools viewed AACSB accreditation as highly valuable to their business school due to its ability to elevate the reputation of the business school. Consequently, the main reason AACSB accreditation was found to be vital for these business schools is because it increases their legitimacy from the perspective of stakeholders, especially employers and students. Legitimacy according to Cheong (1997) is a measure of quality in education.

As previously discussed, AACSB standards are focused on the evaluation of learning goals and outcomes. Furthermore, the attainment and maintenance of this accreditation requires a tremendous amount of work. As a result, these business schools would be hesitant to change their structures, processes and practices that are currently adhering to AACSB standards for risk of losing said accreditation. In addition, in most cases, the business schools have had to restructure their programs and processes to meet AACSB accredited standards (Assurance of Learning Framework) to begin with. Consequently, it can be implied that AACSB accreditation acts as

reinforcing mechanism in the perception of legitimacy amongst stakeholders and a constraining force to institutional change due to fear of potentially losing their accreditation, which serves to maintain the status quo. The end result being that this continuous endeavour towards the perception of legitimacy has led Canadian AACSB accredited business schools to become more alike than different. Hanson (2001) supports this assumption when he states:

Organizations selectively adopt these externally defined “and processes in an effort to establish legitimization in the eyes of society. That is, they try to gain societal confidence by doing what the major stakeholders on the outside expect them to do. Through legitimization, an organization establishes justification for a claim on societal resources and protects itself against attacks on its activities and procedures (p. 650).

Thus, given the amount of work already bestowed by these business schools in achieving AACSB accreditation and its impact on their overall graduate business programs offerings in terms of program development and implementation, to lose AACSB accreditation or to change their current processes and practices in place at this point would be detrimental and require a complete rethinking of their processes and strategy. Thereby, by these business schools adopting AACSB standards and adhering to them, this accrediting body acts as a strong coercive force in promoting homogeneity amongst AACSB business schools in Canada because they are dependent on this accreditation to remain competitive due to the suggestion that “they are a type of rationalized myth that is likely to confer legitimacy on a business school” (Casile & Davis-Blake, 2002, p. 182). Therefore, the AACSB as a strong coercive force on the overall graduate business program offerings in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools acts as a constraining force to any structure, process or practice that does not adhere to these AACSB standards. For instance:

That is (accreditation) that is sort of pushing us. We know that it is time to change up our program. So, when we are making decisions and moving forward, definitely the accreditation components are guiding us. They have the skills and knowledge requirements and that is guiding what (we are) doing (Business school 3 participant).

10.1.2 The influence of leading business schools as a mimetic force.

The leading business schools are suggested to fall under mimetic isomorphism with a medium influence on the overall graduate business program offerings of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. Mimetic isomorphic forces are “the pressure to copy or model other organizations” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 191) in the face of uncertainty. DiMaggio and

Powell (1991) argue that due to uncertainty in the institutional field, organizations tend to model themselves after more prestigious organizations, causing isomorphic effects. Specifically:

Mimetic processes, on the other hand, stem from uncertainty caused by poorly understood technologies, ambiguous goals, and the symbolic environment which combine to produce “modeling” behavior as lower prestige organizations emulate organizations they perceive to be more prestigious (Morphew & Huisman, 2002, p. 496).

The benchmarking of leading business schools by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools during their program development is akin to a term coined by Berdahl (1985) as “academic drift.” He describes academic drift as “the tendency of institutions, absent any restraints, to copy the role and mission of the prestigious institutions” (p. 303). In essence, it is the process where lower status academic institutions benchmark the higher status academic institutions structures and norms to gain higher status or perceive legitimacy. For the purposes of this research study, it would resemble Canadian AACSB accredited business schools (lower ranked) attempting to mimic the programs offerings of the highest ranked business schools, such as Harvard or Yale Business schools. Hanson (2001) describes this process as:

As schools seek legitimization, the replication process begins. That is, educational organizations tend to look for guidance to what highly regarded schools are doing, and this results in a homogenization process, with schools looking and acting like other schools. An unintended consequence of this struggle for legitimacy is that educational organizations are all too often rewarded and preserved for their conformity to correct structures, programs, and processes rather than the quality of their product (p. 650).

Morphew & Huisman (2002) speculate that an outcome of academic drift is institutional changes that increase homogenization of the institutional field and stabilizes institutional structures, processes and practices. This assertion is supported in this research study as many of the participants across business schools have agreed that there isn’t much difference between the core curriculums of most MBA programs. In addition, many of the participants across business schools viewed the most prestigious business schools as trendsetters in the field and a source for their business schools to gain best practices and legitimize their current activities. For example, it is not uncommon to use Harvard instructional case studies to teach various business subjects or for the leading business schools to be referred to by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools as part of their program review process to legitimize their current initiatives or program changes.

The above would lead to the conclusion that leading business schools have a strong

influence on Canadian AACSB accredited business schools overall graduate business program offerings. The response to this is definitely, they have an influence on the institutional field as a whole as they are the trendsetters; they establish best practices for program content and delivery; and by Canadian AACSB accredited business school adopting elements of the leading business schools programs they help to legitimize proposed initiatives or program changes. However, as acknowledged previously, Canadian publicly funded AACSB accredited business schools do not have the same resources as the leading business schools, and as such full “mimicking” is not feasible due to other considerations, such as:

But I think we would also recognize that we are making a decision in a different context for a different market and for different students. And so that would weight into the decision but I don't think it would completely decide, on way or the other. We would also have to see what other Canadian schools were doing. And what our students wanted and go from there (Business school 4 participant).

As well as...

I guess at the end of the day it is an influence of a whole bunch of factors. What is financially viable, what is the client base, what kind of balance do they want, what is the mixture of instructors we can draw on. Unlike private sector organizations where you re-strategize and can quickly downsize to fit that strategic re-direction, you can't do that in a university among the tenured faculty (Business school 3 participant).

Therefore, leading business schools are suggested to be of medium influence due to the consideration that Canadian AACSB accredited business schools do not have the same resources to completely mimic or copy the graduate business program offerings of the leading business schools. Rather, leading business schools' influence resides in being trendsetters and establishing best practices for business schools in general or the direction that the institutional field takes in the long term. However, in the short term, regional considerations (for example direct competitors) have a more direct influence on which option Canadian AACSB accredited business schools take in response to the business school environment.

10.1.3 The influence of business school faculty as a normative force.

The views of business school faculty are represented here as a normative isomorphic force with a strong influence on the overall graduate business program offerings of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools.

Normative isomorphic forces are defined by Budros (2001) as:

One highlights the formal training and cognitive bases to which professionals are exposed during their university education and careers. Educational and professional socialization should legitimize certain organizational practices, motivating individuals to adopt them. The other aspect underscores the elaboration of such social networks as professional associations. Network embeddedness should introduce individuals to professionally endorsed practices, speeding their adoption. Professionalization involves normative processes because it facilitates the creation of normative rules concerning organizational practices, which then lead individuals to favour sanctioned practices (p. 223).

Another main finding in this research study, as discussed in Research question 2, was that faculty opinions have the greatest influence on whether or not their business school chooses to adopt the option of online education for graduate business program delivery. This argument can also be extended to the approval of graduate business program offerings. Their collective power is built upon business schools' internal governance process (committee structure) and reinforced by the tenure track system that provides for employment stability and academic freedom of expression. Consequently, the adoption of any program initiative or change would not be feasible without senior administration gaining faculty support. As such, it is strongly contended that based on the findings of this research study that the views and perceptions of business school faculty acting as a normative isomorphic force is the strongest of the three isomorphic forces constraining institutional change. As Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) support:

The role of actors in the transformation of existing institutions and field has also risen in prominence within institutional research. Institutional studies have documented the ability of actors, particularly those with some key strategic resources or other forms of power, to have significant impacts on the evolution of institutions and fields (p. 215).

The business school environment involves multiple stakeholders and as public institutions they are governed by rules and regulations set by government. Meyer (1992) contends that business schools have multiple and hierarchical approval levels in their internal governance process, which supports the findings of this research study. Another outcome is that organizations such as business schools focus on routines. Routines are made up of rules, strategies, programs, and technologies that have worked in the past. As Morphey and Huisman (2002) state, routines become forces for stability rather than change. In the case of face-to-face teaching, this stability is over 1,000 years old.

For example:

Universities have existed for a thousand years. We feel we endure. We're not some manufacturing place that is here today and gone tomorrow. It is good for us to resist change. If we didn't resist change we might not have survived. Which we think is a good thing (Business school 4 participant).

It is almost as if the status quo is maintained until there is no other option but to respond. This leads to the assertion that due to the fragmented and complex business school environment that Canadian AACSB business schools occupy, they are risk averse and conservative towards dramatic institutional change unless they are left with no other option. The outcome of this strategy is that institutional organizations suffer from inertia and are slow and resistant to institutional change. For instance:

Inertia. I could say the nice word of institutional forces. We teach about change, but we never change in a big way (Business school 4 participant).

For the adoption of online education for the delivery of graduate business education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools there is a small and slow movement towards its adoption; however faculty resistance is still high, making dramatic and rapid institutional change difficult. However, that is not to say that the option of the adoption of online education will not occur, but rather it will take time due to internal constraining forces, such as:

“...this networking of constraints in a school's organizational field places serious limitations on the change process. Schools get tied down by the network of organizations in their fields by laws, operating procedures, purchase orders, bus schedules, delivery schedules, parent expectations of what a “good school” does, and so forth” (Morphew & Huisman, 2002, p. 648).

Finally, when reviewing the effects that peer opinions have on one another through peer pressure and the professionalism of the field, it is found that faculty in the example of the adoption of online education, have found a method that is considered legitimate in their professional field (face-to-face delivery) and given their resistance to change and the lengthy internal governance structure, change will be very difficult. From this perspective, normative forces work best in maintaining the status quo for well-established institutional fields. When current actions or initiatives are considered legitimate there is no force for institutional change, even when the proposed change may be considered the best course of action. Therefore, since business school

faculty perceptions of online education are that it is inferior to face-to-face delivery, they act as a normative isomorphic force, maintaining the status quo. In sum:

The acquisition of normatively defined practices and structures is more important for the survival of institutional organizations than are practices that enhance the efficiency of their technical processes or the quality of their organizational outputs. And, when these “correct” practices and structures are then adopted by all the within a specific field, isomorphic processes are the necessary result, and homogeneity within the field can be expected to increase (Morphew & Huisman, 2002, p. 496).

A facilitator to gain support from faculty is through peer-to-peer leadership (as discussed in Research question 2). This facilitator helps to demonstrate the strength of faculty as a normative isomorphic force. The views and perceptions of business school faculty on one another have the ability to increase homogeneity in the institutional field as more and more faculty support a particular initiative or change. To illustrate this process, the hypothetical adoption of online education will be used. Commonly in the interviews participants across business schools referred to how successful initiatives came to fruition through peer leadership. What typically occurs in this illustration is that senior administration will identify a few faculty members to act as champions for online education (usually a respected faculty member). These champions will seek out other faculty members and discuss the reasons and benefits why online education would best serve them and the business school, until enough support is gained for the adoption of online education to be approved through the committee structure, which is composed of faculty. When adoption occurs, business school faculty discusses the merits of online education to business school faculty at other business schools at conferences or in academic journals.

This method of gaining support is referred to as the bandwagon effect, whereby support is gained from one faculty member and ripples on to the next faculty member until the majority of faculty are supportive of this initiative leaving the rest to join out of peer pressure. In an institutional field, this comprises of one business school adopting online education and then the next and the next until this medium of delivery becomes an accepted and legitimate medium of delivery.

This effect was summed up by one participant from Business school 4, when he said:

Well, hopefully at some point when everybody else was doing it they might just give up and decide that that is just where things are going. And I think that might go a ways by convincing them. If it became the norm. It wasn't just your school doing it and other schools were doing it. If people they talked to at conferences were doing it. And said it wasn't so bad. And if people have figured out how to maintain quality. I mean it would take some time. But I think it is mostly just a lack of knowledge problem. And I think that most people would eventually get enough kind of background and it becomes familiar enough that they would accept it (Business school 4 participant).

The above quote lends support that as a certain structure, process or practice becomes more accepted within an institutional field, it gains legitimacy from the perspective of stakeholders until such time as that structure, process or practice becomes known as the most desirable form to take. For example, the more online education is adopted within an institutional field and the more research is conducted on its effectiveness, the more legitimate this medium of delivery becomes in the perspectives of business school faculty. Correspondingly, this practice now becomes shared and the normative isomorphic pressures are realized. Thus, business school faculty acting as a normative isomorphic force have the strongest influence in terms of overall graduate business program offerings in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. The ultimate conclusion being reached is that faculty support is imperative to institutional change in this institutional field. As such, they can act as both enabling and constraining forces to institutional change.

10.2 Discussion of Findings

To understand the influence of isomorphic forces on institutional change the influence of various stakeholders on the overall graduate business program offerings by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools were presented. In particular three isomorphic forces were applied as follows: coercive (AACSB accreditation – strong influence); mimetic (leading business schools – medium influence); and normative (business school faculty – strongest influence). This research study suggests that in the context of institutional change, coercive forces result in common core processes and program offerings; mimetic forces serve a process of replication, but organizational resources and constraints can overcome homogeneity and introduce an element of heterogeneity in the institutional field; and normative forces due to risk aversion (resistance to change and fear of the unknown) and concerns over legitimacy act as the strongest isomorphic force towards constraining institutional change and maintaining the status quo. Through the exploration of these

isomorphic forces further insights into institutional change became feasible, which now aids in the discussion of the limited adoption of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business school.

10.2.1 Maintaining legitimacy.

A common theme acting as a strong explanatory factor for the strength behind the three isomorphic forces is legitimacy. Hanson (2001) contends that a process reinforcing the isomorphic process is the “struggle for legitimacy that public schools constantly pursue” (p. 649). Granted, Hanson was discussing elementary and high school level education, however, his application is suggested to expand to graduate business education as well. The findings of this research study strongly support the idea that almost all actions taken by the Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are to preserve and maintain legitimacy, which has led to uniform structures, processes and practices. In this sense, Canadian AACSB accredited business schools abide by the notion that “Legitimacy enhances organizational survival” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 353). Therefore, maintaining legitimacy is the main reason for the limited adoption of online education for graduate business program delivery in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools due to faculty concerns over the quality of online education because of the lack of face-to-face interaction.

The exploration of the influence of these isomorphic forces render the strong contention that legitimacy is a strong factor stabilizing and solidifying institutional structures, processes and practices thereby, constraining institutional change in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools in their responses to the business school environment due to the type of organizations they are. Morpew & Huisman (2002) and Meyer and Rowan (1977) categorize academic institutions (which business schools fall under) as institutional organizations. They describe institutional organizations as organizations that:

...Use ambiguous technologies (e.g. teaching) to produce outputs (e.g. knowledge, very capable students) whose “value” and “quality” are very difficult to determine. For these institutional organizations, it is not sufficient to operate efficiently, for it is not in these criteria that their products are judged. Instead, institutional organizations must incorporate the “correct” programs and structures of their organizational field to be viewed – both internally and externally as legitimate (p. 495).

At present, stakeholders view the face-to-face medium of delivery as the most legitimate mechanism to deliver a quality graduate business education. The adoption of online education

(particularly fully online programs) is relatively new and its effectiveness is still heavily debated. Therefore, since this institutional field has a readily accepted and legitimate format to deliver graduate business education, unless online education were to become “as” or “more” legitimate in the view of stakeholders, it lends itself to explain why Canadian AACSB accredited business schools have been slow to adopt online education and have favoured program expansions and specialized programs (which are only an extension of their current strategy) in response to the business school environment. As Dacin et al., (2002) point out:

The creation, transformation, and diffusion of institutions require legitimacy, a condition whereby other alternatives are seen as less appropriate, desirable, or viable (p. 47).

Furthermore, legitimacy over efficiency in institutional organizations like academic institutions take priority to determine survival. As Morpew and Huisman 2002) provide:

As a result, the acquisition of normatively defined practices and structures is more important for the survival of institutional organizations than are practices that enhance the efficiency of their technical processes or the quality of their organizational outputs. And, when these “correct” practices and structures are then adopted by all institutional organizations within a specific field, isomorphic processes are the necessary result, and homogeneity within the field can be expected to increase (p. 496).

Meyer and Rowan’s writings help to understand why legitimacy was such a reoccurring theme in this research study by influencing a Canadian AACSB accredited business school to take organizational action (such as their responses to the business school environment) and why this institutional field has currently not opted to actively pursue online education at this point in time. More specifically, Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1983) proposed that rational myths act like rules of appropriate conduct for the organizations in an institutional field and those organizations who act upon these rational myths gain legitimacy in the view of stakeholders.

In institutional organizations like academic institutions (Morpew & Huisman, 2002), perceived legitimacy is often more important than efficiency. Thus, this perspective through the lens of Institutional theory helps to explain that since stakeholders (employers, business school faculty, senior administration) view classroom delivery as more legitimate (higher quality), they are responding to the business school environment by maintaining this medium of delivery despite it may not being the most efficient medium of delivery available. Furthermore, it aids in our understanding of why stakeholders were more open to the hybrid format since it maintains some degree of face-to-face interaction. Hence, Institutional theory has helped to understand that

concerns with maintaining legitimacy by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools has led to the limited adoption of online education as stakeholders view it as being inferior due to the lack of face-to-face interaction that stakeholders believe is needed to provide a quality education at the graduate business level.

10.2.2 Heterogeneity in an institutional field.

To further explain the adoption of online education, mimetic isomorphism has helped to understand that leading business schools have opened the door for this medium of delivery to be accepted in the future (as most offer online programs). However, it was also found that mimetic isomorphism was not completely realized with the recognition that most Canadian publicly funded AACSB accredited business schools do not have the same resources to fully mimic the graduate program offerings of the leading business schools. A Canadian AACSB accredited business school responds to the business school environment based on their internal resources (human and budgetary) and pressures from their local/regional competitors and stakeholders. To determine how to respond to the business school environment they will refer to the leading business schools for best practices, but will ultimately decide what to do based on what is feasible and in their best interests given their internal resources. The benchmarking that does take place serves to legitimize their organizational changes. The result of this process is that Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are both homogeneous (they all offer an MBA program with similar core content, the main form of program delivery is face-to-face with the main pedagogical approaches being lectures and instructional case studies and have all responded to the business school environment by expanding program offerings) and heterogeneous (they differ in the type of concentrations and specialized Master's programs they offer adapted to local/regional conditions as well as some offer online education) in order to compete in the increasingly competitive graduate business market. These sentiments are echoed by Casile and Davis-Blake (2002) when they state:

Highly competitive markets create many alternatives for customers and force organizations to focus on responding to customers in order to survive. Organizations in highly competitive markets may respond to institutional changes only if doing so enhances their effectiveness to customers. (p. 192).

The above assertion that the institutional field can be both homogeneous but also hold some heterogeneous elements can be further supported by the works of Huisman and Morphey (1998), where they contend that "certain higher education systems may be growing more

heterogeneous over time.” This statement provides some light on why only a small fraction of Canadian AACSB business schools have adopted online education when the greater institutional field (academic institutions) in general has embraced this medium of delivery (Allen & Seaman, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013). Even business schools in general, have seen greater adoption of online education, with the leading business schools carving the way with MOOCs. Huisman and Morphey (2002) suggest that governmental action has “at least dampened the tendencies of homogenization”, which offers that “centralized governance structures may play a significant role in promoting institutional diversity in some cases” (p. 494). Given that the 21 business schools in the population of this study are publicly funded, and therefore vulnerable to budgetary cuts by the provinces, it is proposed that governmental action is a constraint to academic drift and has led to increasing heterogeneity amongst Canadian AACSB accredited business schools.

Institutional theory pays a lot of attention to the idea that as an institutional field becomes more established they become more homogenous over time (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) due to rationalized myths reinforced by stakeholder concerns over legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1983). However, as a result of the findings of this research study, it is suggested that due to the pressures exerted by various environmental factors and internal organizational restraints, multiple legitimate response to these factors/forces can take place. As such, this research study supports the point of view of Greenwood et al. (2008) when they provide:

But isomorphism was (and still is, unfortunately) often taken to mean that all organizations will respond the same way. Yet organizations confront institutional contexts containing multiple and inconsistent myths that allow for multiple yet equally legitimate responses (p. 11).

10.2.3 Online education and the process of institutional change.

Face-to-face education delivery is the current institutional practice accepted by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools for their graduate business program delivery. In Chapter Two, the model by Greenwood et al., (2002) was provided to illustrate the process of institutional change. The following questions were posed: At what stage has the adoption of online education by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools occurred? What would need to occur for online education to reach the “Reinstitutionalization” stage to be adopted by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools? Given, the findings of this research study, responses to these questions are now forthcoming. Please refer to *Figure 2* (p. 44) shown earlier for this discussion.

Based on the findings of this research study, it is suggested that one of the main reasons that online education has not been fully embraced by this institutional field and has not gained legitimacy in the view of stakeholders is that online education is still at the *Theorization phase*. In other words, there is still a level of uncertainty that exists with this medium of delivery. As Lounsbury (2002) provides:

The process of institutional transformation (change) simultaneously involves the deconstruction of an older order and the building up of a new one. As the older order is being dismantled and before a new of institutional arrangements in place, however, a great deal of uncertainty exists (p. 255).

A review of the process is warranted to substantiate this argument and respond to the questions posed above.

I – Precipitating Jolts – In this stage, institutional change is triggered by an exogenous shock or jolt (Meyer, 1982) whereby change occurs as a consequence of external environmental factors “smacking into stable institutional arrangements and creating indeterminacy” (Clemens & Cook, 1999, p. 447). Hanson (2001) refers similarly to this phenomenon as environmental shocks. These jolts/shocks take on the ability to destabilize established practices. They can occur from social upheaval; technical disruptions or regulatory changes. For the adoption of online education, it is suggested that at this stage the external environmental factors such as increased competition; the changing nature of the business world; technological advancements and the needs of the non-traditional student have acted as a form of “jolt” or “shock” destabilizing the institutionalized practice of face-to-face classroom delivery.

II – Deinstitutionalization – In this stage, new entrants (competitors) enter the institutional field bringing with them new ideas and structures, processes and practices, which brings about the “possibility of institutional change” (Greenwood et al., 2002, p. 60). For the adoption of online education, it is suggested that at this stage new entrants such as online universities; business schools outside of North America; in house management training activities that include e-learning products; and even programs catering to the non-traditional student have begun entering the institutional field occupied formerly solely by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. These new entrants have increased the competitive landscape of this institutional field.

III – Pre-institutionalization – In this stage, organizations introduce innovations independently in response to perceived problems. For the adoption of online education, it is suggested that at this stage due to increasing competitiveness of the graduate business education market, some Canadian AACSB accredited business schools may be seeking differentiation by expanding their market reach and shares by introducing fully online or partially (hybrid) online programs.

IV – Theorization – According to Greenwood et al. (2002) theorization is “the development and specification of abstract categories and the elaboration of chains of cause and effect. Such theoretical accounts simplify and distill the properties of new practices and explain the outcomes they produce” (p. 60). Put simply, the new structure, process or practice becomes investigated, abstracted and amended until it is in the format that is simplified enabling wider adoption. For the adoption of online education, it is suggested that online education has grown in acceptance amongst academic institutions in general due to increasing research into its effectiveness, which is most certainly occurring at this point in time. In addition, leading business schools have begun providing formats for adoption, such as MOOCs. I believe this is the current stage of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are all aware of online education and are investigating their options, but still at this point online education is not a taken for granted institutionalized practice as skepticism still exists amongst stakeholders rendering adoption limited.

V – Diffusion – At this stage, there is growing acceptance by the institutional field that the institutional change precipitated by the “jolt” is more appropriate than current structures, processes and practices in place. Now, for online education to reach this stage, it is suggested that stakeholders in the business school environment will need to start to perceive that online education is as a legitimate medium of delivery for graduate business education as face-to-face delivery. They have not reached this stage yet.

VI – Reinstitutionalization – At this stage, the structure, process and/or practice has become fully institutionalized replacing the old structure, process and/or practice as the most natural and appropriate arrangement (Suchman, 1995). Once institutionalized, they are readily accepted by the institutional field and take on rule like status (rationalized myths). Now, for online education to reach this stage, it is suggested that the majority of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools will need to have adopted some form of online education for their graduate business program

delivery. Furthermore, at this stage stakeholders would take it for granted that the graduate business programs offered by Canadian AACSB would offer some online education. Based on the findings of this research study, Canadian AACSB business schools have not achieved this state yet at this point in time.

However, as all four Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are at least considering online education, this medium of delivery is making steps forward in the institutional change process. Referring back to the contention that online education is currently at the “Theorization Stage” what would need to occur for online education to reach the “Reinstitutionalization” stage to be adopted by AACSB accredited business schools? The answer that would be suggested is - time. Institutional change in academic institutions is slow, extremely slow, due to the current approval and governance processes and the nature of academia itself. Furthermore, as Folkers (2002) suggests, “The integration of online education into universities represents both a threat and an opportunity. While it provides the potential to reach a new audience in a new way, it also brings the possibility that it will radically alter the institutions in which it is implemented” (p. 74).

Based on the findings of this research study, it is clear that online education is not an institutionalized practice at this point in time as it has not gained sufficient legitimacy in the view of stakeholders. Therefore, the Institutional theory lens has provided us with a deeper and better understanding into why there has been the limited adoption of online education. Namely, the influence of stakeholders and the reasons that institutional change in academic institutions is so difficult, due to the isomorphic forces acting as constraining forces to institutional change. Finally, maintaining legitimacy has been determined to be the main reason for the limited adoption of online education by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools for their graduate program delivery.

In the last conclusion chapter to follow next, Chapter eleven, the main findings of this research study will be highlighted and summarized, then the limitations of the study, followed by a discussion of my contributions, some practical implications from the study and directions for future research.

Chapter Eleven - Conclusions

The focus of this research study has been on the limited adoption of the option of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools for the delivery of their graduate business programs. This concluding chapter will focus on providing a: summary of the main research findings; limitations of this research study; contributions of this research study; practical implications; directions for future research; and final conclusions. It is important to note, that the purpose of this research study was not to evaluate the effectiveness of online education or whether it is the best option for Canadian AACSB accredited business schools to respond to the business school environment, but rather to explore the limited adoption of online education in these business schools. The word “option” was purposefully utilized within the research questions to denote that online education is but one option to respond to the business school environment.

11.1 Summary of Main Research Findings

The main research problem guiding this research study was: ***Why are the majority of Canadian AACSB accredited business schools currently not offering the option of completing their graduate business programs either partially or fully through online education?***

To finally respond to the research problem that has guided this research study, the conceptual diagram proposed in Chapter 2 – *Figure 3*, will now be revisited and populated with the major findings of this research study. As such, *Figure 3*, has now been renamed *Figure 5* – Diagram of Main Findings of this Research Study.

(continued on next page)

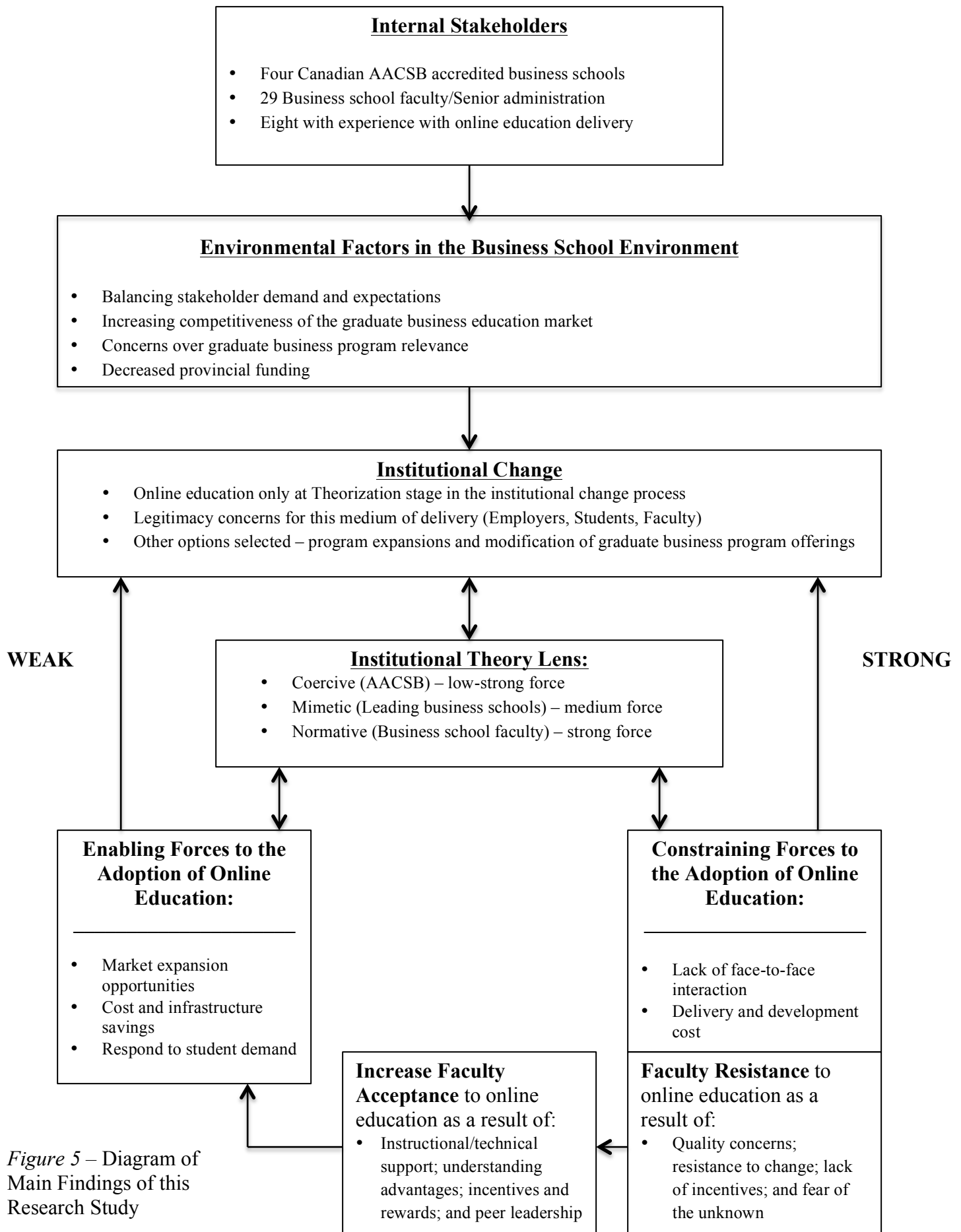


Figure 5 – Diagram of Main Findings of this Research Study

Figure 5 provides an overview of the findings of this research study that explains the reasons why there is limited adoption amongst Canadian AACSB accredited business schools for the adoption of the option of online education for the delivery of their graduate business programs. To determine the findings of this research study a total of 29 senior administration and faculty across four Canadian AACSB accredited business schools were interviewed as part of this research study. The primary function of these interviews was to gather their perceptions and views on online education and institutional change in their academic institutions.

To establish context for this research study, the external environmental factors in the business school environment were identified and explored as it was found that these factors were placing destabilizing pressures on business schools in terms of their traditional graduate business programs offerings. As presented in *Figure 5*, the most important and significant environmental factors identified by participants across business schools were: balancing stakeholder demand and interests; the increasingly competitive market for students in graduate business education; unresolved concerns about the relevance of business education; and how to remain sustainable with decreased provincial funding. These pressures in the business school environment are forcing Canadian AACSB accredited business schools to look at their graduate business programs to see how they can continue to compete in the business school environment. One option proposed to respond is the adoption of the option of online education for their graduate business program delivery. To date adoption has been limited, which ultimately led to the research problem guiding this research study.

Given the results of this research study it can now be confidently stated that at this current moment Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are responding to the environmental pressures in the business school environment, but that these business schools have responded by pursuing other options instead, such as differentiating their programs by offering various program expansions and modification of graduate business program offerings (i.e. more specialized and interdisciplinary programs). To express this another way, Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are realizing that it is a competitive landscape and just doing the same thing, the same way is no longer a viable option, but for the time being it is not online education.

This research study then turned to investigating the enabling and constraining forces towards the adoption of online education. As described in *Figure 5*, various enabling and constraining forces were identified including their influence on adoption. The enabling forces identified by the participants across business schools were: market expansion opportunities; cost

and infrastructure savings; and responding to student demand for more online education offerings. However, a significant finding of this research study was that the constraining forces were stronger than the enabling forces, resulting in limited adoption. The constraining forces identified by the participants across business schools were: lack of face-to-face interaction; and delivery and development costs. However, although the enabling forces are considered weak, they have at least successfully raised an awareness of the utility of this medium of delivery for future consideration by these business schools such as market expansion and potential cost and infrastructure savings as public funding for education remains uncertain and continues to decrease.

As shown under the constraining forces in *Figure 5*, the main stakeholder influencing the limited adoption of online education amongst Canadian AACSB accredited business schools is from the business school faculty members themselves due to the power they exert as a result of their business schools' internal governance approval structures. Without their support, adoption will not occur. At this point in time, business school faculty in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are for the most part resistant to the adoption of online education, especially in terms of fully online graduate business programs. The reasons for this resistance according to the participants across business schools are due to faculty concerns over the quality of this medium of delivery due to the lack of face-to-face interaction; resistance to change in general; lack of incentive to pursue online education given the current reward structure in place at their business schools; and fear of the unknown as most business school faculty do not have any experience with this medium of delivery. As such, faculty opinions and views on online education have the strongest influence on whether or not their business school adopts online education. Since, they are for the most part resistant, this finding is also the strongest explanatory factor contributing to the limited adoption of online education.

As depicted in *Figure 5*, to further understand the limited adoption of online education, the Institutional theory perspective was applied as the lens to frame this research study. Institutional theory helped to understand how institutions change and Canadian AACSB accredited business schools are influenced by isomorphic forces. More specifically, how their influence constrains institutional change. For the purposes of this research study, the adoption of online education was considered an institutional change as it results in a change in institutional practice from face-to-face delivery. To illustrate the influence of these isomorphic forces, the AACSB as an example of a low to high coercive force results in similar structures and processes between business schools due to their adherence to AACSB standards to maintain membership; leading business schools as a

medium mimetic force serve a process of replication due to lower status business schools benchmarking higher status business schools, however their influence is incomplete due to individual resource constraints; and finally business school faculty as an example of very strong normative force, can unilaterally act as a collective to constrain or enable institutional change. The result being, a homogeneous institutional field where institutional structures, processes and practices are reinforced by the power of stakeholders in an institutional field, which serves to maintain the status quo of face-to-face delivery.

Furthermore, by applying the Institutional theory lens came the full understanding that the main reason institutional change in academic institutions is so difficult and why there is limited adoption of online education is due to legitimacy concerns with this delivery medium. Legitimacy concerns amongst Canadian AACSB accredited business schools and by extension, traditional bricks and mortar academic institutions is alive and well and reinforced by very strong rationalized myths further institutionalizing the practice of face-to-face delivery. The participants overwhelmingly felt that if they could not develop and offer a high quality program that was viewed as legitimate by stakeholders, there was no purpose in pursuing this option. Furthermore, given limited resources due to budgetary restrictions, the adoption of online education was viewed by these business schools as too great a risk to pursue at this point in time. However, the hybrid format seems to be gaining momentum due to its ability to reconcile the best that both mediums of delivery have to offer. In addition, most of the participants agreed that this was the ideal format for graduate business program delivery, except in Business school 4, where preference still lays with the full face-to-face delivery graduate business programs.

In addition, Institutional theory has also helped to understand how institutional change can occur, beginning with environmental shocks/jolts (like the environmental factors identified as part of this research study and shown in *Figure 5*), which lead to the need for organizations in an institutional field to investigate options to respond. Furthermore, the enabling forces have provided the opportunity for online education to be considered as an option to respond to the business school environment. Thereby, over time increasing this medium of delivery's legitimacy in the view of stakeholders and promoting its adoption. This stage has already begun as we have already seen the participants acquiesce that adoption in the future in some format or another is inevitable. When reviewing the process of institutional change as indicated in *Figure 5* above, the contention is that online education is currently at the "Theorization Stage" and still steps away from reaching the "Reinstitutionalization" stage. In other words, being fully legitimized and

accepted within this institutional field. To reach this stage, the overall finding is that time is required. Institutional change in academic institutions is slow, extremely slow, due to the current approval and governance processes and the nature of academia itself. To conclude, the results presented in *Figure 5*, have provided a much more complex, richer and clearer understanding and explanation for the limited adoption of online education by Canadian AACSB accredited business schools for the delivery of their graduate business programs.

11.2 Limitations of this Research Study

Despite the comprehensiveness of the methodology applied, this research study is not without its limitations. Firstly, the sample context was limited to Canadian AACSB accredited business schools, and even though many of the findings have provided some insight into business schools in general and at greater scale academic institutions in Canada, it would not be ventured to propose that these findings are generalizable outside of their intended context. For example, these findings would not be generalizable to U.S. based private business schools as they have different funding structures and government regulations. Therefore, this research study should be read in the context for which the findings were intended.

Secondly, this research study focused on the perceptions and views of faculty and senior administration; but did not compare and contrast the findings by participant group because frequently the administrators themselves are faculty members and it would not be possible to disentangle their views. Rather, these perceptions and views were reported as a unified participant. In addition, participants were asked to provide their perceptions of the points of view of students and employers without any data actually collected from this data source. Even though, it is felt very strongly that the participants provided an accurate picture of the perspectives held at their business school, it is acknowledged that there is a margin of error that exists due to potential subjectivity of the participants. In addition, as part of the interviews conducted with participants, they were asked not only to provide their perspective on online education and institutional change, but also to speculate in terms of their business school as a whole and the institutional field in general. As such, there is a risk (as in most qualitative research) that the participants' bias could have influenced the findings of this research study. This approach also led to the possibility that certain stakeholders and their influence may not have been considered in the findings of this research study.

For example, one participant in the research study did mention the influence of unions as a stakeholder:

Our business school is constrained within the broader University and by the faculty belonging to the faculty union. So, we can't respond to the outside stakeholders, in isolation. We have to take into account the other internal constraints from senior administration and the union (Business school 1 participant).

Consequently, given that only one participant mentioned this stakeholder in their follow-up interview, perceptions of this stakeholder were not included as part of this research study.

Finally, this research study was based on a qualitative multiple case study design. As such, data collection was limited to four business schools and 29 participants. Although the merits and the reasons for the selection of this design are well articulated in Chapter Three – Methodology, it is acknowledged that value could have been added at a macro level by implementing some form of quantitative method, such as the dissemination of a survey. This would have allowed for a broader reach in this institutional field, such as access to more than four business schools and 29 participants. Subsequently, the quantitative data collected could have been useful to further substantiate and reinforce the main findings of this research study.

11.3 Contributions of this Research Study

Even with the limitations described above, this research study has provided a number of significant contributions to research in the areas of online education and institutional change in academic institutions. No previous research study has provided such an in depth understanding of the limited and slow adoption of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools by identifying and determining the influence of various enabling and constraining forces towards the potential adoption of the option of online education for the delivery of graduate business programs. In addition, no research study on this topic has applied a theoretical lens to explain the organizational decision making of this institutional field. Furthermore, where this research study gains its strength is in the commonality and frequency of the participants' responses across business schools. The fact that many of the findings were cited over and over by the participants across business schools lends strong support to the assertion that many of the findings are transferable to publicly funded Canadian AACSB accredited business schools, which can be applied to future research studies in these areas. The specific contributions of this research study are as follows:

Firstly, this research study provides a unique contribution to the to the growing literature on online education in academic institutions by investigating the reasons for the limited adoption of online education in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools for the delivery of their graduate business programs. The empirical research reviewed as part of the literature review focused mainly on comparing online education versus face-to-face delivery and discussing why there is a lack of adoption. With the depth and breadth of the findings in this research study, new insights and knowledge to this important area of the literature have been provided as not only were the enabling and constraining forces identified, this research study also comprehensively explored the business school environment, Canadian AACSB accredited business schools' response to the external environmental factors, and the influence of stakeholders. Furthermore, it is argued that these findings can be useful and applicable to many public academic institutions in Canada, as they are all facing pressures from similar environmental factors such as budgetary concerns and a more competitive landscape in the delivery of education.

Secondly, it was determined that the influence of business school faculty as a collective is strong in terms of adoption and institutional change in general. This finding is important and very relevant in our understanding of enabling and constraining forces, as it is argued that faculty influence is strong not only in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools but public Canadian academic institutions in general as they all hold fairly similar internal governance processes, making these findings very relevant and useful to different academic disciplines. As Howells et al., (2014) put forth academic institutions in general are different from other types of public organizations “due to the loose coupling between administration and academic core, high professional autonomy and weak leadership and management (Howells, et al, 2014, p. 256).

Thirdly, most of the relevant literature reviewed as part of this research study was based on quantitative data collection methods, such as using surveys to obtain their results. Even Allen and Seaman's (2008, 2009, 2010, 2013) survey results, which are considered the largest studies to date exploring the adoption of online education, are U.S. based only and do not differentiate between the undergraduate or graduate level or academic discipline. This research study has addressed this significant gap in the literature and has provided a closer look at this phenomenon by applying a qualitative methodology to provide rich descriptions and firsthand accounts at the graduate level, which has never been attempted previously for the Canadian context.

Fourthly, this research study successfully provided new insights into how stakeholder perceptions could act to increase homogeneity in an institutional field and maintain current

institutional practices. In particular, how Institutional theory can help to explain organizational action, behaviour and decision making in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. This is particularly beneficial since while conducting a review of the literature on the adoption of online education in academic institutions it became abundantly clear that none of the empirical studies explored stakeholder influence from a theoretical perspective. This research study makes an important and significant contribution by addressing this gap in the literature.

Fifthly, this research study makes a contribution to and builds on the writings of Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1983) and their perspective on legitimacy as well as DiMaggio and Powell's (1983, 1991) premise of how the pursuit of legitimacy by organizations in an institutional field leads to "startling homogeneity of organizational forms and practices" (p. 147). They titled this process as isomorphism and describe three powerful isomorphic forces (coercive, mimetic and normative) that bring about out this state of homogeneity in an institutional field. This study has provided an example of how Institutional theory is not only useful as a theoretical lens to explore the limited adoption of online education but also how these isomorphic forces can explain the influence of various stakeholders in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. In order to make this determination, stakeholder influence in the context of overall graduate business program offerings was investigated. By doing so, this research study has also added to our further understanding of Institutional theory and how an actor within an institutional field can influence the direction of an institutional field based on their interests (Ahmadijian & Robinson, 2001; Casile & Davis-Blake, 2002; DiMaggio, 1988; Greenwood et al., 2002; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Oakes et al., 1998; Oliver, 1992; Scott, 1987).

Sixthly, by applying the Institutional theory perspective to this research study, certain assertions with regard to the influence of various stakeholders and institutional change in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools became feasible. By looking at the findings of this research study through the lens of Institutional theory, it now became possible to add to the discussion on why institutional change is so difficult in Canadian AACSB accredited business school through greater understanding of organizational decision making in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools and the isomorphic forces that help to maintain current institutional structures, processes and practices. Uniquely, the model by Greenwood (see *Figure 2*, p. 44) has never previously been applied in this context and, thus clearly provides some new insights and explanations to institutional change and aids in our understanding of the lack of adoption by these business schools.

Finally, another significant and unique contribution of this research study is that it focused on the organizational decision makers themselves - senior administration and business school faculty through the collection of first hand experiences and opinions not only on the adoption of online education but also on institutional change in their business school. As some of the very candid quotes have shown, what was gained was very insightful and unfiltered responses to the research questions providing an insider look at Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. This was particularly fruitful to this research study, as Folkers (2005) states, “without the support of higher education faculty, true reform (change) within an institution is unlikely to take place (p. 69). The main research finding that business school faculty have the highest level of influence on whether or not a Canadian AACSB accredited business school adopts the option of online education authenticates Folkers (2005) statement above. Therefore, by utilizing Institutional theory to explore the limited adoption of online education, the door has been opened for more research studies to apply this theoretical lens to explore not only organizational action, behaviour and decision making in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools but possibly academic institutions in general in the future.

In sum, this research study has made significant contributions to the scholarly literature on the adoption of online education by investigating the influence of various enabling and constraining forces to adoption; the research literature on graduate business education by exploring the influence of various stakeholders on the adoption of online education; and Institutional theory by demonstrating how its application to understanding organizational behaviour, actions and decision making can be used as an exploratory lens to conduct research in this area. In addition, various insights and assertions on institutional change in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools that can translate very effectively to Canadian public academic institutions in general have been offered.

11.4 Practical Implications

In addition to the significant contributions of this research study described above, the results have also provided some very useful practical implications. In particular, practical strategies that senior administration can avail themselves of to gain support by faculty for future initiatives or changes. These strategies became apparent when the participants discussed in the context of the adoption of online education what senior administration would need to do to gain acceptance for online education. The term used in the research study to describe these strategies

was facilitators (see *Figure 5*, p. 249). These facilitators are strongly suggested to be applicable in multiple contexts as the participants referred to these strategies as they reflected on successful initiatives in their business schools. The four main strategies identified were: Instructional and technical support; understanding the advantages to online education; incentives and rewards; and peer leadership (for an elaboration of these facilitators, see Chapter Nine – section 9.3).

As an example of how these strategies can be applied by senior administration in other contexts, the following hypothetical example is provided for how senior administration in a business school can attempt to gain support for the wide spread use of a teaching method such as instructional case studies by faculty in their graduate business classes. This process can be as follows:

To provide instructional and technical support: This strategy involves providing instructional and technical support to business school faculty. To apply this strategy to the adoption of instructional case studies, senior administration would provide examples of cases to faculty and provide them with training on how to effectively deliver a case study in class. For example an experienced case instructor from Harvard, which uses cases extensively and has an outstanding reputation, could offer instructional and design support on how to design courses in such a way to include instructional case studies as an effective teaching pedagogy. This support strategy lessens the faculty members' fear of the unknown.

Understanding the advantages associated with the initiative: This strategy involves helping business school faculty understand the benefits of a particular initiative or change. To apply this strategy to the adoption of instructional case studies, senior administration would bring forward all the advantages of using instructional case studies in the classroom by outlining its effectiveness in terms of learning outcomes and soft skill development. Provide evidence and credible information about these advantages to faculty. The argument made here is that once faculty come to understand and become accustomed to instructional case studies and have the opportunity to experience the advantages of this pedagogical tool for themselves, adoption can slowly occur.

Provide incentives and rewards: This strategy involves providing incentives and rewards to business school faculty for their support of a particular initiative and/or change. To apply this

strategy to the adoption of instructional case studies, senior administration could reward faculty who adopt case studies in their classes through monetary incentives or research funds. This strategy works to appeal to individual faculty member's motivation to pursue or try out instructional case studies in their classes.

Use of peer leadership to influence change: This strategy involves gaining business school faculty support for a particular initiative and/or program change through peer leadership (champions). This strategy entails identifying a few champions that are respected faculty members to support the initiative and then build support from within (also known as the bandwagon effect). To apply this strategy to the adoption of instructional case studies, senior administration could appoint a few respected peer leaders to voice the advantages of instructional case studies or to adopt instructional case studies in their classes in order to share their experiences. This strategy is particularly effective given the collegial respect between faculty members.

Therefore, if these strategies (facilitators) are effectively implemented by senior administration, it is suggested that these mechanism can work to increase support by faculty for a particular change or initiative. The end result being, when the proposal for the initiative passes through the various levels in the committee approval structure, faculty support will already be there and the initiative should then receive little resistance at each and every committee level.

11.5 Directions for Future Research

Despite the limitations associated with this research study, they also provide the opportunity to build upon them in order to conduct future research in the areas of online education and institutional change in academic institutions.

First, the opportunity resides in the ability to conduct a similar research study with senior administration and faculty in other disciplines/departments within academic institutions. This would provide an interesting understanding and exploration in terms of contrasting faculty influence and acceptance/resistance towards the adoption of online education and on a broader level - institutional change. For example, exploring the acceptance or resistance of online education with senior administration and faculty in Departments of Education across academic institutions. This population would be very interesting given that faculty at a Department of Education would arguably be at the forefront of educational delivery methods and have more experience with the application and use of online education. Therefore, their views on online

education is suggested to be more “informed” than with faculty at a Canadian AACSB accredited business school.

In addition, another area that could be investigated further is the exploration of the difference between publicly funded and privatized business schools or Canadian AACSB accredited business schools and Canadian business schools that are not AACSB accredited. It would be very insightful to investigate the similarities and differences in enabling and constraining forces as well as the strength of the influence of various stakeholders on organizational decision making. Furthermore, how do these business schools institute change? Are publicly funded academic institutions slower to change than private academic institutions? If so, why? Do senior administration and business school faculty hold different levels of resistance or acceptance to online education? Further research in this area would be highly beneficial.

Secondly, it is suggested that unions are strong within an academic setting. However, their influence in a business school and the adoption of online education and institutional change in general is questionable due to the fact that the unions representing faculty cover the entire academic institution not just business school faculty. Further investigation would be warranted to explore the influence of unions as a stakeholder. In addition, it is argued that more data be collected from employers and students who occupy positions on these business schools’ Business Advisory Councils. This research study identified this group of stakeholders as having a medium influence on the long-term direction of the business school. Thus, their perspectives would be highly beneficial to our understanding of institutional change in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools.

Thirdly, a means to lessen the margin of error in this qualitative research study and further contribute to this area of research is to conduct more mixed methods research. To date most of the research on online education has been purely quantitative. Subsequently, by utilizing a mixed methods approach we can reach a larger population and then utilize qualitative methods to inform and provide a deeper reflection on the results of the quantitative findings. For example, in this research study, had a mixed methods design been selected, a multiple business school wide survey could have been circulated to determine at a quantitative level just how much acceptance/resistance there was towards online education. The interview data collected then could have served to further reflect upon the quantitative results. This is an opportunity for future research studies to build upon the findings of this research study by applying a mixed methods approach.

Fourthly, throughout this research study the delivery and development cost of online education was discussed as a constraining force without any numerical quotes provided. The literature to date is also very limited in providing actual costing of developing and delivery online courses or programs not only in monetary terms, but also in human resources terms. It would be enlightening to see more studies in this area for clarification. For example, conducting a case study comparing the cost of developing and offering a new graduate business program (specialized) versus the cost of developing and delivering a new online graduate business program (fully or hybrid). This case study could explore questions, such: What were the main challenges and benefits? What was the actual cost? It is believed that more studies like these documenting the process of launching a new online program by a traditional business school will be very interesting and insightful in terms of lessons learned and a valuable contribution to this ongoing conversation.

Another approach that could yield promising insights is to carry out a longitudinal case study. If a business school that has moved from a traditional face-to face instruction to a completely online delivery of graduate business education can be identified, it would be useful to examine in more depth the enablers that helped in this transformation. Furthermore, what was the process that was initiated by senior management that facilitated this development? What were the lessons learned that can help in our understanding of how an academic institution can successfully realize institutional change?

Finally, one of the main contributions of this research study is the use of Institutional theory to explain organizational decision making and behaviour in an institutional field as a reaction to various enabling and constraining forces to institutional change in an established institutional field. In the field of education, this theory is promoted to be used more readily in future research studies in education to explain and test institutional change and the enabling and constraining forces that may inhibit or accelerate change in education policy (for example to explain the shift towards standardized testing in elementary schools, and increased accountability for results). In addition, more studies exploring the causes of heterogeneity in an institutional field would strongly help our understanding of institutional change in multiple environments.

11.6 Final Conclusions

At this point in time, the business schools that participated in this research study have responded to the environmental pressures in the business school environment by primarily expanding their program offerings (including the introduction of specialized graduate business

programs) and aggressively recruiting international students. However, it was also established that these business schools are pondering upon the potential adoption of online education in the future, where two of the four business schools have already adopted some online education for their graduate business program delivery. Thus, it is suggested that institutional change in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools is not insurmountable given the right circumstances, but rather a slow process with major change almost always including a form of resistance. This as one participant states is a common characteristic of most academic institutions:

I should say a lot, but the reality is probably not. It is just the nature of universities and academia. It is starting to change. It is getting back to the first point where we can't just do things the same way indefinitely that the world is changing. And universities and academia are changing. And we have to look at bringing in funding ourselves because the provincial funding for this as a public institution is dwindling and will be bankrupt if we just continue along the same model. So, it is slowly changing (Business school 3 participant).

In order to overcome resistance, this research study identified various facilitators to grow acceptance of online education amongst business school faculty. These facilitators are suggested to be applicable in multiple contexts whereby senior administration is seeking support from business school faculty for a particular initiative or change. Thus, even though online education has seen limited adoption amongst AACSB accredited business schools in Canada for graduate program delivery so far, the adoption of some form of online education in the future seems to be inevitable.

Given the findings of this research study, the projection for the future is that the business school environment will see a form of market segmentation. Segmentation in that it is expected that academic institutions that specialize in online education will cater to the students whose preference for this medium is centered; while traditional bricks and mortar business schools will offer their fully face-to-face programs to serve full-time students and hybrid programs for the non-traditional students. Of course, there will be some exceptions to the above, with some business schools' offering specialized or interdisciplinary programs fully online where it's determined that a market exists. Thus, it seems that online education has cracked a small hole in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools in the sense that they are aware of its presence, but how fast and in what scope this change will become a fixture in these academic institutions is yet to be seen.

To conclude, the reader is left with two significant implications of this research study for theory and practice that have emerged: the value that senior administration and faculty have towards face-to-face interaction that they believe cannot be fully replicated in an online

environment and their vulnerability towards maintaining legitimacy in all that they do. Therefore, the question to ponder upon is, how can we preserve the value that face-to-face interaction brings to education in an online environment while maintaining legitimacy? With all the change occurring in education, from content, pedagogy, and finally to delivery mediums, the future is uncertain, but one thing that is certain, as one participant rightly summed up, which mirrors my sentiments as well, “It will be interesting to see how education unfolds in the next 10 years.

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Appendix A - AACSB Accredited Business Schools in Canada and their Graduate Business Program Offerings.

**Offerings as of August 2015*

Academic Institution	Graduate Program Offerings	Online Courses/Programs
1. Brock University (Goodman School of Business)	- MBA (full-time, part-time, and international student pathway) - Master of Science (MSc)	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
2. Carleton University (Sprott School of Business)	- MBA (full-time, part-time, and accelerated options) - PhD in Management	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
3. Concordia University (John Molson School of Business)	- MBA (full-time and accelerated) - Executive MBA - MBA with complete CFA Integration - Master of Science (MSc) in Administration Program - PhD in Business Administration	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
4. Dalhousie University (Rowe School of Business)	- MBA (Corporate Residency) MBA (Financial Services)*	*This program offers a hybrid structure between online delivery and intensive classroom sessions.

Academic Institution	Graduate Program Offerings	Online Courses/Programs
5. HEC Montréal	• MBA (full-time and part-time) • McGill – HEC Montreal Executive MBA • Master of Management in International Arts Management • Master of Science (MSc) in Administration	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
6. Memorial University (Faculty of Business Administration)	• MBA (full-time and part-time) • Master of Science (MSc) in Management • Master of Employment Relations (joint program) • PhD in Management	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
7. McMaster University (DeGroote School of Business)	• MBA (full-time and part-time, accelerated, co-op) • Executive MBA • Master of Finance • Master of Science (MSc) in e-Health/Global Health (interdisciplinary) • Master of Health Management (interdisciplinary)* • PhD Program	*Program is offered fully online with two residencies (three days)

Academic Institution	Graduate Program Offerings	Online Courses/Programs
8. Queen's University (School of Business)	• MBA (full-time and accelerated) • Master of Science (MSc) in Management • Master of International Business • Master of Entrepreneurship and Innovation • Master of Finance (Toronto, Beijing) • Master of Management Analytics (Toronto) • National Executive MBA* • PhD Program in Management	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online. *This program is offered through boardroom learning centres that leverages technology but not considered and online program.
9. Ryerson University (Ted Rogers School of Management)	• No graduate business programs offered	N/A
10. Saint Mary's University (Sobey School of Business)	• MBA (full-time, part-time, accelerated, and CPA stream) • Master of Finance • Executive MBA • Master of Technology Entrepreneurship and Innovation • PhD in Management	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.

Academic Institution	Graduate Program Offerings	Online Courses/Programs
11. Simon Fraser University (Beedie School of Business)	• MBA (full-time and part-time) • Executive MBA • Management of Technology MBA • Executive MBA in Aboriginal Business and Leadership • Master of Science in Finance • PhD Program	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
12. University of Alberta (Alberta School of Business)	• MBA (full-time, evening, and FastTrack options) • Fort McMurray MBA • Master of Financial Management • Executive MBA • PhD in Business	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
13. University of British Columbia (Sauder School of Business)	• MBA (full-time, part-time and international) • EMBA in Strategic Mining Management (interdisciplinary)* • EMBA in Health Care (interdisciplinary)** • Master of Management • Master of Management in Operations Research • MSc in Business Administration • PhD in Business Administration	*Program offered in hybrid format online/intensive residency ** Program offered in hybrid format online/intensive residency

Academic Institution	Graduate Program Offerings	Online Courses/Programs
14. University of Calgary (Haskayne School of Business)	• MBA (day-time, evening, thesis based, and accelerated options) • Combined MBA (interdisciplinary) • Global Energy Executive MBA • MSc Sustainable Energy Development • Executive MBA • PhD in Management	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
15. University of Laval (Faculty of Business Administration)	• MBA (full-time and part-time)* • Executive MBA* • Master of Science in Administration* • PhD program	*Available on various platforms depending on the course (online, hybrid medium, in the classroom)
16. University of Manitoba (Asper School Business)	• MBA (full-time, part-time) • Master of Science (MSc) • PhD Program	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
17. University of Ottawa (Telfer School of Management)	• MBA (full-time and part-time)* • Master of Health Administration • Master of Science Management • Executive MBA	*Part-time MBA offered in 1/3 hybrid format
18. University of Toronto (Rotman School of Management)	• MBA (full-time, morning or evening) • Master of Finance • Executive MBA • PhD Program	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.

Academic Institution	Graduate Program Offerings	Online Courses/Programs
19. University of Windsor (Odette School of Business)	• MBA (full-time and weekend) • Master of Management	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
20. University of Victoria (Gustavson School of Business – Gill Graduate School Business)	• MBA (day-time and evening) • Master of Global Business • PhD in International Management and Organization	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.
21. Wilfrid Laurier University (School of Business and Economics)	• MBA (full-time, part-time, and accelerated) • Master of Finance • Master of Arts in Business Economics • Master of Science (MSc) • PhD in Management	None of these programs are offered partially or fully online.

Appendix B - Request for Organizational Participation

THE ADOPTION OF ONLINE EDUCATION FOR THE DELIVERY OF GRADUATE BUSINESS PROGRAMS IN CANADIAN AACSB ACCREDITED BUSINESS SCHOOLS: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING FORCES ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Dear Dean XX,

I would like to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to read this information sheet and learn more about my research project. I am a PhD Candidate from the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. The purpose of this qualitative multi case research study is to explore the limited adoption of the option of online graduate business programs in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. Of particular interest, is the adoption of hybrid to fully online programs. To provide a comprehensive perspective on this issue, this research study will seek to examine not only the environmental factors that constrain adoption but also enable it in order to foster a greater understanding of the relationship between the various enabling and constraining forces within the business school environment and how they affect adoption.

I am looking for interested accredited business schools to participate in the important discussion on the topic of the adoption of online education for delivering graduate management programs. Each business school would be considered a case study with the findings of this research study provided in a multi case report.

In order to provide context for your business school's case study, you would be requested to provide internal documentation that would provide insights into your graduate management program development (i.e. program descriptions, program changes, new initiatives, etc.).

The individual participants from your business school would include a mix of senior administrators and faculty who have differing perspectives on the adoption of online graduate management programs. Experience participating in graduate management program development and evaluation would be considered an asset. In order to identify these potential individual participants, it would also be requested that a list of names be provided that meet the criteria described above to facilitate individual recruitment. The individual participants would be asked to participate in the following:

- 1) Complete a participant profile (5- 10 min)
- 2) Participate in an in depth interview (30-45 min) followed by the review of the interview transcript
- 3) Review the draft Case report for your business school, and
- 4) Small focus group discussion of the final case report (optional, I will ask for volunteers)

The interviews and focus groups would be audiotaped and later transcribed by me. Before data collection begins, each individual participant would be asked to sign a Consent Form. Please be advised that the name of your business school would not be released as part of this study and the names of the individual participants would be removed from the data during the transcription

process and will not be linked to the data in any reporting of the findings. Individual participants' names will be protected by a pseudonym and all contents of the interview and focus group will be kept in a locked cabinet and password-protected computer. Every effort will be made to assure absolute anonymity and confidentiality. Only myself, and my thesis supervisor, Dr. Swee C. Goh will have access to the data.

There are no risks associated with involvement in this project aside from those experienced in everyday life. There are many benefits to this study. This is an opportunity to provide your voice and perspective on the adoption of various online education formats for delivering graduate management programs in the context of your business school and for business schools in Canada in general. As well, to discuss the opportunities and challenges faced by your business school responding to the current business school environment. The final case report may also be used by your business school to facilitate future program planning and development.

Your participation in this study is optional and entirely voluntary. It is your right to ask the researcher about any aspects of the study at any time.

Should you have any questions about this project, please do not hesitate to contact myself, Ivana Pavic, at XXXX or by email at XXXX, or my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Swee C. Goh at XXXX or my email at XXXX.

Sincerely,

Ivana Pavic
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa

Organizational Consent

I _____, on behalf of _____, have read through the Organizational Request for Participation letter and understand and agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Ivana Pavic, PhD Candidate of the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa.

Signature

Date

Appendix C – Request for Individual Participation

THE ADOPTION OF ONLINE EDUCATION FOR THE DELIVERY OF GRADUATE BUSINESS PROGRAMS IN CANADIAN AACSB ACCREDITED BUSINESS SCHOOLS: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING FORCES ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to read this information sheet and learn more about my research project. I am a PhD Candidate from the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. The purpose of this qualitative multi case research study is to explore the limited adoption of the option of online graduate business programs in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. Of particular interest, is the adoption of hybrid to fully online programs. To provide a comprehensive perspective on this issue, this research study will seek to examine not only the environmental factors that constrain adoption but also enable it, in order to foster a greater understanding of the relationship between the various enabling and constraining forces within the business school environment and how they affect adoption.

I am looking for interested senior administrators and faculty at accredited business schools to provide their perspectives on the adoption of online graduate management programs in their business school as an option to respond to the current business school environment. As such, I am seeking to senior administrators with experience administering and teaching at the graduate management level. Experience in graduate management program development, delivery and evaluation would be considered an asset. Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1) Complete a participant profile (5-10 min)
- 2) Participate in an in depth interview (30-45 min) followed by the review of the interview transcript
- 3) Review the draft case report for your business school and attend a focus group (optional)

Depending on the amount of interest, participants will be selected on a first come, first serve basis.

Our conversations will be audio-taped and later transcribed by me. Please be advised that the interview, focus group and any documentation provided will be available in English only. Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign a Consent form; however your name will be removed from the data during the transcription process and will not be linked to the data in any reporting of the findings. Your identity will be protected by a pseudonym and all contents of the interview and focus group will be kept in a locked cabinet and password-protected computer. Every effort will be made to assure absolute anonymity and confidentiality, however this will be limited during the focus group phase between individual participants due to the group setting format. Only myself, and my thesis supervisor, Dr. Swee C. Goh, will have access to the data.

There are no risks associated with involvement in this project aside from those experienced in everyday life. There are many benefits to this study. This is an opportunity to engage in reflective practice and explore your perspective on the adoption online education for the purposes of delivering graduate management programs as well as how business schools are/should be responding to the increasingly global competitive environment for graduate management education. The final case report may also be used by your business school to facilitate future program planning and development.

Your participation in this study is optional and entirely voluntary. It is your right to ask the researcher about any aspects of the study at any time. During the interview and focus group you have the right to refuse to participate and answer questions and you can withdraw from the study at any time without suffering any negative consequences. If you withdraw, you may request that your participant profile as well as all data gathered during the interview phase be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this research study, please do not hesitate to contact myself, Ivana Pavic, at XXXX or by email at XXXX, or my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Swee C. Goh at XXXX or my email at XXXX.

Sincerely,

Ivana Pavic
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa

Appendix D - Consent Form

THE ADOPTION OF ONLINE EDUCATION FOR THE DELIVERY OF GRADUATE BUSINESS PROGRAMS IN CANADIAN AACSB ACCREDITED BUSINESS SCHOOLS: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING FORCES ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Contact Information:

Principal Investigator
Ivana Pavic

Supervisor
Dr. Swee C. Goh

Dear Participant:

I have been invited to participate in Ivana Pavic's doctoral research project at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

The purpose of this qualitative multi case research study is to explore the limited adoption of the option of online graduate business programs in Canadian AACSB accredited business schools. Of particular interest, is the adoption of hybrid to fully online programs. To provide a comprehensive perspective on this issue, this research study will seek to examine not only the environmental factors that constrain adoption but also enable it in order to foster a greater understanding of the relationship between the various enabling and constraining forces within the business school environment and how they affect adoption.

I am willing to participate in the following requirements:

- 1) Meet at a location and time of convenience to discuss my perceptions and views on the adoption of online education for graduate management programs at my business school.
- 2) Complete a participant profile (5-10 min)
- 3) Participate in an in depth interview (30-45 min) and review the interview transcript
- 4) Review the draft case report for my business school and attend a voluntary focus group to validate the data gathered and make any additions to the report (30-60 min)

My participation in this research is completely voluntary. I am free to withdraw at any point. I can ask questions at any time, including during the research. I am also allowed to refuse to answer any questions. If I choose to stop participating, or refuse to answer certain questions, there will be no negative consequences. The researcher has also assured me that even though interviews will be recorded using a digital recording device, my identity will be protected by a pseudonym and the contents of my participation will remain confidential. However, due to the local nature of a business school, I understand anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, especially during the focus group phase, as it will take place in a group setting. If this is a concern, I have the right to withdraw my participation, and my participant profile as well as all data collected during

the interview phase will be destroyed. However, I acknowledge that this would not be possible for the data collected during the focus group phase. My identity will not be divulged in the data or in any published work that makes use of this data.

There are no risks associated with my involvement in this project aside from those experienced in everyday life. There are many benefits to this study. This is an opportunity for me to engage in reflective practice and explore my perspective on the adoption online education for the purposes of delivering graduate management programs as well as how business schools are/should be responding to the increasingly global competitive environment for graduate management education. The final case report may also be used by my business school to facilitate future program planning and development.

The electronic transcript for the interview will be transcribed by the principal investigator and sent by secure email. Upon receipt of the transcript, I understand that I will have 20 business days to review and provide feedback by secure email back to the principal investigator.

The interviews will be digitally recorded and stored as electronic sound files on password computer only made accessible to the principal researcher. All transcripts will be stored as electronic files as above and as hard copies in locked file cabinets in the home of the principal investigator and doctoral Supervisor's University of Ottawa office. All names and identifying features will be removed during the transcription process. The data will be analyzed and processed using computer software and the findings will be saved electronically. Data will be stored securely for a period of five years beyond the life of the project at which time electronic files will be deleted and hard copy files shredded.

I, _____ agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Ivana Pavic, PhD Candidate of the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa.

Should I have any questions about this study, I can contact, Ivana Pavic, at XXXX or by email at XXXX or her doctoral supervisor, Dr. Swee C. Goh at XXXX or my email at XXXX.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5. Tel.: (613) 562-5387. Email: ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of the Consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E – Participant Profile

Gender: _____ Male 2. _____ Female

Job Title: _____

Stage of Career:

1. _____ Assistant
2. _____ Associate
3. _____ Full
4. _____ Other

How long have you been with your current business school?

1. _____ Less than one year
2. _____ 1-5 years
3. _____ 6-15 years
4. _____ 16 + years

How often do you use a computer?

1. _____ Everyday
2. _____ Every other day
3. _____ Once a week
4. _____ Other

Rate your proficiency with computers/Internet:

1. _____ Below Average
2. _____ Average
3. _____ Above Average
4. _____ Excellent

Rate your level of acceptance of technology as a pedagogical delivery method:

1. _____ Below Average
2. _____ Average
3. _____ Above Average
4. _____ Excellent

How do you rate the quality and effectiveness of online education?

1. _____ Below Average
2. _____ Average
3. _____ Above Average
4. _____ Excellent

Have you ever taught an online course?

1. _____ YES
2. _____ NO

Would you like having the option of teaching an online course?

1. _____ YES
2. _____ NO

What is the main purpose of graduate management education?

How does your business school measure the success of their graduate management programs?

List the primary mediums of delivery you/your business school employ(s) to deliver their graduate management programs? (i.e. lecture, case-studies, online education, etc.)

Appendix F - Interview Guide

Introduction:

- Thank interviewee for agreeing to take part in interview.
- Explain purpose of research and the interview.
- Review Consent Form and have interviewee sign.
- Confirm interviewee is agreeable to being recorded.
- At end of interview, ask the participant if they need any clarification on any parts of the interview and if they would like to add anything.
- Advise participant of next steps (i.e. when transcript will be sent for their review).

Online education is a course delivery method that is often interchangeably used with the terms online learning and distance education. It is the “process of providing formal education in such a way that the instructor and student can be separated by geography, time or both” (Estelami & Rezvani, 2011, p. 159). Further, online education delivers courses through various multimedia platforms over the Internet, using asynchronous and synchronous methods, whereby the student and instructor communicate without face-to-face interaction (Grandzol, 2004; Smith & Mitry, 2008). Variations include single courses and hybrid learning, where the majority of the course is delivered online with students meeting face-to-face with the faculty member at various intervals (Arbaugh, Desai, Rau & Balakuntalam, 2010; Beqiri, Chase & Bishka, 2010).

Review the Participant Profile completed with interviewee to gain clarification if needed. The Profile clarifies the individual’s comfort with technology, initial reaction to online education and their understanding of the purpose of graduate management education and how they measure the success of their programs.

A list of definitions will be provided as required.

1. Business School Environment/Perspectives of Online Education

Interview Questions: (In the context of graduate business education/programs)

- How do you describe the current business school environment?
 - a) Describe the main opportunities and challenges for business schools.
- Given your description of the current business school environment:
 - a) How has your business school responded?
 - b) Do you plan to respond differently in the future? If so, how? Please explain.
- How do you view online education as an option to respond to the current business school environment?
 - a) What are its benefits?
 - b) What are its disadvantages?
 - c) Is there a form of online education you feel is better suited (e.g. hybrid forms)?
- If you have adopted online education in your business school:
 - a) What were the main factors that influenced your decision to do so?
 - b) Is it an option more appropriate in some contexts than others?
- If you have not adopted online education in your business school:
 - a) What are the main factors that influenced your decision not to do so?
 - b) Describe the context in which your business school would consider adopting a form of online education.
- Other than the reasons cited above, are there any other reasons why your business school should/would decide to offer/not offer the option of online graduate management programs?

2. Influence of Various Environmental Factors in Business School Environment

Interview Questions: (In the context of graduate business education/programs)

- Is being accredited/highly ranked important for your business school? Why?
- How do the graduate programs offerings (including delivery medium) of the most prestigious business schools affect your decision of the types of programs to offer?
- To what extent would you consider online education as a program delivery medium if the highest ranked business schools were strongly opposed to this method of delivery?
- How do the assessment criteria for accreditation affect your decision on the types of graduate programs to offer and the way it is delivered?
- How do you define/evaluate quality (graduate management programs)?

- To what degree do you perceive online education as a legitimate form of program delivery in terms of:
 - Relevance
 - Effectiveness (Learning outcomes)
 - Student Satisfaction
- How do you compare the quality of online education to the traditional in class delivery medium? Please describe the main differences.
- Do you feel that online education is perceived by stakeholders as a desirable, proper and appropriate way to deliver graduate management programs?
- How do stakeholder perceptions influence your decisions on the type of graduate programs to offer?

3. Internal Governance/Faculty Acceptance and Resistance to Online Education

Interview Questions: (In the context of graduate business education/programs)

- Describe the process for which your business school evaluates their graduate management program offerings?
- Who is involved in the process? Who are the main decision-makers?
- What role do faculty play in your graduate program development?
- Overall, at your business school are faculty resistant or relatively open to the option of online education? Is there a particular group of faculty that are more resistant than others? (i.e. generational resistance)
- Do you feel that comfort with technology is a constraint to adoption amongst faculty?
- Do you feel that faculty are concerned with loss of face-to-face contact amongst students? What other factors (e.g. teaching pedagogy) may be of concern?
- What factors would enable faculty to become more open to the adoption of online education?