

Exploring certification programs and organizational capacity in Canadian soccer

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Assisting member organizations to achieve certification standards is becoming an activity of interest to many governing bodies who seek to develop capacity within their sport (Van Hoecke, Schoukens & De Knop, 2013). Certification programs aim to both promote and validate organizational development while standardizing programs, policies, and procedures. Sport-based certification is growing as an international phenomenon (e.g., Nichols & Taylor, 2015; Perck, Van Hoecke, Westerbeek, and Breesch, 2016; Relvas, Littlewood, Nesti, Gilbourne & Richardson, 2010). A growing number of governing bodies across Canada are implementing certification through multi-sport or single sport certification programs, either designed and delivered through internal programs or by external agencies.

Sport organizations face increasing pressure to professionalize and standardize their program delivery and operations (Van Hoecke et al., 2013). Certification schemes represent one means of quality assurance, yet engaging in certification requires extensive investment of time, resources, and energy which may already be limited in amateur sport organizations (Cope, Haq, Garside, Pannell & Gooders, 2014). There are anecdotal claims of efficacy in implementation, but there has been minimal empirical investigation of certification within the academic literature. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of club-based certification programs in Canadian soccer.

The study is framed by key tenets of institutional theory, recognizing that organizations are highly influenced by their environments and affected by institutional pressures (Washington & Patterson, 2011). As well, the study explores how institutional-level learning theories explain the implementation of the program within the Canadian soccer context (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Finally, multidimensional frameworks of organizational capacity (Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Doherty et al., 2014) are examined to understand what dimensions of organizational capacity are required to implement or adopt the program, and how the program is perceived to build organizational capacity for CSOs.

This study involves a qualitative investigation of the development and initial stages of implementation of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, a nationally and provincially delivered, four-level program designed to guide community clubs toward best principles for organizational development (Canada Soccer, 2018). 22 in-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted with representatives from four provincial and territorial soccer associations (PTSOs), four community soccer organizations from each of the interviewed PTSOs, and three staff from the national soccer organization. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) analysis methods of first and second cycle qualitative coding were utilized to analyze the data.

Analysis of the data revealed several motivations for implementing and Club Licensing Program. The NSO was motivated to change the culture of Canadian soccer delivery, to standardize and build accountability for the delivery of soccer, and strengthen the sport, while acknowledging that one size does not fit all. PTSOs' motivations resulted in six subthemes relating to leadership and system alignment. CSOs' motivations for adopting the program included the desire to be measured by 'the same stick', gaining legitimacy among key stakeholders, strengthening organizational development, and feeling pressure to adhere. In order to position and promote the Club Licensing Program, the NSO and PTSOs targeted messaging to each audience, supported clubs to build capacity, incentivized adoption, and discussed consequences of non-participation or non-achievement. The human resources, infrastructure and process, and external relationships capacity dimensions were found to be most needed or

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leveraged to implement or adopt the Club Licensing Program. Finally, certification was perceived to positively influence CSOs' ability to achieve their missions by enabling organizational development and offering a mechanism for differentiation among CSOs, but also perceived to negatively influence CSOs' ability to achieve their missions because certification is not worth the effort.

The study offers timely insight into the development and current delivery of the Club Licensing Program with implications for the role of certification programs more broadly. As well, the study offers governing body practitioners insight into the considerations that should be made when developing a certification program.

Keywords: *Certification, Standards, Institutional theory, Quality assurance, Community sport, Organizational capacity*

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Dedication

In earnest, I dedicate this project to myself. It was inordinately difficult to leave my dream job and the house I own, move to a new city and province halfway across the country, and relentlessly and (almost) singularly pursue this two-year project. I am deeply proud of my resilience, my ability to maintain perspective, and my pursuit of a project that is wholly mine. The resulting thesis has been crafted exactly as I had envisioned.

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List of Abbreviations

AFC	Asian Football Confederation
ASA	Alberta Soccer Association
CAF	Confédération Africaine de Football
CAAU	Canadian Amateur Athletic Union
CONCACAF	Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football
CONMEBOL	South American Football Federation
CSO	Community Sport Organization
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
IF	International Federation
MLS	Major League Soccer (American-based top-flight professional soccer league)
MSA	Manitoba Soccer Association
NLSA	Newfoundland & Labrador Soccer Association
NSF	National Sport Federation
NSO	National Sport Organization
NWT Soccer	Northwest Territories Soccer
OFC	Oceania Football Confederation
PASS	Professional Academy Support System
PEISA	Prince Edward Island Soccer Association
PTSO	Provincial/Territorial Sport Organization
QPP	Quadrennial Planning Program
QSF	Québec Soccer Federation
SFAF	Sport Funding and Accountability Framework
Soccer NB	Soccer New Brunswick
SSA	Saskatchewan Soccer Association
SNS	Soccer Nova Scotia
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The latest news in sport is often on the tips of peoples' tongues. Recent headlines this year inciting extensive debate include the folding of the Canadian Women's Hockey League after 12 years of operation due to its 'economically unsustainable' business model (CBC, 2019, March 31), the ongoing debate regarding the rights of transgendered athletes to compete at the international level (The Globe and Mail, 2019, April 19), and the large-scale action taken by the Canadian federal government to eliminate abuse in sport after CBC released an investigative report revealing sexual offence convictions of more than 200 Canadian coaches over the past 20 years (CBC, 2019, February 10; CBC, 2019, February 21). In each scenario, discussions centre on issues of governance, highlighting how governance and management of sport is critical to the fair and effective implementation of programs and sport competition at all levels.

Public scrutiny and pressures, such as those from governing bodies, risk management and insurance protocols, and the complexities of organizational growth must be navigated by sport organizations and the organizations who govern them (Edwards & Leadbetter, 2016; Nichols, Wicker, Cuskelly & Breuer, 2015). In order to deliver a quality sport experience for participants, sport organizations must generate or mobilize their various resources in order to fulfill their missions and accomplish their goals (Millar & Doherty, 2016; Sharpe, 2006). This is a multi-dimensional concept called organizational capacity; there are several similar frameworks in the literature that include elements commonly required to guide an organization to success (e.g., Doherty, Misener & Cuskelly, 2014; Hall et al., 2003).

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Facing these pressures (further described in the literature review as isomorphic and institutional learning pressures), governing bodies and sport organizations are challenged with having the necessary elements of organizational capacity required to execute their mandates.

Consequently, governing bodies are systematically introducing

the principles of quality and performance management ... into the various sport structures in order to improve and control the quality and performance of the sport system. ... By identifying what is really required to achieve excellence, an organization can find out what areas it needs to improve in and how its limited resources can be more effectively directed to achieve this improvement. (Van Hoecke, Schoukens & De Knop, 2013, p. 89)

Certification programs are one increasingly common way for governing bodies to build organizational capacity within their management systems and governance practices. These programs aim to both promote and validate organizational development while standardizing operations, policies, and procedures. While certification is growing as an international phenomenon (e.g., Nichols & Taylor, 2015; Perck, Van Hoecke, Westerbeek, and Breesch, 2016; Relvas, Littlewood, Nesti, Gilbourne & Richardson, 2010; Van Hoecke et al., 2013), governing bodies across sports in Canada are currently implementing certification through internal and external certification programs, either designed for multiple sports, or designed as sport-specific models. Such programs offer certification standards and permission to use a certification program brand/logo in exchange for completing training modules or meeting various criteria relating to the areas of operations necessary to successfully govern a sport organization (Club Excellence, n.d.-c).

1.2 Significance of the Study

The environments that amateur sport organizations operate in challenge their ability to deliver a quality sport experience. The increasing demands on contemporary sport organizations related to infrastructure costs, recruiting volunteers, and managing complex stakeholder demands place further strain on their resources (Balduck, Lucidarme, Marlier & Willem, 2015).

Consequently, sport organizations are looking for creative solutions to help them achieve their goals. One of the central roles for sport governing bodies is to develop organizational capacity within their member organizations in order to ensure that their members are fulfilling their own mandates, thus supporting the mandate of the governing body (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015).

Certification programs offer an opportunity to build organizational capacity for governing bodies and their membership.

Assisting member organizations to achieve certification standards is becoming an activity of interest to many governing bodies who seek to develop capacity within their sport.

However, scholarship on the utility of these programs to build organizational capacity is minimal and a recognition exists that certification programs require significant investment of time, resources, and energy which may already be limited, particularly in community sport organizations (Cope, Haq, Garside, Pannell & Gooders, 2014). There are anecdotal claims of efficacy in implementation, but there has been minimal empirical investigation of certification within academic literature, particularly within Canada. The body of research originates in Europe with works authored primarily by De Knop, Schoukens, and Van Hoecke (e.g., De Knop, Van Hoecke, & De Bosscher, 2004; Perck et al., 2016; Relvas et al., 2010; Van Hoecke, De Knop & Schoukens, 2009; Van Hoecke et al., 2013).

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Additionally, the sport landscape today “has encouraged governing bodies at different levels to pressure sport organizations into assuming a more professional approach to the delivery and design of the sport product” (Van Hoecke et al., 2013, p. 89), however, scholarly examination from the lens of governing bodies is minimal. An article, written by Van Hoecke and colleagues (2009) details the usage of the total quality management, IKGym, IKSport, and PASS programs by various governing bodies for quality and performance management in Flanders. A chapter, written by Van Hoecke et al. (2013), discusses the role of governing organizations implementing systems of quality assurance within their membership and describes the history of implementation of European football NSOs’ Foot PASS quality assurance system for their professional academy members. These two sources encompass all of the literature about this topic. As certification programs are becoming more prevalent in Canada and elsewhere around the world, there is an opportunity to further our understanding of certification programs globally, and particularly within the Canadian context. Here, certification is currently being pursued by soccer’s national sport organization, with several of the provincial and territorial associations having previously implemented certification programs for their membership to adopt. Certification programs have significant potential, both in application and in research.

Therefore, this study will assist in filling gaps in the existing literature related to the examination of the application of certification programs and organizational capacity within the governing body context. Thus, the study presents a timely and unique opportunity to gather multiple perspectives on the development of certification programs within the governing structure of soccer organizations in Canada (deVos, 2018).

1.3 Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature in four main areas that form the broad conceptual framework that guide this study. The chapter begins with the first section, an account of the historical evolution of Canada's sport governance system and a description of soccer's vertically-tiered governance system. Next, the second section describes institutions, institutional theory and isomorphism which are used to frame the study. The third section, a review of organizational capacity and its multidimensional framework follows, with a description of relevant aspects of capacity building. The fourth section of the chapter discusses certification programs and their role in sport today. Finally, the chapter offers a conclusion and outlines the study's proposed research questions.

2.2 Sport Governance in Canada

Worldwide, sport is delivered through a vertically-tiered governance system (Frisby, 1983), and the Canadian sport system is no different. Over time, the sport governance structure has evolved into its current system. A brief history of sport governance in Canada is offered below in order to provide context for soccer's vertically-tiered governance hierarchy. This section concludes with an explanation of the central pressures faced by sport organizations today.

2.2.1 History of sport governance in Canada.

Formalized sport began in Canada in the 1800s when voluntary associations were formed by upper- and middle-class men to organize their play with curling, rowing, cycling, snowshoeing, quoits, cricket, track and field, and baseball (Pedersen, 2011). Small and independent, the organizations governed their membership, enforced rules, and organized national championships (Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1995). Governing bodies of these clubs were

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formed at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. The Canadian Amateur Athletic Union (CAAU), established in 1898, was formed to represent Canadian sports collectively in international competitions and at the Olympics (Frisby, 1983). Both sport clubs and governing organizations remained predominantly casual in nature, mainly operating with volunteers (Slack & Hinings, 1992).

The federal government's involvement in sport was minimal throughout the first half of the century, but in 1961, the federal government passed the *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act* (Rule, 1998). The Act provided coordination and unification to the system. The passing of the Act formed a linkage between the government and the sport system; this linkage marked much earlier bureaucratic involvement compared to other nations' sport systems (Green, 2007; Pederson, 2011). Initial involvement was prompted by increasing concern over 'Canadian' identity, with aspirations of building national unity from coast to coast to coast (Green, 2007; Rule, 1998; Thibault & Harvey, 2015). Following the creation of the Act, a report, titled the *Task Force on Sports for Canadians*, was released in 1969 (Rule, 1998). The report discussed the nation's current landscape of amateur and professional sport and proffered the federal government's role in contributing to and improving sport.

From the Task Force's recommendations, Sport Canada was formed in 1971, becoming the federal government agency responsible for supporting and funding the sport system at the national level in Canada (Government of Canada, 2017, November 14; Kikulis et al., 1995; Rule, 1998). Sport Canada then established a National Sports and Recreation Centre in Ottawa and offered NSOs funding for the salaries of full-time staff in exchange of relocating their offices to this centralized location (Green, 2007; Kikulis et al., 1995; Thibault & Harvey, 2015). Additionally, a network of multi-sport support agencies (Coaching Association of Canada,

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Canada Games Council, Athlete Assistance Program, and ParticipACTION) were established (Kikulis et al., 1995; Thibault & Harvey, 2015).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government instituted several policy mandates that shifted the focus of its funding provision from predominantly grassroots participation to elite-level sport (Green & Houlihan, 2004). There were growing concerns of Canada's lackluster results in international competition (ex. international ice hockey competitions and Olympic performances) and the poor health of the general population (Green, 2007; Rule, 1998). These mandates were also made as a result of Montreal hosting the Summer Olympic Games in 1976 and Calgary hosting the Olympic Winter Games in 1988 (Thibault & Harvey, 2015). Although it was considered risky to dedicate public funding to elite-level sport, the shift occurred with hopes that the nation would achieve greater visibility, respectability, and prestige through international sport (Frisby, 1983). The execution of the Montreal and Calgary Games was generally considered successful from an event management perspective; however, the nation was unable to secure any gold medals at either Games, further prompting debate over the decision to publicly fund elite-level sport (Thibault & Harvey, 2015).

Thereafter, the government introduced the Best Ever '88 program in the early-1980s to again expand government support to help sport organizations develop elite-level athletes to perform well in major international competitions, especially on home turf for Calgary '88 (Kikulis et al., 1995; Thibault & Harvey, 2015). This led to the initiation of the Quadrennial Planning Program (QPP) by Sport Canada, wherein NSOs would receive federal funding to develop and implement four-year plans to enhance the preparation of their athletes (Green, 2007; Slack & Hinings, 1992; Slack & Hinings, 1994; Thibault & Harvey, 2015).

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These four-year plans ... required NSOs to identify performance targets and to specify the material and technical support systems (from training camps and centres of excellence, to coaching and medical arrangements and research programmes) necessary for the achievement of each set of targets. (Green, 2007, p. 931)

For all NSOs on the Olympic program, the reception of national funding was contingent on the adoption of QPPs (Kikulis et al., 1995; Slack & Hinings, 1992). As part of the QPP, NSOs were required to offer high-performance-oriented programs. As well, they were required to create an organizational structure that placed decision making in the hands of professional staff, assign staff to oversee the development and delivery of their QPP, and ensure that certain organizational roles were filled by paid employees instead of volunteers (Kikulis et al., 1995; Slack & Hinings, 1994). Despite vocal and active resistance from some NSOs, the implementation of the QPP was quickly institutionalized (Kikulis et al., 1995; Slack & Hinings, 1992; Slack & Hinings, 1994) and provided the foundation from which the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) was introduced (Green, 2007; Thibault & Harvey, 2015). Since its inception in 1995/1996, the SFAF works to implement Sport Canada's objectives and funds NSOs proportionately based on assessments of high performance sport, international competition results, and sport participation, increasing the accountability of NSOs in the use of federal funding (Green, 2007; Thibault & Harvey, 2015).

Ben Johnson's disqualification from the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in Seoul following his positive drug test rocked Canada's sport system and led to the publication of the Dubin Inquiry and Report in 1990 (Rule, 1998; Thibault & Harvey, 2015). What followed was a new doping policy and the creation of two organizations, Fair Play Canada and the Canadian Centre for Drug-Free Sport, which merged to form what is known today as the Canadian Centre

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for Ethics in Sport (Thibault & Harvey, 2015). Additionally, the report criticized the Canadian sport delivery system, highlighting the federal government's over emphasis on funding for programs for high performance sport and the control the government had over sport organizations' autonomy since federal funding was often organizations' primary source of funding. The criticisms and resulting recommendations were largely ignored (Green, 2007; Rule, 1998).

At the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, the "most extensive pan-Canadian consultation process ever" was conducted (Thibault & Harvey, 2015, p. 26). The collected feedback led to the development of the *Canadian Sport Policy, 2002-2012* and Bill C-12, known as the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* (Thibault & Harvey, 2015). The *Canadian Sport Policy, 2002-2012* focused on four priorities: enhanced participation, enhanced excellence, enhanced capacity, and enhanced interaction. The Policy was found to be effective for the excellence, capacity and interaction priorities. A second extensive consultation process was engaged to create a second iteration of the document - the current *Canadian Sport Policy, 2012 – 2022*, which "sets the direction for all governments, institutions and organizations to make sure sport has a positive impact on the lives of Canadians, our communities and our country" through five broad objectives: introduction to sport, recreational sport, competitive sport, high performance sport, and sport for development (Government of Canada, 2017, December 15).

In summary, sport organizations are responsible for working to achieve the different policy objectives while delivering sport at different levels, which is done through a hierarchy (Thibault & Harvey, 2015). Thus, the advances described throughout this section set the backdrop for the development of amateur sport organizations in Canada. The governance

structure for sport organizations will now be discussed further in order to provide additional context for the soccer system in Canada.

2.2.2 Sport governance structure.

Sport organizations are primarily nongovernmental, self-governing, and nonprofit (however, clubs in professional leagues and community-level sport organizations are sometimes private, profit-seeking organizations). The majority of sport organizations in Canada operate in the nonprofit sector and consist of a volunteer board of directors who oversees the direction of the organization, and paid staff who execute the daily operations of the organization (Babiak, 2003). They have organizational stakeholders from several sectors and receive funding from grants or subsidies from federal and provincial governments, membership fees, fundraising initiatives, sponsorships and partnerships, sales of merchandise, and event and program delivery (Babiak, 2003). Sport organizations “promote, develop, and regulate the sport, and serve as leaders in terms of providing expertise and highly technical knowledge, advocacy, and administrative support to ensure the efficient delivery of programs and services” (Babiak, 2003, p. 11).

Sport organizations are linked to one another through a vertically-tiered, hierarchal system, generally comprised of clubs, regional associations, and national federations (Van Hoecke et al., 2013). Professional and semi-professional youth and senior leagues often operate at different levels in the system. Each level of the system (elite, professional, semi-professional and amateur) provides support to each of the other levels by the inter-connectedness of the system (Van Hoecke et al., 2013). The inter-related system allows organizations to deliver consistent messages while working in concert to achieve a common vision. Likewise, the vertically-tiered system allows for differentiation in mandate and responsibility so that there is

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no duplication of efforts on the same goals between organizations. This vertically-tiered system connects organizations within a sport in a system, instituting supervision and regulation between the system's levels. Although the large majority of sports utilize a vertically-tiered governance system, there are deviations to this delivery structure. The following outline is specific to soccer's governance system.

2.2.2.1 International federations (IFs).

The International Federation governing soccer (also known as football) around the world is FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) (FIFA, n.d.-b). IFs globally promote and govern their respective sports and protect their sport's integrity by developing governing rules and regulations, overseeing international competition and championships, and working with relevant authorities to manage disputes and anti-doping (Nagel, Schlesinger, Bayle & Giauque, 2015). FIFA is made up of 211 member associations (FIFA, n.d.-a) and has the vision, "to promote the game of football, protect its integrity and bring the game to all"; FIFA intends to achieve this vision by growing the game, enhancing the experience, and building a stronger institution, by ownership, investment, and innovation, and maintaining transparency, accountability, cooperation, and inclusivity for all (FIFA, n.d.-c).

2.2.2.2 Regional federations.

International Federations are comprised of Regional (Con)Federations who are generally formed based on continent and who manage competition, offer technical and administrative training and support, and actively promote and develop the sport within its region. FIFA has six confederations: the AFC (Asian Football Confederation), CAF (Confédération Africaine de Football), CONCACAF (the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football), CONMEBOL (the South American Football Federation), OFC (the

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Oceania Football Confederation), and UEFA (the Union of European Football Associations) (FIFA, 2017). CONCACAF has 41 member associations, from Canada to Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. CONCACAF's mission is "to develop, promote and manage football throughout the region with integrity, transparency and passion in order to inspire participation in the game" (CONCACAF, n.d.).

2.2.2.3 National sport organizations (NSOs).

National sport is governed by NSOs, who are sometimes also called NSFs (national sport federations). Governed by continental and international sport governing bodies, these organizations govern all aspects of a sport in Canada, including managing their high-performance programs, selecting and managing their national teams, implementing national initiatives to develop and promote their sport, sanctioning national level competitions and tournaments, providing professional development for coaches and officials in their sport, and proposing and supporting bids for international competitions in Canada (Government of Canada, 2017, October 31; Winand, Zintz, Bayle & Robinson, 2010). The Canadian government provides funding and support for NSOs, and in turn sets mandates that the NSOs must follow. Sport Canada funds 58 NSOs (Government of Canada, 2017, October 31).

Canada Soccer is the NSO for soccer in Canada and "shall organize soccer in Canada according to the Laws of the Game" (Canada Soccer, 2014, p. 2). Canada Soccer is comprised of provincial/territorial association members, league members, professional club members, athlete members, director members, associate members, and life members. The organization is responsible for fielding national teams (men's, women's, youth, para, beach and futsal), and holding national championships and international events. Equally important, Canada Soccer provides technical leadership for its members, developing and delivering coaching and refereeing

education, as well as supporting and developing initiatives and regulations meant to develop its members, and the game (Canada Soccer, 2017).

2.2.2.4 Provincial and territorial sport organizations (PTSOs).

PTSOs are nonprofit, self-governing governing organizations for a specific sport. PTSOs are entrusted by the statutes of their IF and NSO with the mandate of “developing their sports, providing a competitive pathway¹ for athlete development, selecting provincial teams, recruiting and training coaches, officials and volunteers, conducting provincial championships, and ensuring they operate within their National Sport Organization rules” (Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 2017, December 1). Most PTSOs are governance or strategic boards, meaning the board is responsible for “the functioning and overall direction of the organization” (p. 245) and allots the execution of that direction to paid staff and/or volunteers. However, some PTSOs are operational, meaning the board directs the ongoing operations of the organization (Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald, 2009). Canada Soccer’s membership consists of 10 provincial sport organizations (Alberta Soccer Association, BC Soccer, Manitoba Soccer Association, Newfoundland & Labrador Soccer Association, Ontario Soccer Association, Prince Edward Island Soccer Association, Québec Soccer Federation, Saskatchewan Soccer Association, Soccer New Brunswick, and Soccer Nova Scotia) and three territorial sport organizations (Northwest Territories Soccer Association, Nunavut Soccer Association, and Yukon Soccer Association).

¹ The term ‘player pathway’ describes the roadmap that all players, regardless of age and ability, would follow according to their participation aspirations, whether those aspirations are recreational, competitive or high performance oriented. The player pathway is built around the principles of Long-Term Player Development and aims to encourage lifelong participation. The player pathway is often associated both with the level of competition and competitive opportunities available for players at those stages of development (Canada Soccer, 2018c).

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Canada Soccer's provincial and territorial associations promote, regulate, and provide support for the advancement of soccer in collaboration and cooperation with their membership, partners and other stakeholders (Babiak, 2003; Ontario Soccer Association, n.d.-a). PTSOs provide leadership, expertise, advocacy, highly technical knowledge, and administrative support to develop effective and efficient programs and services (Babiak, 2003; Ontario Soccer Association, n.d.-a). For example, PTSOs are trained by Canada Soccer and then deliver grassroots-level coaching courses, while Canada Soccer delivers the competitive-level coaching courses. PTSOs follow the direction of Canada Soccer to implement rules, regulations, and initiatives that govern the game. They work to grow the game locally and provincially.

2.2.2.5 District sport organizations (Districts).

Although not all sports contain district sport organizations within their governance hierarchy, several PTSOs within Canada Soccer do. District sport organizations are tasked with the governance of community sport organizations within their geographic jurisdiction (Ontario Soccer Association, n.d.-d). For example, Ontario Soccer has 21 district members (Ontario Soccer Association, n.d.-b), however, Saskatchewan Soccer has none. Districts promote, develop, and govern the game within their geographical area, administer discipline and appeals, implement clinics for coaches, referees, and possibly administrators, and oversee registration and the sanctioning of games (Ontario Soccer Association, n.d.-b).

2.2.2.6 Community sport organizations (CSOs).

Community sport organizations form the grassroots base of the sport system in Canada and are primarily nongovernmental, nonprofit, and self-governing. Some CSOs may employ full time, part time or contract staff, but CSOs most often are informally structured, volunteer-led, and may or may not be formally incorporated under relevant legislation (Sharpe, 2006). CSOs

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offer societal value through the delivery of recreational and competitive sport programs and services (Doherty et al., 2014) and are responsible for the delivery of most of the sport services to end users- participants and spectators (Van Hoecke et al., 2013). CSOs are one of the largest segments of nonprofit voluntary organizations in Canada (Imagine Canada, 2006), and over 25% of Canadians claim regular participation in organized sport (Canadian Heritage, 2010).

Compared to PTSOs, more CSOs are led by an operational board, as opposed to a governance board. CSOs are responsible for the execution of the sport on the ground level- they collect registrations, locate rental facilities or maintain owned or leased facilities, plan sport seasons and create schedules, recruit, train and supervise coaches and referees, run tournaments and events, and are responsible for logistics such as ordering, distributing and managing uniforms and equipment. CSOs are also responsible for the organization's direction (e.g., short- and long-term planning), fiscal and risk management (e.g., fundraising and safety training), and organizational development (e.g., marketing programs, building the club's image, engaging in wider social action to support their community, and recruiting people to help with its operations).

2.2.3 Pressures facing sport organizations.

Sport organizations today face a multitude of competing pressures and must navigate increasingly bureaucratic funders and governing bodies. Sport is being called on to solve social problems and organizations' performance dimensions are expanding (O'Boyle & Hassan, 2014). Because sport is touted as having so many benefits, public perception can be supportive, or swiftly damning (Babiak, 2003). Core funding is shrinking, competition for funding is rising, and rationale for requests of funding must be increasingly focused on clear evidence of the positive effects that sport is delivering (Lowther, Digenarro, Borgogni & Parry Lowther, 2016; Van

Hoecke et al., 2013). Sponsorships and partnerships are resource intensive and cannot be continuously relied on (Misener & Doherty, 2014).

Sport organizations are being challenged to adopt “more businesslike practices and quicker decision making” in order to respond to an increasingly competitive and commercialized industry (Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1992; Lowther et al., 2016, p. 84; Van Hoecke et al., 2013). Changes in legislation and the risk of litigation prompt organizations to focus more energy on risk management (Lowther et al., 2016). There may be pressure for organizations to evolve into more professional-like operations in order to look attractive to potential stakeholders (Kikulis et al., 1992; Van Hoecke et al., 2013). Organizations must consider the interests of diverse stakeholders such as athletes, parents, employees, volunteers, coaches, and officials (Babiak, 2003), but must also follow the mandates, rules and regulations set in place by their governing bodies. To respond to these challenges and pressures, sport organizations must structure themselves in such a way that they are still able to deliver their priorities in the face of these many often-competing pressures. Institutional theory and institutional learning offer a useful lens for understanding these pressures further and are briefly reviewed in the following sections.

2.3 Institutional Theory and Institutional Learning

Sport management literature often examines the changing nature of sport organizations and institutional theory has been utilized as a major theory to deconstruct why sport organizations change (e.g., Kikulis, 2000; Washington & Patterson, 2011). The extant literature drawing on institutional theory is extensive and, consequently, this review of the literature has been limited to seminal works on institutional theory outside the sport as well as institutional theory as taken up by sport management researchers. Researchers such as Hinings, Kikulis, and Slack have used institutional theory and its concepts to develop a stronger understanding of

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Canadian sport organizations (e.g., Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2004; Kikulis, 2000; Kikulis et al., 1995; Slack & Hinings, 1992). Haunschild and Chandler (2008), however, have departed from the traditional tenets of institutional theory and utilize concepts from learning theories to propose institutional-level learning as additional explanations of organizational change. The two concepts offer valuable insight into the circumstances that prompt organizations to incorporate new practices, which will be useful in analyzing the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer. Therefore, this section introduces the concepts of institutional theory and institutional learning and their relevancy to this study.

Institutional theory offers a framing for understanding and explaining how organizations change and are changed by actions and structures that become “taken-for-granted institutional rules” (Kikulis, 2000, p. 295), also known as institutional pressures (Edwards, Mason & Washington, 2009). Early work within the institutional perspective considered organizations as “systems of coordinated and controlled activities that arise when work is embedded in complex networks of technical relations and boundary-spanning exchanges” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 344). An organizational field is where organizations and institutions interact and exert influence on each other (Edwards et al., 2009). Organizational fields, in themselves, are institutionally defined according to common languages, shared scheme or understandings and common ideologies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Washington & Patterson, 2011). The implementation of institutions within an organization, and the development of institutionalism can be, but are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

An institution is a “process by which individual actors transmit what is real” (Zucker, 1977, p. 728). An institution is a “multifaceted, durable social structures(*sic*), made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources” (Scott, 1995, p. 57) and dictates

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“categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relationships” (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). They are relatively resistant to change, but may change over time (Scott, 1995). A necessary element of an institution is the perpetuation and habituation of actions by agents to the point of common acceptance or a taken-for-granted part of social reality (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996; Zucker, 1977). Therefore, an institution can be both a structure (i.e., a tangible resource), and also the processes, practices, ideas, rituals, routines and beliefs that influence that structure (i.e., social constructions created through meaning-making by humans) (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008; Scott, 1995; Washington & Patterson, 2011).

Institutions are composed of three common elements, or pillars (regulative systems, normative systems, and cultural-cognitive systems), which often work in interdependent combination, although one pillar may dominate a particular institution on occasion (Scott, 1995). The regulative pillar stipulates that “institutions constrain and regularize behaviour” (Scott, 1995, p. 59). The conformance of rules or standards may offer rewards, special powers, or benefits, while nonconformity may involve punishment or sanctions. The degree of regulation falls on a continuum of obligation (the degree to which behaviours are influenced because of scrutiny by external actors), precision (the clarity with which the rules outline behaviour), and delegation (the extent with which third party actors have the authority to govern the rules) (Scott, 1995). The normative pillar institutes prescriptive and evaluative values and norms for social behaviour (Scott, 1995). Scott (1995) states that the normative pillar establishes the rules that govern the game, as well as the etiquette on how to play the game. As well, roles may emerge when established values and norms prescribe behaviours for certain individuals over others. The cultural-cognitive pillar speaks to the interplay between the external environment and the internal interpretive processes that makes meaning (Scott, 1995). Cultures shape individual beliefs and,

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in turn, individual beliefs mould belief systems into cultures. It is both these cultures and these cognitions that may be institutionalized. The combination of these three pillars shape institutions, and shape institutionalization, which will be discussed next.

Within the sport organization context, Kikulis (2000) reviews Tolbert and Zucker's (1996) three stages of institutionalization. First, 'pre-institutionalization' is when actions are identified and become implemented as responses to challenges organizations are facing. An example of pre-institutionalization is the emergence of best practices for creating inclusive environments for transgendered participants in sport by developing supportive policy (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2016). The best practices have not yet been adopted by all organizations and are not yet considered fundamental practice necessary to an organization's operation, which is what makes this scenario pre-institutionalized. Second, 'semi-institutionalization' is when the actions become socially accepted but are not yet fully implemented, and third, the actions become fully normalized and begin to sediment into different layers across the organization (Kikulis, 2000). The adoption of online registration for CSOs, and the widespread requirement of transfer agreements due to residency rules in soccer (The Guardian, 2015, June 5), are examples of semi-institutionalization, and sedimentation, respectively. In other words, institutionalization is a graduated process from identification to implementation, to acceptance, and finally normalization. Lastly, institutions may also deinstitutionalize, or diminish in influence, in order to be overtaken and replaced by new institutions (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Understanding this process is useful for understanding how practices become more common, then institutionalized, then diminish.

Washington and Patterson (2011) summarize Greenwood et al.'s five key tenets of institutional theory. First, they state that organizations are influenced by their environments (i.e.,

their institutional contexts). Second, all organizations are affected by institutional pressures, particularly organizations experiencing ambiguity. Third, because of the institutional pressures felt by organizations, organizations become isomorphic with their environment to gain legitimacy. Fourth, the actions organizations take to become isomorphic with their environment may not necessarily be actions that best suit the organizations' needs. Fifth, when that action becomes viewed as essential to legitimacy and is supported by a dominant institution, that action becomes an institution, hence institutionalized (Washington & Patterson, 2011). While institutional theory as a whole encompasses many theoretical propositions that can be used to inform the basis and study of sport (e.g., Washington & Patterson, 2011), the notion of isomorphism is particularly relevant to the study of certification and thus will be the focus of the following subsection.

2.3.1 Isomorphism

Isomorphism is defined as a unit (e.g., person, thing, organization) evolving to similarly resemble other units in a population (or field) due to the same environmental conditions and external forces (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In an organizational context, isomorphism occurs when the environment, or institutional context (otherwise known as an agent), exerts pressures on organizations to adopt similar processes and practices in order to survive, which is also considered homogenization (Edwards et al., 2009; Washington & Patterson, 2011). Because of the agent's institutional pressures, organizations will look to other organizations facing a similar environment and adopt similar organizational features. In other words, institutions adapt to become more homogeneous within the organizational field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Washington & Patterson, 2011). Isomorphism may occur out of a desire to remain competitive, or isomorphism may occur because of institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

2.3.2 Three isomorphic pressures.

There are three types of isomorphic pressures which are well documented in the sport management literature and help to explain the actions of sport organizations operating within a governance system (Kikulis, 2000; Slack & Hinings, 1992). They are coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, and normative isomorphism. Each is detailed below.

2.3.2.1 Coercive isomorphism.

Coercive isomorphism results from formal and informal pressures exerted by organizations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organizations function (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Often, power relations and political structures are at play with coercive isomorphism (Washington & Patterson, 2011). The pressures exerted by external organizations may be overt, such as a governing organization implementing a policy that a member organization must therefore adopt, or subtle, such as a governing organization choosing to fund grant applications for member organizations who are able to apply with a 'more professional' application (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As well, coercive isomorphism often exists when nonprofit organizations are reliant on a funding source for the majority of its funding (Edwards et al., 2009) and that funding source sets or changes parameters for accessing that funding.

2.3.2.2 Mimetic isomorphism.

Mimetic pressures occur when organizations model themselves after similar organizations that they have perceived to be experiencing success (Slack & Hinings, 1992). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) called this behaviour modelling. Organizations may feel encouraged to imitate other organizations when they experience purpose or goal ambiguity, or solution uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Edwards et al., 2009). When this happens,

organizations are likely to look at other organizations who they believe to be legitimate. By adopting similar structures, operations and programs, the organization is perceived as gaining legitimacy (Edwards et al., 2009; Washington & Patterson, 2011).

2.3.2.3 Normative isomorphism.

Normative pressures relate to professionalization (Slack & Hinings, 1992). Employees come to organizations with formative experiences from past organizations or from completing training at a learning institution (Edward, Mason & Washington, 2009). Organizations may also hire consultants or professionals who have received specialized training and the professionalized skillsets that those individuals possess may result in normative pressures being exerted (Kikulis, 2000). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) emphasize that the formal education process and the growth of professional networks strongly influences normative isomorphism. Taken separately or together, these influences can result in normative pressures on organizational process (Edwards et al., 2009) and result in the adoption of more professional and business-like management practices. In response to these pressures, sport organizations often seek out training, associations, and networks that define standards of operating; this professionalization may come from conferences, taking specialized professional development, joining professional associations, and networking with likeminded individuals (Washington & Patterson, 2011).

The three isomorphic pressures each contribute to institutionalism. The length of time over which the resulting institutionalism occurs may vary and develop at different speeds, and this varies within an organization and within the organizational field. Isomorphic pressures are likely to increase as an institution becomes more common. Some organizations may adopt new or different practices early because they feel it to be valuable to their operations, but others may adopt practices once isomorphic pressures become too great, the practice may assist in gaining

legitimacy, or it seems like ‘the thing to do’ (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). However, there are other reasons to explain how organizations shift in the face of pressures, and these can be explained by institutional-level learning.

2.3.3 Institutional-level learning.

Learning theories examine the evolution of organizations as they interact with and influence various social and cultural forces (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Therefore, instead of presuming that organizations are forced to adopt institutions, institutional-level learning proposes that organizations learn from early adopters’ successes and failures and incorporate that learning into the implementation of the institution so that the organization experiences economic benefits (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Haunschild and Chandler (2008) further suggest that a learning perspective develops a “more complex, holistic change process” and better explains “potential firm behaviour in the face of institutional forces” (p. 625). To this end, institutional-level learning occurs when an institution evolves deliberately over time, responding to changes in the field that cause an evolution of values, beliefs, and attitudes, as a result of an agent of change, or as a result of the “the unintended outcomes of everyday action” (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008, p. 627).

Accordingly, institutional-level learning offers six concepts that complete a more holistic view of how and why organizations change. First, deliberate actions taken may result in unexpected and unpredictable outcomes that lead to change, which means that the institution (the action) will not automatically reproduce itself (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Second, learning from other organizations and their processes occurs faster for organizations of closer geographic proximity and where there is a stronger level of interconnectedness within an organizational field. These factors result in inconsistent and imperfect imitation and replication.

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Third, the search of new knowledge and practices, termed exploration, will propel greater field-level change than the customization of current practices, termed exploitation, which will generate measured change within a smaller scope (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Along with exploration and exploitation, the speed of adaptation that an organization adopts impacts the amount of learning an organization will experience. Slow adaptation allows an atmosphere of brainstorming and creativity, while fast adaptation encourages streamlining and single-mindedness to implement quickly. Fourth, organizations ‘forget’ or ‘unlearn’, which contributes to deinstitutionalization. Although institutional theory does not acknowledge organizational forgetting or unlearning, learning theories do. Staff and volunteer turnover, the extent of technological sophistication, and susceptibility to fads all impact organizational learning (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Fifth, organizations may experience selective and inferential learning, which is similar to mimetic isomorphism, in that organizations may look to experiences of other organizations and model themselves after them but are selective in choosing processes that have the most potential to implement social and economic success.

Sixth, there are three key field-level conditions/processes that encourage heterogeneous institutional change (as opposed to the homogeneous change of isomorphism): imperfect copying, regulatory pressures, and field-level competition (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Organizations that engage in mimetic learning may not understand all the inner workings of the practice they are trying to copy and may copy imperfectly as a result. They may also choose to explicitly forgo certain aspects of a practice they are copying, which will produce an entirely different practice, potentially leading to a new institution. Although regulatory pressures may produce similar results in an organizational field, organizations will have unique responses, and this is likely to lead to heterogeneity in results. Environments that have innovation, novelty, and

are incentive-based breed diversification and therefore heterogeneity (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). These six concepts offer additional insight into the learning organizations may experience in the incorporation of institutional practices. In the next section, the different dimensions of capacity building, and a model of how capacity is built, will be discussed.

2.4 Organizational Capacity

Organizational capacity, the third section, has been a subject of examination in the business and nonprofit literature since the 1970s (Forbes, 1998). The Canadian nonprofit sector intensified its focus on organizational capacity in the late 1990s and the early 2000s while the discussion of organizational capacity emerged in the sport literature in the mid-2000s. The concept of organizational capacity has been applied to a variety of related contexts within sport management literature. Truyens, De Bosscher, Sotiriadou, Heyndels and Westerbeek (2016) offered a method to measure the organizational capacity that countries possess to support high-performance sport development in athletics. Wicker and Breuer (2014) analyzed German sport clubs to compare the organizational capacity characteristics of disability sport clubs. Svensson, Hancock and Hums (2017) explored how organizational capacity impacts sport for development and peace organizations. Lastly, Jones and colleagues (2018) analyzed how organizational capacity impacts its ability to build community capacity in an American CSO. These examples demonstrate the variety of ways organizational capacity is being taken up in the literature.

Organizational capacity is considered a multidimensional framework where capacity and capital are closely linked (Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009). Capacity is thought of as the ability to mobilize the required resources (capital), both tangible and intangible, necessary to perform or produce desired outcomes or achieve an organizational goal (Hall et al., 2003). In other words, organizational capacity is considered “an organization’s potential to achieve its

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mission and objectives based on the extent to which it has certain attributes that have been identified as critical to goal achievement” (Misener & Doherty, 2009, p. 458).

The examination of organizational capacity in the sport management literature has resulted in the emergence of widely-cited organizational capacity frameworks. Hall and colleagues (2003) proposed a framework for nonprofit and voluntary organizations that was comprised of five central dimensions: human resources, finances, relationships and networks, infrastructure and processes, and planning and development. Although the framework is not sport organization specific, it has been empirically verified in the community sport sector by Misener and Doherty (2009) and others and remains the baseline framework for capacity in the sport management literature. Misener and Doherty’s (2009) case study of a gymnastics community sport organization explored and utilized the same five dimensions of Hall’s framework but detailed nuances not mentioned in Hall et al.’s publication. Doherty et al. (2014) drew on Hall et al.’s framework to explore the concept of organizational capacity with a focus group methodology, drawing on the knowledge of club presidents from a variety of community sport organizations in Ontario. In addition to identifying human resources, finances, infrastructure, planning and development and external relationships as the critical dimensions that impact organizational capacity, they also identified several critical elements under each dimension that were crucial to capacity. Although there are similarities between existing frameworks, the extent to which a dimension is critical for an organization’s success is dependent on the organization’s context (Misener & Doherty, 2009). Despite slight variations in the language by the various studies to identify the dimensions of capacity, the defined dimensions contain the same essence; our current understanding is that organizational capacity is comprised of the dimensions of human resources, finances, infrastructure and process, planning

and development, and external relationships. Each organizational capacity framework dimension will be discussed further below.

2.4.1 Human resources capacity.

Human resources capacity is the ability to “deploy human capital” (Misener & Doherty, 2009, p. 462). Human capital includes both paid staff and volunteers, although for many sport organizations, volunteers often greatly outweigh the number of paid staff, and many organizations operate without paid staff. Sport organizations also require volunteers who fill more permanent roles like board positions, as well as less permanent roles, such as coaches and referees (Sharpe, 2006). Regardless of whether the position is paid or volunteer, recruitment, training, management, and retention is important for each type of role (Hall et al., 2003).

Similarly, Doherty et al. (2014) identified seven critical elements that influence human resources capacity. The first is the enthusiasm people have for their role, the sport, and the organization. The second is having the human capital required, with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience required for the tasks at hand. The third is everyone involved having a common focus or shared vision from which to operate. The fourth is having sufficient volunteers and relates to the second critical element; it is important to have both the number of individuals necessary to properly execute operations and that those individuals possess the right skills and knowledge for the roles. The fifth critical element is continuity and the sixth is succession. Continuity is important in order to ensure that rapport and consistency are built, but it is also important to ensure that replacement and knowledge transfer occurs when a role is vacated. The seventh critical element is development and support, meaning that it is vital to provide formal and informal training and development opportunities for people to learn the required skills and

knowledge to fill their roles, but also supporting people on an ongoing basis to ensure that they continue to have everything they need to carry out their roles well (Doherty et al., 2014).

2.4.2 Financial capacity.

Financial capacity “is the ability of an organization to develop and deploy financial capital (i.e. the revenues, expenses, assets, and liabilities of the organization)” (Misener & Doherty, 2009, p. 462). Revenue generation capacity, financial management, and accountability are primary elements that impact financial capacity (Hall et al., 2003). Stable revenues, fixed expenses and alternate sources of revenues are all critical elements of financial capacity for sport organizations (Doherty et al., 2014). Often, participant registration fees are a sport organization’s primary revenue source, but many sport organizations also rely on government funding (Misener & Doherty, 2009; Slack & Hinings, 1992). Therefore, securing alternate sources of funding that fund core operations instead of projects, and are stable and predictable is preferred (Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009). Financial accountability is also of critical importance to nonprofit and voluntary organizations (Doherty et al., 2014). Smaller nonprofits (those who have annual revenues of less than \$100,000) experience the greatest number of fraud cases and the highest losses relative to their annual revenue (Chen, Salterio & Murphy, 2009). Further, the majority of those who engage in fraud are those who regularly interact with the financial affairs of the organization (treasurers, financial officers, hired fundraisers, accounting departments, upper management, etc.) (Chen et al., 2009). Therefore, mechanisms that ensure appropriate fiscal management and accountability are imperative.

2.4.3 Infrastructure and process capacity.

Infrastructure and process capacity refers to the internal operational aspects, i.e. organizational structures and systems, of an organization (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). An

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element that greatly impacts an organization's capacity is whether the organization has a formal board structure, bylaws, policies, procedures, and/or defined organizational roles (Doherty et al., 2014). This is known as formalization, and the extent to which an organization is formalized will vary according to its needs, however, the element of formalization typically improves the organizational capacity of an organization. A second critical element is frequent and open communication. Consistent communication and transparency ensure that key stakeholders remain 'on the same page' with ongoing activities (Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009). A third critical element is the availability and quality of facilities (Doherty et al., 2014). An organization's relationship with those who operate facilities has the ability to impact availability and access to quality and safe facilities where the sport takes place, and facilities where staff or volunteers work and operate (Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009). A fourth and final element is the accessibility to information technology. Hall et al. (2003) reported reliance on inefficient, outdated, and poorly integrated information technology constrained nonprofit and voluntary organizations in functioning effectively. It is important to note that the degree to which the cost of, and access to information technology constrains organizations has greatly evolved since Hall et al.'s 2003 report.

2.4.4 Planning and development capacity.

Planning and development capacity represents the ability to develop and draw on plans that are both strategic and operational, and short- and long-term in nature (Doherty & Misener, 2009). The ability to develop and execute plans is critical to this dimension of capacity (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016) and planning and execution depend greatly on the financial and human resources capacities of an organization (Hall et al., 2003). Challenges with planning often occur because of the need to focus on day-to-day operations, resulting in reactionary decisions

(Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009). Organizations who engaged in a creative planning process often found success in the development and execution of plans (Doherty et al., 2014).

2.4.5 External relationship capacity.

External relationship capacity involves the relationships created and sustained for mutual benefit (Misener & Doherty, 2009). Inter-organizational relationships relate to this particular dimension of organizational capacity and are presently a topic of examination in the sport management literature (Alexander, Thibault & Frisby, 2008; Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds & Smith, 2017). This capacity dimension encompasses relationships which are voluntary, such as sponsorships or mutually-beneficial partnerships, as well as relationships that are bureaucratic in nature, for instance, with governing bodies, municipal facilities, lottery/gaming commissions, and media (Doherty et al., 2014; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). Being strategic about partnership development is key to many organizations' success, but many organizations are challenged to develop meaningful and worthwhile partnerships (Misener & Doherty, 2009).

A major constraint in building relationship capacity is having the knowledge and skills required to navigate the complexities of arrangements (Hall et al., 2003). A second key constraint to creating and sustaining relationships is the time required to build lasting arrangements (Misener & Doherty, 2009). A lack of and retention of qualified staff to assist in building relationships and networks is a challenge, as well as mobilizing board members to engage in relationship and network management (Hall et al., 2003). Having the knowledge and skills required to interact with media was also identified as a particular challenge in this capacity dimension. Consequently, Hall et al. (2003) found that many of their participants felt they would benefit from media-savvy personnel. Doherty et al. (2014) found that personal connections were

beneficial in forming some of the partnerships and relationships in organizations of their study participants, as people are more likely to engage in arrangements with those with whom they've had prior positive experiences. Additionally, where relationships, networks and partnerships were established, the arrangements that were mutually engaged, balanced, and dependable were found to be the most successful.

2.4.6 Interrelated capacity dimensions.

The organizational capacity dimensions are interrelated and this is shown by research findings (Misener & Doherty, 2009; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). Deficits or challenges within one capacity dimension have “noticeable implications” on other dimensions (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016, p. 121), but it is also possible that positive increases in one capacity dimension could positively impact other dimensions as well (Doherty et al., 2014). Challenges with securing ongoing funding might cause an organization to task one or more staff or volunteers to spend more time attempting to cultivate relationships with potential funders, drawing them away from their regular responsibilities, with the potential that the cultivation of the relationship does not result in a mutually beneficial, lasting arrangement (Hall et al., 2003). Conversely, recruiting a volunteer with financial acumen may allow an organization to strengthen their financial management practices in a short amount of time. “Thus, the capacity in one area can positively influence the capacity levels in the other areas” (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016, p. 121).

While each of the capacity dimensions are of similar importance and are similarly interrelated, the human resources capacity dimension has the ability to significantly impact each of the other capacity dimensions (Misener & Doherty, 2009; Wicker & Breuer, 2011). Jones et al. (2018) found that the human resources capacity dimension was the most challenged dimension that their case experienced. The youth sport organization who focused on using sport

for community capacity development was challenged with recruiting volunteers and transitioning them to leadership roles causing current volunteers to take on multiple responsibilities, thereby reducing their abilities to focus on less immediate tasks, such as strategic management (Jones et al., 2018). Sharpe (2006) reported similar findings with her examination of a minor softball league. Challenges with volunteer recruitment and volunteer management negatively influenced the committee's ability to pursue important projects or meet external demands.

Understanding the capacity dimensions and their multidimensional and interconnectedness provides greater insight into how sport organizations achieve optimal organizational capacity. A natural progression is to understand a process model that may be executed to increase organizational capacity. A comprehensive model of capacity building will be discussed next.

2.4.7 Comprehensive model of capacity building.

Although it is beneficial to understand organizational capacity, its dimensions, and its influence on sport organizations' abilities to execute their missions and goals, it is also important to understand how an organization would improve its resources and ability to mobilize those resources to respond to its environment (Millar & Doherty, 2018). This is called capacity building. Millar and Doherty (2018) state, "capacity building presents a targeted approach to addressing the challenges an organization faces by focusing the development efforts on the specific needs of the individual organization" (p. 348). Millar and Doherty (2016) undertook the construction of a process model to explain effective capacity building, which articulates the process an organization would follow from stimulus to program and service delivery, in order to address "weaknesses, challenges or limitations in one or more aspects of organizational capacity" to "improve an organization's ability to formulate and achieve objectives" (p. 366).

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The process model illustrates a strategic process that occurs as a response to new or changing situations within an organization's environment (Millar & Doherty, 2018).

The capacity building process begins with an internal decision or an external factor, resulting in stimulus, the first step of the process model. The force triggers a response and initiates a capacity building process (Millar & Doherty, 2018). Both the cause (the force) and the effect (the response) constitute the stimuli in the model. It is likely that the causes which initiate a capacity building process could be labelled as coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphic pressures, or a combination of the three. Cause and effect occur; acknowledgement of the cause(s) which initiates the process is key to effective capacity building (Millar & Doherty, 2016). Forces that affect the organization's core functioning are more likely to motivate response than those that affect the organization's programs and services or goal achievement.

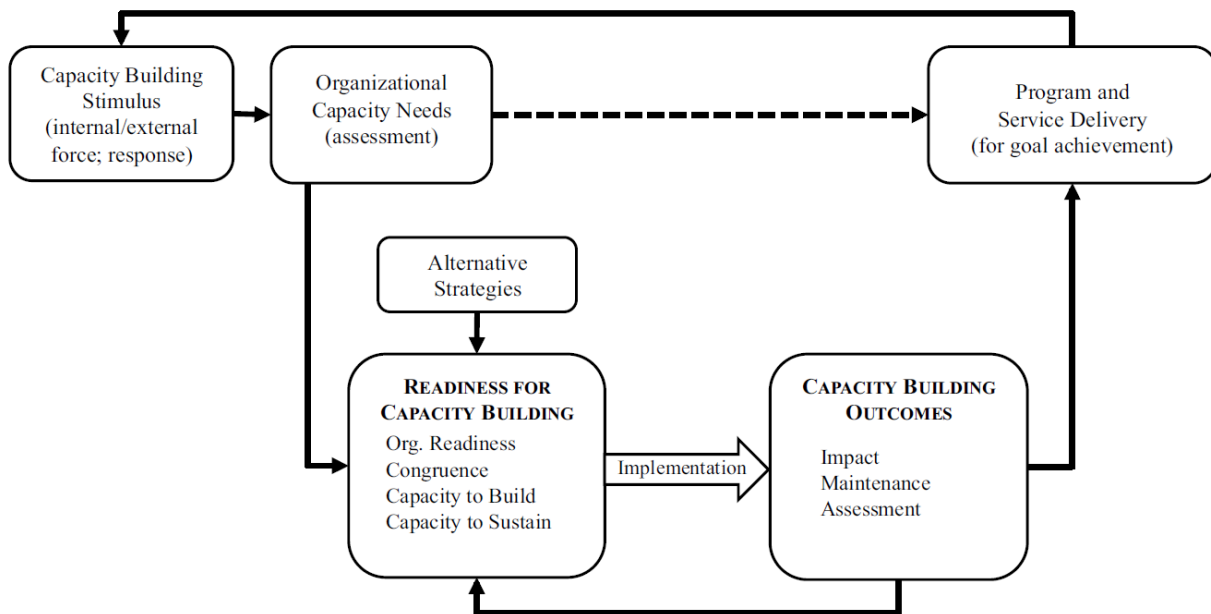


Figure 1. A comprehensive model of capacity building (Millar & Doherty, 2016).

The second step in the process model is an assessment of organizational capacity needs. The assessment accomplishes two things: first, it identifies the specific particular capacity needs

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required to respond to the force, and second, it identifies the particular organizational assets that may be crucial to the capacity building process (Millar & Doherty, 2016). Appropriate identification of the capacity needs required to respond to the environmental force is essential in order to respond and deploy resources appropriately (Millar & Doherty, 2016). For sport organizations, both capacity assets and capacity needs may be multidimensional in nature, with assets and deficiencies identified in several dimensions concurrently (Millar & Doherty, 2018). Therefore, a sport organization may have to prioritize its needs and focus on building capacity for the most important needs first. During assessment, it is possible that an organization may determine it has the required capacity necessary to respond to a force. In this case, the organization will execute whatever actions are deemed necessary and will proceed with program and service delivery (reflected by the dash line in Figure 1). But “where any of these capacities is deficient, building is required and should be the focus of strategic efforts” (Millar & Doherty, 2016, p. 376). Millar and Doherty (2018) stress that a thorough assessment of each of the organizational capacity dimensions to determine capacity needs and assets will best position the organization to build capacity effectively.

The third step of the process model is readiness for capacity building. Four factors impact readiness for capacity building: organizational readiness, congruence, capacity to build, and capacity to sustain (Millar & Doherty, 2016). Readiness is concerned with the level and availability with which the people and processes within the organization are available to facilitate change. This factor relates strongly to the human resources capacity dimension and its critical elements (Millar & Doherty, 2018). Congruence relates to the alignment between the organization’s existing systems and environment and the proposed capacity building goals and objectives. The factor of congruence connects strongly to the infrastructure and process and

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planning and development capacity dimensions and their related critical elements (Millar & Doherty, 2018). Capacity to build and capacity to sustain relate to the degree to which an organization is positioned to make the required changes, and sustain those changes (Millar & Doherty, 2016). These two factors refer specifically to an organization's existing capacities and the ability of the organization to engage those skills, abilities, and resources within the resource-intensive nature of capacity building (Millar & Doherty, 2018). The four factors of readiness are entirely dependent on the specific circumstances of the organization and each uniquely impact the success of capacity building efforts (Millar & Doherty, 2018).

An off-shoot of the readiness for capacity building step is alternative strategies, and the relationship between the two is cyclical. An organization's ability to generate and seriously consider several strategies signifies an organization's readiness for capacity building (Millar & Doherty, 2016). Some of the brainstormed strategies may be previously-used traditional techniques, while other strategies may be new and untried alternatives. If an organization does not comprehensively consider its options, the organization may settle for "the most expensive, low-lying fruit, easiest way" (p. 356) which may result in unsuccessful attempts at building capacity or implementing programs (Millar & Doherty, 2018). Therefore, organizational readiness can be signified by the organization's willingness to select the appropriate strategies that will best meet the needs and objectives of the organization and have the built capacity be sustained (Millar & Doherty, 2016; 2018).

The fourth step of the process model is capacity building outcomes, i.e. what results from the implementation of the strategy (Millar & Doherty, 2016). "Effective capacity building results in both immediate and sustained changes in the form of, for example, enhanced financial or human resources (or infrastructure or partnerships)" (Millar & Doherty, 2018, p. 350). Again,

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Millar and Doherty (2016) suggest that the outcomes are dependent on the organization's readiness, congruence, capacity to build and capacity to change. Figure 1 indicates a feedback loop between the capacity building outcomes and the readiness for capacity building. Where the capacity building outcomes have not been successful, it is reasonable to conclude that one or more of the organizational readiness factors were deficient, and the process may need to be re-engaged (Millar & Doherty, 2016). The level of congruence of the selected capacity building strategy will be reflected by the capacity building outcomes. If a strategy has greater micro-level congruence (i.e. the strategy matches well with the daily operations) than strictly a macro-level congruence (i.e. the strategy fits within the overall mission but does not easily fit within the daily operations), the capacity building outcomes will be more successful than the inverse (Millar & Doherty, 2018).

The final step of the process model is program and service delivery. If the selected strategies have been successful, the organization may be able to proceed with program and service delivery. This may conclude the process, or may uncover additional stimuli for capacity building, prompting another engagement of the process model, as illustrated by the feedback loop to the first step (Millar & Doherty, 2016). Conversely, the selected strategies may prove unsuccessful and the stimuli may remain unaddressed, prompting the organization to consider reengaging the model. For both of the sport organizations in Millar and Doherty's (2018) study, the outcomes of the capacity building strategies revealed additional needs that could have generated environmental forces that subsequently initiated further capacity building efforts.

In its entirety, the model offers a clear and comprehensive description of how an organization would engage in a capacity building process (Millar & Doherty, 2016). Millar and Doherty's (2018) findings suggest "that each stage of the capacity building process is,

individually and collectively, integral to the success of these efforts” (p. 349), and that the model is useful in helping sport organizations understand the complexity of the strategic capacity building process. This complexity and, as Millar and Doherty (2016) note, the level of capacity the model requires in order to then generate greater capacity, offers an interesting paradox that organizations must navigate. Certification programs are one possible solution and will be examined next.

2.5 Sport-based Certification Programs

Performance management, considered the “process of quantifying action” (Van Hoecke et al., 2013, p. 89), monitors financial and non-financial organizational dimensions on an ongoing basis to capture the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational performance (O’Boyle & Hassan, 2014; Winand et al., 2010). This often occurs through accreditation, certification, standards-based programs, or systems of quality assurance by utilizing established guiding frameworks or reporting tools to ensure that “the same information, methods, skills and controls are used and practised in a consistent manner” (Nagel et al., 2015; Van Hoecke et al., 2013, p. 90). Many industries use performance management tools, including the sport management industry; although it is less common, the phenomenon is becoming more popular in Canada. The fourth and final section of the current literature review describes certification programs, then details their usage in sport management, internationally and within Canada, before defining potential outcomes that sport organizations may experience by implementing certification programs.

Certification programs offer standards on “numerous performance dimensions that may be fundamental to the effective delivery of an organization’s mission” (O’Boyle & Hassan, 2014). Often, the various criteria relate to people management, governance standards, financial

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accountability, marketing, recruitment, revenue generation, program delivery, coaching and other technical standards (Club Excellence, n.d.-c). These programs aim to both promote and validate organizational development while appraising operations against standardized criteria. Governing organizations may align with existing programs and use them as part of a multi-sport initiative, such as the Club Excellence program in Canada (Club Excellence, n.d.-c) or ClubMark in England (Nichols & Taylor, 2015).

Some organizations choose to make use of multidisciplinary (non-sport) programs, such as the Balanced Scorecard, which is a commonly used tool in Australasia (O'Boyle & Hassan, 2014). On the contrary, some organizations may invest resources into developing their own sport-specific programs which are then delivered in-house, such as the English FA Charter Standard, or delivered by an independent organization, such as Foot PASS, developed by a spin-off company of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel called Double PASS. For some governing organizations, the certification program is mandated in exchange for certain rights and privileges. For others, the certification program is offered as an optional program-enhancer for member organizations. Further, other organizations utilize certification programs as benchmarks from which to measure against for internal reflection, such as the SATSport Framework for Effective Governance, or Total Quality Management (Lowther et al., 2016; Van Hoecke & De Knop, 2006).

2.5.1 Sport-based certification around the world.

2.5.1.1 IKGym.

IKGym is an independent, quality management system for Flemish gymnastic clubs in Belgium (Perck et al., 2016). Perck and colleagues (2016) labeled the program a “pioneering project” (p. 159), as the program was used by the Flemish Gymnastics Federation to trigger

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professionalization in its members. The program originated from a provincial strategic plan in 1997, followed by a policy in 2001, that called for quality management and performance management for all sport systems to develop sport clubs (Perck et al., 2016). Launched in 1998, IKGym's targets include quality (planning, internal, external, culture, management, and human resource management) and performance (organisational effectiveness) (Perck et al., 2016; Van Hoecke et al., 2009). Perck and colleagues' (2016) assessment of the program's effectiveness concluded that the program significantly impacted professionalization, homogenisation, and organisational performance of the federation's clubs. IKGym's success prompted a launch of IKSport, an adaptation of the program, for other sports in Belgium and the Netherlands (De Knop et al., 2004). IKSport's model situates its scope more on the efficiency and effectiveness of the club's management system rather than on the quality and performance of the operational sports system, like IKGym (Van Hoecke et al., 2009).

2.5.1.2 Clubmark.

In 2002, Sport England launched Clubmark, the licensing system for clubs with junior participants under the Sport England umbrella (Nichols & Taylor, 2015). The program can be delivered as designed or customized by NSOs to meet their specific needs but requires clubs to meet standards relating to activity/playing programmes, duty of care and welfare, knowing the club and its community, and club management (Cope et al., 2014). It has been noted that the process can be costly and time intensive (attainment of the criteria may take up to two years and reassessment is required every 3 to 4 years) (Nichols & Taylor, 2015). Gaining Clubmark accreditation creates the opportunity to receive funding from local and national governments and governing bodies, possibly providing preferential access to facilities, and most importantly providing external assurance of quality and good practice. According to the *Clubmark*

Accreditation Evaluation of 2014, although stakeholders had concerns that many of the benefits were intangible and had the potential to be undervalued, Clubmark was seen as valuable for assuring stakeholders of a club's ability to meet the program's high standards of health, safety, and welfare.

2.5.1.3 Foot PASS.

The Professional Academy Support System (PASS) is a system of quality assurance that NSOs in Belgium have introduced for youth development (Van Hoecke et al., 2013). Originally implemented by the Belgian Football Association in 2001, the PASS has grown to be adopted by sports like basketball, korfbal, and ice hockey (Van Hoecke et al., 2009). On a grander scale, soccer's introduction into certification was with UEFA's introduction of a club licensing system at the start of the 2004/2005 season. The annual licensing is conducted by an independent organization and is based on eight dimensions: strategic and financial planning, organization and decision making, talent identification and development system, athletic and social support, academy staff, communication and cooperation, facilities and equipment, and productivity (Van Hoecke et al., 2013). The program expanded to include new licensing regulations in 2010. The Foot PASS system has wide acceptance within European NSOs, such as Belgium, Finland, and Germany. (Van Hoecke et al., 2013).

2.5.1.4 The FA Charter Standard.

The FA Charter Standard is the English Football Association's (FA) multi-level accreditation program (The Football Association, 2019b). Considered one of the preeminent soccer-based certification programs worldwide, the Charter Standard Programme "aims to raise standards in the grassroots game, supporting the development of clubs and leagues, [and] recognising and rewarding commitment, quality and achievement" (The English FA, 2019a). The

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programme offers four levels with differing standards relating to operational policies and a code of conduct, coaching qualifications, and links, pathways and development plans. Clubs and leagues work with their county FA to meet their chosen level and then complete an annual health check to maintain their accreditation. In exchange for accreditation, clubs access a number of benefits and incentives that will help them deliver their goals (The English FA, 2019c; 2019d).

2.5.2 Certification within Canada.

Similar to the certification programs outlined above, sport organizations in Canada have implemented or are implementing certification programs that are multi-sport in nature, or sport specific.

2.5.2.1 Multi-sport certification.

Club Excellence, formed in 2007, was the only multi-sport certification program operating in Canada. Club Excellence offered two graduated levels of certification- ‘Affiliation’ and ‘Level 1’ (Club Excellence, n.d.-e). The ‘Affiliation’ level was achieved after completing a self-declaration that an organization had met the requisite standards. Once ‘Affiliation’ was achieved, an organization could remain as an affiliate or choose to pursue ‘Level 1’ by submitting relevant documentation for verification (Club Excellence, n.d.-e). The program was managed by the Club Excellence Cooperative, which consisted of Athletics Canada, CanoeKayak Canada, Gymnastics Canada, and the True Sport Foundation, with several other sports (cross country, rugby, and speed skating) promoting Club Excellence on their websites and using the program within their organizations (Cross Country Canada, n.d.; Club Excellence, n.d.-d; Club Excellence, n.d.-f; Speed Skating Canada, n.d.). The program is currently undergoing a metamorphosis, transferring ownership and management from the Cooperative to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, and redeveloping the program to better respond to clubs’

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needs and challenges (A. Burford, personal communication, March 14, 2019; Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, n.d.).

2.5.2.2 Sport specific certification.

Some NSOs have elected to develop their own sport specific certification programs. Baseball Canada's *RBI (Reaching Baseball Ideals) Program*, Basketball Canada's *Basketball Club & Association Excellence* program, Volleyball Canada's *Club Accreditation*, and Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association's *Podium Club* are all examples of sport specific programs currently in operation in Canada (Baseball Canada, n.d.; Basketball Canada, n.d.; Volleyball Canada, n.d.; Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association, n.d.). Similar to Club Excellence, Baseball Canada and Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association's certification programs are multi-tiered (Basketball Canada, n.d.; Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association, n.d.). Tailored to the individual needs of each NSO, the certification programs share common themes with standards relating to athlete development, coaching, program development, governance and administration (Baseball Canada, n.d.; Basketball Canada, n.d.; Volleyball Canada, n.d.; Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association, n.d.).

2.5.2.3 Soccer specific certification programs.

Soccer governing bodies in Canada have been engaged in certification for a number of years. BC Soccer, Ontario Soccer, and Soccer New Brunswick each developed and were operating programs in-house, while Saskatchewan Soccer had implemented Club Excellence, the aforementioned multi-sport program (BC Soccer, n.d.; Ontario Soccer Association, n.d.-c; Saskatchewan Soccer Association, 2017, August 10; Soccer New Brunswick, n.d.). Two more PTSOs were engaged in similar work, with Quebec Soccer Federation conducting an audit of its clubs in the last few years, and Manitoba Soccer Association instigating its own work to develop

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a program in-house. As well, BC Soccer and Ontario Soccer were both operating standards-based programs in the form of high performance leagues, with standards higher than those in their certification programs. In 2017, Canada Soccer began developing its own program, the *Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program*. After extensive research, development and consultation with Canada Soccer's membership, the program began its rollout nationally in the summer of 2018 (D. Nutt, personal communication, July 13, 2018; deVos, 2018). While the program is not mandated, it is meant to replace provincial editions and it is expected that all PTSOs will champion the use of the new national program.

2.5.3 Outcomes of adopting certification programs.

Quantifying performance management is attractive to both sport practitioners and researchers as the measurement of specific elements brings awareness to practices and helps identify improvement (Van Hoecke et al., 2013). An external certification validates the organization's robust organizational processes (Club Excellence, n.d.-b). In turn, this may differentiate the organization from their competition, whether that be with other organizations within or outside the sport. As well, certifying would allow a sport organization to align with a credible brand, potentially strengthening its own image (Club Excellence, n.d.-b).

Conversely, by implementing a mandated certification program, governing organizations may institute greater control and therefore standardize products and services for sport participants, which has potential strengths and drawbacks (Van Hoecke et al., 2013). Additionally, by engaging in the assessment process necessary for the certification process, governing organizations may better understand their member organizations' strengths and deficiencies. Being more attuned to the needs of members may allow governing organizations to be more responsive to meeting their member organizations' needs.

Despite potential benefits, governing organizations should be cognizant of possible drawbacks to mandating certification programs. Volunteers may have to invest large efforts into the training that is required to meet the standards (Perck et al., 2016). Member organizations may feel that the potential benefits are outweighed by the capacity and resources that must be invested (Cope et al., 2014). Governing bodies may be challenged by the amount of support that they are required to invest to support their members in reaching accreditation and reviewing applications. Governing entities may experience strain within their networks as member organizations with vastly different scopes and resources struggle to implement one common model (Edwards & Leadbetter, 2016). Governing organizations may be required to invest significant resources into the management of the program, including the appraisalment of members attempting to reach the standards. Although stakeholders may have to make significant investments in order to experience the success of the certification program, certification programs may be excellent mechanisms for achieving an organization's mission and goals.

2.6 Conclusion

As sport organizations work to respond to the contemporary challenges of the sport sector, they look to creative solutions to meet their needs and the needs of their members. Anecdotal conversation around certification programs suggest that such programs offer significant opportunity to improve operations for sport organizations, but there is presently very little empirical research that demonstrates this to be true. As certification programs become more common within Canada, empirical investigation becomes more necessary. Institutionalism, isomorphic pressures, and institutional learning may provide helpful insight into the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer. Soccer's experience with performance management systems worldwide provides a unique history from which to draw

while analyzing the implementation of Canada Soccer's national Club Licensing Program and the other such systems within Canada's soccer system (Relvas et al., 2010).

2.7 Research Questions

The research will address the following questions:

1. What motivated the adoption of the Club Licensing certification program within national, provincial, and community soccer organizations in Canada?
2. How did the national and provincial soccer organizations position and promote the adoption of certification to the community soccer organizations?
3. What dimensions of organizational capacity were needed and leveraged to engage in certification at the national, provincial, and community levels?
4. How is certification perceived to influence community soccer organizations' abilities to achieve their missions?

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a description of the methodology and methods employed for this study. The chapter begins by describing a basic interpretive qualitative inquiry, the theoretical underpinnings and methodology chosen for this study. The chapter continues with a delineation of the methods: a description of the sample, the data collection methods, and the data analysis methods. The chapter concludes with a description of the ethical considerations for the study.

3.2 Theoretical Underpinning and Methodological Choice

The study employed a basic interpretive qualitative design to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity. Because of my experiences as a practitioner in the sport management industry, I am naturally drawn to the value of practical research and seeking answers to timely organizational questions. I have endeavoured to execute a study that is highly relevant in real-time applicability within the soccer community and hope that my research could eventually be used to inform policy and program decisions.

Therefore, a basic interpretive qualitative inquiry offered variability to design a study that best addressed the study's purpose statement and research questions without being tightly bound to a specific theoretical paradigm (Merriam, 2002). Patton (2015) suggests that "there is a very practical side to qualitative methods that simply involves skillfully asking open-ended questions of people and observing matters of interest in real-world settings to solve problems, improve programs, or develop policies" (p. 154). Basic qualitative inquiry does this without "allegiance to a particular epistemological or philosophical tradition" (Patton, 2015, p. 154). Patton (2015) further suggests that methods can be effectively utilized while separated from their

epistemological and theoretically paradigmatic origins. To achieve the objectives of the study, I used the data collection method of semi-structured interviews which will be further described below.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Participants.

The participants for this study were purposefully sampled, drawn from sport organizations within the Canadian soccer community. My sample was created with organizations from three governance levels, all of whom were presently engaged in the pursuit of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program at the time of the study. The first was the National governing body for soccer in Canada- Canada Soccer, where I contacted and interviewed three key employees. Including the national organization allowed me to better understand the desire to adopt a certification framework throughout the country and the various factors that have been and are being considered as the program is implemented. Second, I interviewed representatives from four PTSOs, including two PTSOs with previous experience with certification programs, and two PTSOs with no previous experience with certification programs. These were identified through conversation with the NSO who made suggestions on which PTSOs to approach and include in the study, given the inclusion criteria. Third, I interviewed representatives from three or four CSOs of varying size from each of the selected provinces/territories, also identified through conversations with and recommendations made by the PTSOs.

For all representatives, I requested to interview whomever the organizations deemed to have the necessary information about their certification programs and the pursuit of certification within their own organization. This included those in positions who were directly related to the

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planning or delivery of the certification programs, such as the technical director, program manager, membership manager, executive director, and/or board president.

3.3.1.1 Participant profile.

Table 1

Participant Profile

Organization	Gender	Position	Approx. Annual Youth Registration	Previously Offered/ Pursued Certification	Category of Licensing Program in Pursuit
NSO 1	Male	Director of Membership		-	-
NSO 1	Male	Program Director		-	-
NSO 1	Male	Technical Director		-	-
PTSO 1	Male	Executive Director		Yes	-
PTSO 1	Male	Technical Director		Yes	-
PTSO 2	Male	Executive Director		Yes	-
PTSO 2	Male	Program Director		Yes	-
PTSO 2	Male	Technical Director		Yes	-
PTSO 3	Male	Technical Director		No	-
PTSO 4	Male	Technical Director		No	-
PTSO 4	Male	Program Director		No	-
CSO 1	Male	Board President	3,600	Yes	NYCL
CSO 2	Male	Head Coach	175	Yes	NYCL
CSO 3	Male	Technical Director	230	Yes	NYCL
CSO 4	Male	Executive Director	2,900	Yes	NYCL
CSO 5	Male	Executive Director	7,000	Yes	NYCL
CSO 6	Male	Programs Manager	5220	Yes	NYCL
CSO 7	Female	Executive Director	600	No	NYCL
CSO 8	Female	Executive Director	4000	No	NYCL
CSO 9	Male	Technical Director	720	No	NYCL
CSO 10	Male	Executive Director	6,000	No	NYCL
CSO 11	Female	Club Administrator	330	No	PSO 1
CSO 12	Male	Board President	350	No	PSO 1
CSO 13	Female	Executive Director	950	No	PSO 2

*NSO = National sport organization; PTSO = Provincial and territorial sport organization; CSO = Community sport organization; NYCL: National youth club licence; PSO 1 = Provincial soccer organization – Level 1; PSO 2 = Provincial soccer organization – Level 2

Table 1 includes the list of participants who were interviewed for this study.

Organization refers to the organization the participants were a part of, the level of the soccer governance system to which the organization belonged, and the organization pseudonym used when participants were directly quoted throughout. *Gender* has been included for informational purposes only and was not used as part of the analysis in this study. *Position* illustrates the type

of paid or volunteer position that each participant held within their organization. In some cases, position titles were generalized to protect anonymity. *Approximate annual youth registration* was provided to help inform the reader about the size of participating CSOs and offer context into their scope relative to the comments included throughout. *Previously offered/pursued certification* outlines which organizations were previously part of certification programs, and those who were not. *Category of licensing program in pursuit* refers to the category of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program that the CSO is presently pursuing at the time of this thesis.

3.3.2 Data collection.

Data for this study was collected from in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted with an interview guide developed based on the literature and refined following the thesis proposal. The questions were open-ended and where necessary, responses were followed up with probe questions meant to further clarify and deepen the discussion (Roulston, 2010). The semi-structured interview format provided some structure for the interview based on the research questions, while still offering flexibility in pursuing discussion that offered valuable insight (Roulston, 2010).

The majority of interviews were conducted one-on-one, with two interviews being conducted with two participants each. All of the interviews except one were conducted over the phone. Interviews were audio recorded and conducted in three phases. The first phase was completed in October 2018 with interviews conducted with the PTSO participants. The second phase was completed in November 2018 with interviews conducted with the CSO participants. The third phase was completed in March 2019 with the Canada Soccer participants. The phases allowed for concurrent analysis of the data so that key findings could be brought forth to direct

the next phase of interviews. Incorporating my preliminary findings into the interviews as probes for discussion with the participants of Canada Soccer resulted in a greater depth of insight and discussion (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Interviewing representatives from the three levels of soccer organizations garnered a variety of insights that was key in fully informing the findings for each of the research questions.

3.3.3 Data analysis.

Data analysis drew on Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) first cycle and second cycle qualitative coding. Data were initially coded into "data chunks" which Miles and colleagues refer to as first cycle coding (2014, p. 73). Within the first cycle of coding, descriptive coding, subcoding, and simultaneous coding were utilized. Descriptive coding is the assignment of a label (e.g., a word, short phrase, and often a noun) to a given passage of data (Miles et al., 2014). Subcoding is assigning "a second-order tag ... after a primary code to detail or enrich the data" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 80). Simultaneous coding assigns one or more codes to data, as necessary, to appropriately reflect the data's applicability to multiple codes (Miles et al., 2014). First cycle codes were developed inductively.

Second cycle coding is the process of coding within the first generated coding cycle. The method that was utilized in this cycle of coding was pattern coding. Pattern coding is a method of grouping the first cycle of codes into a smaller number of categories, themes, or constructs (Miles et al., 2014). Miles and colleagues (2014) suggest that pattern codes are often developed and assigned by categories or themes, causes or explanations, relationships among people, or theoretical constructs. Similar coded items were assigned a pattern code, called leads, and the codes were further examined to find additional subcodes. Second cycle codes were also developed inductively.

Miles and colleagues' (2014) data analysis methods include visually arranging patterns and codes in order to further analyze the data from a different point of view. They suggest writing up the data within a pattern into an analytic memo to assist in clarifying the emergent theme, category, and construct. Matrices and networks are used to further display format options. Matrices are an intersection of two lists, arranged by rows and columns. Networks are a collection of nodes with linkages that display relationships (Miles et al., 2014). I allowed the final selection of data display formats to emerge during and after I have concluded the first and second cycles of coding, utilized all three methods, and developed the data display formats both inductively and deductively while comparing my codes to particular concepts in literature.

3.4 Ethical Considerations & Trustworthiness

Ethical considerations must be made in research. To attend to ethical considerations for this study, I submitted an ethics application to and received approval from the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board. Each participant and organization was given an information letter at the time of initial contact. The consent form was emailed to the participants at least one week in advance, or with as much notice as possible in cases when interviews were scheduled less than one week in advance. I asked the participants to sign the consent form prior to the interview, after I provided them the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had about the process. Both the information letter and the consent form stated that participation was strictly voluntary, that participants could remove themselves and their data from the study up until when data analysis began, and that they may have contacted me, my research supervisor, and/or the ethics review board of the University of Waterloo if they felt inclined. Individual participants were assigned a pseudonym according to the organization they represented, in order to protect their anonymity; the roles they held within the organization were, in some cases, given a generic

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role title so that they would not be identified by their position. Data collected in this study was and will be protected at all times. Any paper documentation was and will continue to be held in a locked cabinet, and electronic documents were and will continue to be kept in password protected files.

In addition to ethical considerations, I attended to trustworthiness. Much of the discussion that occurs about trustworthiness revolves around adequately planning, preparing, executing, and communicating the process of the study and its results (Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004). A trustworthy study is one that has credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Patton (2015) defines credibility as the alignment of the researcher's representation of the findings with the participants' insights with regard to the phenomenon. To attend to credibility, I utilized the well-established research methods of semi-structured interviews, developed a strong understanding of the culture of the organizations from which I have drawn my participants, utilized iterative questioning to ensure I was receiving well balanced responses to my interview questions, and established credibility as a researcher from my experiences as a practitioner in sport governance, all of which are identified as key criteria that promote credibility (Shenton, 2004). Transferability is the degree to which a researcher provides sufficient information to allow the reader to generalize the findings to similar cases (Patton, 2015). I attended to transferability by endeavouring to clearly describe my methods and research process so that others may understand the boundaries of the study, and worked to develop a thick description of the phenomenon through my data collection and analysis (Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004) states that dependability is the ability of the researcher to report a thorough understanding of "the research design and its implementation, the operational detail of data gathering, and the reflective appraisal of the project" (pp 71-72). Dependability was not

attended to as strongly in this study as the other types of trustworthiness. Finally, confirmability is the assurance that the research's findings have been borne out of the research, and not out of the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. To attend to confirmability, I have identified the researcher's position, attended to it during the study, and reflected on its place in the research after the study, which I attempted to do to the best of my ability (Shenton, 2004).

3.4.1 Position of the researcher.

I hold a diploma and an undergraduate degree in the fields of leisure studies, particularly in recreation and tourism management, and sport and recreation studies. My previous work experiences include positions within multi-sport games (national and international) as both a staff and volunteer, and provincial sport organizations as a practitioner. I am also a certified referee and coach. As someone who has experienced sport in various roles, at various levels, I have seen the importance of strong organizational operations and its affect on participants' experiences. My professional and academic interests lie in assisting sport organizations with strengthening their organizational governance and administrative operations to offer the best participation experience possible to participants, coaches, referees, volunteers, and administrators. For that reason, my research interests focus on sport organization governance, management, and policy, which culminates in the conducted research program. I anticipated that my previous knowledge and experiences would influence this research study, and I have reflected extensively as I have encountered this influence.

As I have limited experience with conducting empirical research, I have worked closely with my research supervisor and committee member as needed. I am confident that their guidance resulted in a stronger research study than what would have otherwise been possible.

4 Findings

The findings of this research revealed many illuminating factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity.

This chapter first describes the origins of the Club Licensing Program and provides context for its current implementation. The major findings from each research question are discussed then in four sections. The findings which support research questions one, two, and four are described inductively, although sensitized to the relevant concepts described in the literature review, while the findings which support research question three are described deductively, using the identified multidimensional framework of organizational capacity to present that section's findings. The chapter concludes with commentary that bridges into the study's discussion.

4.1.1 Origins and summary of the licensing program.

NSO participants shared that certification, and its soccer-specific variants, seems to have originated around 2005, roughly 15 years ago. Similarly-structured and -principled standards-based programs emerged from UEFA and FIFA around the same point in time, with the standards-based programs focused predominantly towards professional clubs and their youth academies. These certification programs were meant to bring greater uniformity throughout the governance, operations, programming and sport delivery of each club within their given systems.

CONCACAF developed a similar program shortly thereafter, to “implement ... in our region so that we could have some standards set based around their club competitions- the Champions League competition and the CONCACAF Nation Shield” (NSO1). An NSO staff member reported that, in turn, the champions of the two competitions would “have the potential to advance to the FIFA World Club Competition” and therefore, “what we needed to do was

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make sure that we were adhering to the minimum standards that they were rolling out” (NSO1). The success of these programs, in part, led to Canada Soccer’s consideration of such a program within their own jurisdiction.

More recently, MLS instituted similar standards within its league, which will come into effect in 2020. An NSO participant shared that the resulting impact will be that players who come out of the amateur soccer clubs that meet the required standards in Canada will qualify for domestic player status throughout the league (domestic player status was previously available to players from the United States throughout the entire league, but players from Canada only received domestic players status when they played the four Canadian-based teams in the league). The change in Canadians qualifying for domestic player status throughout the entire MLS will increase the number of Canadian athletes that can be held on the rosters of each of the league’s teams because they will no longer be considered international players. Over time, the increase of Canadian players playing in professional environments is likely to increase the overall quality of players in Canada.

Notwithstanding the implementation of the certification programs within the greater soccer community, Canada Soccer’s internal environment was also part of the contributing circumstances that facilitated the consideration of a similar program for its own membership. As discussed earlier in the literature review, several of the provincial and territorial associations had previously implemented certification programs. The lack of uniformity across the country, as well as within provinces and even within individual cities and regions, resulted in disorganization within the soccer landscape, and lack of clarity of the pathway for end users (participants and their parents/guardians). NSO staff held the opinion that CSOs lacked the understanding of their role and how to best execute that role, and that this contributed to both the

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disorganization and the lack of clarity for the pathway: “Our clubs don't know what they don't know. They live in a very myopic world where they're not really sure what the reality is, and they're not really sure what other organizations look like around the country” (NSO1). The Canada Soccer participants felt that they required an instrument that could be utilized to improve the quality of soccer within the country, and this instrument could also clarify how a CSO was supposed to operate. As an NSO staff member summarized, the program is meant “to create more alignment and have people moving in the same direction and ... raise the quality and the standards within all youth soccer organization[s] so that everybody can get better” (NSO1). For these reasons, Canada Soccer began to craft and implement a licensing program for their own purpose. For the purposes of this thesis, licensing and certification will be used interchangeably.

The decision to implement a certification program came after discussion that occurred over “a period of months” (NSO1). After the decision was made to implement, Canada Soccer hired the program director to manage the program, who began researching and planning. In conducting that research, NSO staff reviewed all of the certification programs operating in Canada, the soccer-based certification programs operating internationally, as well as “information that [they] could find from other industries that were implementing standards-based approaches” (NSO1). In addition, they reviewed academic literature relating to creating standards in amateur organizations, fun integration theory, and complexity theory. The NSO began engaging the PTSOs in consultation about specific aspects of the program two months later, and engaged the CSOs in consultation six months after that. The program experienced some metamorphosis as feedback was collected and new concepts came into play, and evolved into the structure presented in this study.

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We were very collaborative in how we built the criteria; we were very collaborative in how we built the approach; we gave our provinces and territories multiple opportunities to provide feedback on everything that we were doing. Which took a lot longer than we would have liked, but we feel it's allowed us to build a much stronger program, because everyone has taken ownership of it. It's not our program, per se, it's everyone's program. (NSO1)

About 16 months later (July 2018), regulations passed at the board level and the program documentation was released publicly (NSO1). Small adaptations continue to be made as the program enters the implementation phase and they see their planning in action.

The Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program is “a new program designed to classify, develop, and appraise member organizations from across the country” (NSO1). The primary goals of the program are to: set clearly defined standards and expectations for member organizations; recognize excellence in the soccer community; raise the level of all soccer organizations throughout in Canada; and, drive change in the soccer system (Canada Soccer, 2018b). The program is loosely “based on the CONCACAF club license” (NSO1). The program is structured around seven principles: (1) prioritize fun; (2) emphasize physical, mental, and emotional safety; (3) provide developmentally-appropriate, high quality programs; (4) maximize attraction, holistic program development, progression, and long-term engagement; (5) focus on participant-centred decision making; (6) foster accessible, inclusive and welcoming environments; and, (7) act as a good corporate and community citizen (Canada Soccer, 2018b).

The Program has four categories:

At the Canada Soccer level, we've confirmed two categories: the standards for quality soccer, which is our base level, and the National Youth Club license, which is our highest

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level. In between that we have some flexibility within our provinces and territories to move forward with what works in their context, in terms of readiness, size, scope, etc. So, they potentially could have nothing in between those two in some of the smaller areas [or] they could have up to two levels between those two, which would make it a total of four levels. (NSO1)

Within those four categories, the program “has four pillars that are essentially linked to that CONCACAF pro license” (NSO1). These pillars are governance, administration, infrastructure and technical. Each pillar has a number of requisite characteristics and behaviours which vary according to the four categories of the program (ex. ‘has basic management and operational structures’ is one of the administrative pillar characteristics that must be demonstrated for the Quality Soccer Provider category). For the purpose of this thesis, the characteristics and behaviours will be referred to as standards (see Appendices I, J, K, and L for the complete listing of standards under each of the Program’s categories).

Table 2

Number of Standards That Must be Demonstrated Under Each Pillar for Each Licensing Program Category

Categories	Pillars			
	Governance	Administration	Infrastructure	Technical
Quality Soccer Provider	5	3	1	3
Provincial/Territorial Youth Licence 1	9	10	3	11
Provincial/Territorial Youth Licence 2	11	14	6	27
National Youth Club Licence	13	18	9	38

The program is comprised of three foundational elements- classification, development, and appraisal. While classification is the traditional concept of labelling organizations according to their ability to deliver against the certification’s standards, the Club Licensing Program adds

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elements of offering support and assistance to soccer clubs to help them develop, and “measuring alignment to the principles” (NSO1). The appraisal is meant to provide “organizations with clear feedback against the key performance indicators aligned to the stated principles and desired behaviours and outcomes” (Canada Soccer, 2018c). Once organizations have achieved licensing with the program, they will be able to access the program’s benefits. These benefits are built around a four-corner approach: reward (specific rewards will depend on the level of licence achieved), recognition (public recognition on the NSO and PTSOs’ websites), differentiation (the ability to separate the organization from its competition), and access to competition (access to certain competitive opportunities that would otherwise not be accessible) (Canada Soccer, 2018c). Commenting on the foundational elements, the an NSO staff member stated:

the idea of raising the level of everyone in the system and aligning it to the good principles and guiding the positive behaviors that we want to see in sport is really the trick shot or the benefit that we're most focused on within the licensing program. (NSO1)

As mentioned in the literature review, the program was designed to be a national initiative, led by Canada Soccer, with all provinces and territories championing the Club Licensing Program within their own jurisdictions. However, when asked if the Club Licensing Program was a mandate, an NSO staff member responded:

‘Mandate’ is a word that I don't like to use, because it implies that I'm making you do something you don't want to do. I'm a much bigger believer in the word ‘educate’. In circumstances where perhaps there was disagreement, or there was opposition, we try to educate and continue to try to educate the provinces as to why this is beneficial for them, and why it's beneficial for their members. (NSO1)

This comment reflects the NSO's position on how they hope to deliver the program. PTSOs' and CSOs' perceptions of the program will be explored throughout the study.

The discussion in this subsection has illustrated the context in the greater soccer landscape and the factors within Canada Soccer's jurisdiction that instigated Canada Soccer's pursuit of a certification program. As well, the summary of the Club Licensing Program's goals, principles, categories, and pillars establish the foundation to next discuss the motivations for implementation from the national, provincial and territorial soccer organization's perspectives, and the motivations for adoption from the community soccer organizations' perspectives.

4.2 Motivations for Adoption

The findings outlined in the following section provide insight into the study's first research question: *What motivated the implementation and adoption of the Club Licensing certification program within national, provincial, and community soccer organizations in Canada?* The section first outlines the themes uncovered within the NSO's motivations for implementing a national Club Licensing program, then presents the PTSOs' motivations for implementing the national program within their own jurisdictions, and concludes with the CSOs' motivations for pursuing a license with the Club Licensing Program.

4.2.1 NSO motivations for adoption.

Canada Soccer had three main motivations for the development and implementation of the Club Licensing program: changing the culture, standardization and accountability, and finding a way to strengthen the sport, when one size does not fit all.

4.2.1.1 Changing the culture.

First, study participants identified the Canadian soccer landscape as unique. An NSO staff member stated:

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We've got a unique culture, we've got a unique soccer system, and we've got a unique society. ... The context of Canadian soccer is so broad and so different from, you know, coast to coast to coast and even within centers. The organizations or types of organizations that are involved are very different. ... Just taking something that worked in Germany or England or Belgium and dropping it into Canada, it's probably not going to work as well here 'cause our situation is completely different. (NSO1)

Study participants expressed that the development of that unique soccer culture over time had evolved so that those who deliver soccer (and perhaps greater sport in general) place emphasis on the wrong factors.

You might go and look at some of your neighboring clubs, who might have some good players, as well, and see if you can convince them [to] be a part of your team because that's going to give you the best chance to succeed. Whereas, alternatively, if I told you the way we're going to decide who the best clubs are, [is] the [club(s)] that bring the most players into the game, the one that keeps them playing the longest, the one that actually moves those better players on to higher levels of play and progresses them to different opportunities within the game, and the club that transitions them into other meaningful roles, you as a club, if those are your measures, you're probably going to behave differently. ...If, instead, we're measuring some of these other pieces, then that becomes what matters. And that's going to guide people to behave a little bit differently. So that's part of the goal of structuring the program in this way is that we actually start to influence and change people's behaviors. (NSO1)

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The staff from the NSO felt it was time to take action and expressed that their overarching motivation for implementing a certification program was the desire to ‘change the game’.

This is what we're going to try to do. We're going to try to change the game. And that's what I signed up for when I started with Canada Soccer [], and this project in particular. Let's change the way sport's delivered in this country and get it either back to, or for the first time, depending on how you look at what we've done in the past, to being principles-based and being about what matters. (NSO1)

The desire to change the culture within the sport of soccer laid the foundation from which the club licensing program was built.

So, the soccer industry in Canada is a multi million-dollar industry. And unfortunately, until this program existed, there were no real standards in place for what programs were being run and what programs were being offered. We felt it was very important for us to guide organizations towards best practice so that they can become the best version of themselves and deliver the best soccer programs possible for their membership. We're really trying to bring some order and some quality assurance to a landscape that currently doesn't have any. (NSO1)

4.2.1.2 Standardization & accountability.

To build on the previous subsection, Canada Soccer's second motivation for the implementation of the Club Licensing Program was the desire to standardize soccer operations across the country. “A part of it is to support putting order around everything that we're doing” (NSO1). This motivation was understood throughout the soccer system. A staff member for one PTSO stated, “they want the development of players across the country to be in a standardized

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format” (PTSO2), while a staff member for a second PTSO stated that the goal was “to have standards, and to have targets to shoot for, and to have guidelines to follow, and ways to measure if we are or aren’t on track, and to have it be a consistent thing across the country” (PTSO3). A staff member for a third province shared that without standards, “it becomes somewhat subjective and that’s where it’s very difficult to move anything forward because it just becomes about people’s opinions and [a] subjective framework to deal on process” (PTSO4).

The CSOs too identified that standardization appeared to be a main driver for the NSO. The board member for one CSO observed that the standards applied to different areas of a club’s operations: “my understanding of the idea behind it is to try to set some standards and maybe get some uniformity across the country. There’s obviously a technical component, there’s a governance component, there’s an administrative component” (CSO2). As well, the staff member for one of the CSOs stated that Canada Soccer’s motivation was

having everybody under the same - or in the same program - the same standards. So, when you’re evaluating one club to the next, if you’re using the same criteria, it’s a lot easier to. ... I don’t know if they want to evaluate or compare clubs, in that sense, but at least now you’re making that comparison based on the same information. (CSO4)

A staff member for another CSO concluded that standardizing programs across the country would benefit the end users, the soccer participants. “They’re just trying to get some consistency across the country and improve what members across the country are getting from their individual organizations” (CSO11). Using the certification program to establish consistency in the programming and delivery of a club across the country, from coast to coast to coast, was understood to be Canada Soccer’s motivation by all participants interviewed.

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The NSO staff expressed that implementing standards that reflected the organization's newly established principles was a key consideration in the development of the Licensing Program. The PTSOs' and CSOs' buy in to the program would facilitate the desired culture change discussed above. However, the NSO staff understood that establishing principles and standards would not suffice; incorporating a component of accountability would be a key element in fostering a culture change. For NSO staff, the standardization of the sport was less important than the outcomes that would be achieved from standardizing, such as organizational and sport system development, and quality assurance.

I think re-establishing and measuring what matters and re-establishing what sport should stand for is another element of licensing. It's not the licensing program in particular, but the way we've approached it is to try to use the criteria and the principles to drive positive behaviors, rather than it being a strictly classification exercise. (NSO1)

An NSO staff member stressed, "we are there to help organizations hold themselves accountable to the best practices that we'd like to see put in place" (NSO1). A second staff member with the NSO made similar comments:

If we, as a soccer community, can get to the point that we have a culture that's aligned to those principles, now we hold each other accountable. So, if a coach or an organization isn't participant-centered, or isn't prioritizing fun, or isn't accessible, inclusive and welcoming, we're going to hold each other accountable, because we know that that's the principle that we want in sport. (NSO1)

For the staff of the NSO, the standards, the principles, and being accountable to those principles were inextricably linked.

4.2.1.3 Strengthening the sport, but one size does not fit all.

The third motivation in establishing the program was to strengthen each organization that delivers soccer, across the country, at every level. The NSO's staff member stated, "the primary driver is to help our organizations get better at what they do. That has always remained at the forefront of our thinking in doing this." (NSO1). A board member for one of the CSOs stated:

They'd like to see a better support system to be able to help the clubs build a better program so that we, number one, are retaining kids, but number two, we're growing the game so that we are able to actually give a proper pathway structure to the players.

(CSO12)

The motivation to strengthen the sport was well understood by all study participants and shared by the PTSOs and CSOs as well.

However, study participants expressed concern at the challenge that would come with standardizing 'strengthening the sport' across the country's diverse soccer landscape. The staff member from one PTSO said, "we are dealing with a large scope of organizations, from recreational all the way to high performance" (PTSO2), while a CSO staff member felt that CSOs with smaller registration numbers would have greater challenges with pursuing their desired license than CSOs with larger registration numbers (and by extension, larger communities):

It's going to have to be tweaked in a way for different sized centers, in my opinion. You know, you look at something like Brampton or Oakville where they've got 20,000 players, well yeah maybe that can happen but from, you look at the Okanagan, you know, a club of 200 kids, let's say. To do some of the stuff that they're asking ... could be a major killer of a club. (CSO3)

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Similarly, participants also felt that there were regional differences that would make the process challenging. “[Canada Soccer is going to have to] figure out what works best in each region because something that works in Ontario may not work in Saskatchewan and may not work in BC, may work in Alberta, may work wherever else.” (CSO3). Study participants whose organizations resided in smaller, more rural parts of the country believed that the program would have more success in larger, more urban centres.

I feel like it's very fit for a province such as Ontario, but it's not ‘a one size fits all’ just yet, because in Ontario and bigger provinces, you have the populations there, and you ... can throw in stuff like this because you'll have the clubs that will still be okay. (CSO13)

Staff with Canada Soccer understood the need for the program to be personalized, despite its standardization, and explained that the program would find the balance between the two.

We’ve kind of used it to identify what type of soccer organizations currently exist in our country and then to classify organizations based on where they fit into the soccer ecosystem, and then support them to try and become the best versions of themselves. It's not designed for everyone to be exactly the same. But it's designed to take into consideration the regional realities that exist in the soccer ecosystem in our country and try and support organizations to become better at what they do. (NSO1)

A second NSO staff member shared a similar sentiment. “What we're trying to do is create principles, and then within that organizations will select their own methods or approaches based on their own context” (NSO1). Canada’s diverse landscape and unique soccer culture challenged the NSO to develop a nationally standardized certification program, but the NSO’s motivations of creating a culture change through the usage of standardization, while maintaining some flexibility in how the program is applied in different jurisdictions and holding people

accountable to the foundational principles, allowed the NSO to craft a program that exactly met their needs.

4.2.2 PTSO motivations for adoption: leadership & system alignment.

The PTSOs' main motivation for implementing the national licensing program within their own jurisdictions was to experience leadership and system alignment. Within this motivation, several nuances emerged, presented below as subthemes of alignment. PTSOs wanted Canada Soccer to assume leadership in this area; doing so would align soccer delivery from coast to coast to coast, which would help to clarify the player pathway, both symbolically and technically. PTSO participants also believed that by aligning to the NSO, it would change the relationship between PTSOs and CSOs, an outcome they desired. It was also perceived that PTSOs would have future capability to leverage the newly aligned system to their advantage.

Canada Soccer assuming leadership. PTSO participants were pleased that Canada Soccer was 'taking charge' in an area where they had not previously taken a leadership position. "What appealed the most was the fact that Canada Soccer is taking interest and leadership in this area" (PTSO2). CSOs participants concurred: "Many people across our country have long spoken about the need for change and Canada Soccer has taken, I think, a leadership position and tried to drive change" (CSO9). One of the PTSO's staff members asserted that the NSO had a responsibility to lead in the development of soccer organizations in the country. "As a national governing body, Canada Soccer, they have a responsibility to ensure that there's quality soccer experiences, for ... all the provinces and territories and that's what I think they're endeavoring to do" (PTSO3). A different PTSO staff member expressed that it was important for the NSO to regain leadership in an area where the PTSOs had previously led.

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Probably the best, sorry, the most important, is alignment. We're a province that has risen out ahead of this for a number of years now so for us it's finally to have alignment with our national governing body. If it was done properly your national governing body would have come out with this stuff before the provinces did. (PTSO2)

Alignment coast to coast to coast. PTSO participants were also pleased that Canada Soccer's new leadership with this program would bring alignment to the soccer landscape, not only vertically, but also horizontally, from coast to coast to coast.

Especially with it coming from the national body, rather than it just coming from the provincial body, I think people may buy into it a little bit more ... so I think that's going to have a positive impact, or I hope it does. And I hope it raises the standards for everybody in the province. I hope it creates a better overall soccer environment for every club. (CSO4)

Ultimately, the improvement of soccer delivery would result in a better program for end users like players, parents, coaches and referees. A CSO staff member shared her perspective on how the Club Licensing Program would influence soccer delivery: "the clubs who declare are setting the standard and maintaining that standard to make sure that they're offering all of the members the highest quality of program they can, across the board" (CSO11). It was perceived that coast to coast to coast alignment would improve soccer delivery across the country.

Pathway clarification (symbolically & technically). A staff member from one of the PTSOs spoke at length about how the Club Licensing Program would be beneficial in defining the pathway for technical sport development, and how clarifying the pathway would drive multiple outcomes.

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We hope that by recognizing and by giving standards to organizations from top to bottom, from the most sophisticated all the way into the very recreational ones, that we can establish a system that they will recognize how they work with each other. ... Once there is a full recognition that organizations within the province are the ones filtering players into what we call the provincial program, the organizations that are operating underneath that layer can start recognizing and start forming affiliations for the movement of players. And I think that will be the greatest achievement from the [Club Licensing Program] for us, is that it will give a clear understanding where organizations fit within the pathway. ... So, the consolidation of the pathway, the organizational [aspect] will be important, and that will lead, as well, into a better competition stream, or a better competition structure. (PTSO2)

Defining where clubs sit within the player pathway would, first, clarify the player pathway. This outcome, in itself, was appealing to PTSOs. Moreover, the clarification of a club's place in that pathway would provide clubs with perspective on how their program delivery impacts the player pathway. In turn, this would offer clubs the ability to see potential networks for building a stronger pathway- also particularly appealing for PTSO participants.

Alignment to the NSO. PTSO participants expressed that aligning to the NSO was very important to their organizations. A PTSO staff member shared:

The biggest one for us, across the whole program, would probably be collaboration with our national association. ... This is the first time where we're having ongoing dialogue around rolling out a national initiative that is there to hopefully support soccer and improve soccer, because that's ultimately what we're all trying to do. So, I think collaboration is something that our association really values in this process. (PTSO1)

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In speaking about his organization's existing certification program, a second PTSO staff member concurred that alignment to the national body was valuable:

Since we already had [our certification program], it was a way of us to share and to align and adjust. It was good to see the rest of the country moving this way because as [we were] sort of the first out in this and had strict policies around this to change the game, you're often by yourself. And now that Canada Soccer is doing it and is aligned with us, it's hard for your members to wiggle out of the trap door and say 'Oh, you guys don't know what you're talking about.' Alignment of our association in the governance model is very powerful. (PTSO2)

By aligning and collaborating with Canada Soccer on this program, PTSOs believed they would receive validation for their previous efforts. Additionally, the PTSOs felt that alignment to the national body would allow them to leverage Canada Soccer's power to align their CSOs to the program.

Changing the relationships between PTSOs & CSOs. Another element of the PTSOs' motivation of leadership and system alignment was that they anticipated that their relationships with the CSOs would evolve and improve.

It's more of a passing the baton a little bit, where now Canada Soccer takes the lead in that program and we provide the support for organizations to attain that level. It's an interesting position that we are in right now. It's something that, that's not new to us. It will be business as usual in terms of how we relate to the program, but it will probably be a different perspective based on how Canada Soccer becomes now the granter of the licence and not us. (PTSO2)

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The expectation that the relationships between the PTSOs and CSOs would evolve results from offloading the ‘policing’ of the CSOs from the PTSOs onto the NSO.

Having that Canada Soccer logo associated with that program makes it extremely, well, it makes it much easier to apply and implement on the ground in the provinces because our role becomes more of a support and education role versus the policing role. Because it’s Canada Soccer, they can be perceived as the police, whereas in the past we’ve been perceived as the police. And then that relationship is not positive to move anything forward. (PTSO4)

PTSO participants expressed that they’d be seen more as supports to CSOs to help them achieve their desired categories of licence, instead of seen as the gate keepers to granting or denying that licence.

Leveraging system alignment. Although the PTSO participants didn’t speak to this, both NSO participants and CSO participants were of the opinion that the PTSOs would find the information they obtained from the Club Licensing Program to be a motivation in pursuing the program within their own jurisdictions.

They're going to get a better understanding of the mechanisms they need to put in place for membership so they can then execute on supporting their membership. Again, I always go back to clarity. It's going to provide clarity for the provinces as to what's really going on in their neck of the woods and how they can support them. (NSO1)

While an NSO staff member stated the information would assist PTSOs to better support their members, CSO participants suggested that PTSOs would be able to use the increased clarity to leverage desired outcomes: “It [will be] easier to determine who is where and what level the

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clubs are at so they know what demands they can put on different clubs, and it will help for them when they're implementing new programs and so forth" (CSO8).

Overall, several aspects of leadership and system alignment appealed to PTSOs. Aligning the Canadian soccer system under Canada Soccer, within provinces, across provinces, and from the local to the national environment was seen to benefit the provincial and territorial soccer organizations by clarifying the player pathway. This alignment would allow the relationships between PTSOs and CSOs to evolve from a relationship of enforcement to a relationship more of support. Finally, PTSOs would be able to mobilize the information gleaned from the implementation of the Canada Soccer Licensing Program to further improve the soccer system under their jurisdictions.

4.2.3 CSO motivations for adoption.

The NSO had two motivations for adoption, the PTSOs had one; CSOs, however, had four different motivations for pursuing the adoption of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. CSO participants felt that the program offered a standardized method from which they could be compared to other clubs across the country. Moreover, CSO participants perceived that they would receive recognition from key stakeholders for achieving their desired levels of licence with the program, and that achieving the licence would legitimize their past and present efforts. As well, CSO participants anticipated improvements in delivery, on and off the field, as a result of completing the standards required to achieve licensing. Finally, although only a small number of CSO participants held the view they had no other choice but to pursue licensing with the program. Each of these motivations will now be discussed in greater detail.

4.2.3.1 Measurement by 'the same stick'.

The first motivation that appealed to CSO participants was that they and their competitors would be 'measured by the same stick'. CSOs thought it was important to rank themselves against other clubs across the country to get a sense of where they stood in relation to their competitors.

For the clubs, it's very much about getting a better understanding of themselves and getting an understanding of where they, not necessarily rank, but where they categorize themselves with respect to other programs around the country that operate similar programs to them. (NSO1)

The national Licensing Program would offer that ability, where provincial certification programs could not before.

BC and Quebec had standards-based programs before, but it wasn't the same as Ontario. So, if you're not asking for the same information, asking the same questions, how can you relate one to the other? So, I think for them it hopefully will ... create that consistency throughout the province, so when you're creating those standards or evaluating those standards, it's a lot easier to do when you're all evaluating from the same criteria. (CSO4)

Being measured by the same standards was especially important for CSOs when being compared to those who were not under the Canada Soccer umbrella.

Soccer delivery is now a crowded marketplace where you have, not only community clubs operating, you have academies, you have clubs within academies, you have non-registered operations that are not part of the sanctioned soccer world. And so [the PTSOs'] ability to want to get all participants being members of sanctioned soccer is a

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real challenge. ... [It should] reduce a lot of those people believing that they are something that they're not because now there's a system that is telling them what they are and what they are not, for lack of better words. (CSO6)

Participants also stated that being measured by the same standards would discourage CSOs from making false claims about the quality of programming they offer in order to attract new players.

There is, in the soccer world, a lot of people that claim to be things that, you know, they may not be, in order to drive registrations and opportunities within their programming. So, it gives us a chance to be able to confirm based on standards, and based on context of what they're actually doing, where they fit within that system instead of it just being taken at their word that 'we're the best developer of youth soccer'. You may be, but with no criteria to determine what that looks like, it's just somebody's word and somebody's idea and concept and then most of the people that are willing to say that out loud are probably not what they say they are. (NSO1)

A PTSO staff member suggested that the licensing program might clarify positioning for CSOs who genuinely thought they were offering quality programming.

There's going to be others that, frankly, they need to know they're not doing the job that they're suggesting that they're doing, and so do the parents that are part of their organization. ... They're not living up to the standards that they're suggesting that they are. It's false advertising. (PTSO3)

By being measured by the same criteria, the staff member of one CSO suggested that they would be able to use the differentiation from other clubs to their advantage:

We may not be that club if what you're looking for is 10 year-olds to be driven to win, 10 and 11 year-olds not receiving equal playing time, a 9 year-old who only plays in goal or

only plays up front. We might not be the club. And that's okay. But I think if nothing else, I'm excited that it becomes a clear differentiator in those conversations. It's something that will help to define why our experience will be different than club X, Y, or Z in our region. (CSO9)

Thus, the implementation of the national Club Licensing Program offered CSOs the ability to assess where they operate in comparison to other clubs, both inside and outside of the system, as well as the opportunity to use that information to differentiate themselves from other clubs.

4.2.3.2 Legitimacy among key stakeholders.

CSO participants expressed that a key motivation for pursuing licensing with the Club Licensing Program was the legitimacy they would gain with key stakeholders. For participants, the recognition they would receive from their provincial and territorial associations was of high importance. One CSO staff member shared: “It is a bit of a status thing, as well, for us to be able to brag that we meet these standards, you know, we have that badge of approval from the governing body (CSO8)”, while another CSO staff member exclaimed: “We want to be, you want to be the one that is promoted by [your provincial/territorial body]” (CSO13).

CSO participants were hoping to gain more legitimacy with their membership. “I hope that we become more of a professionalized organization. And I hope with that we really gain a lot of trust and confidence in our membership, and with that, the membership grows” (CSO13). For one CSO staff member, achieving their desired level of licence would mean that they would receive validation that the philosophy they had been working under for years was worthwhile:

Quite frankly, I think what attracts our club most is the first principle that's outlined by Canada Soccer, which is the prioritization of fun. We've long been pushing the realization that we can't look at youth sport through the lens of an adult. We need to look

at it through, instead, the eyes of the player- what players need, and again, Canada Soccer uses language like ‘player centric decision making’. We want to see processes as being more important than outcomes. So those things for us are really important. ... Really for us, it’s legitimising what we have been doing. So, it just seems like a perfect fit for us to go after the license. (CSO9)

A third stakeholder with which CSO participants also wanted to gain legitimacy was the general public. A CSO board member shared:

I think that the awareness of our club will go up. ... Within our own organization, within the soccer community, and within the general public. And when I say general public, I mean families that may just be community members and not involved with soccer but have some sort of sports interest, or some sort of kid interest, or some sort of community interest. (CSO1)

The board member went on to share that it was his board’s desire to be seen as a quality organization by both the public and other sport organizations in their community. Being viewed as a credible soccer organization that offered high quality programming by their governing body, their membership, and the greater community was important to study participants.

4.2.3.3 Strengthen organizational development.

CSO participants anticipated that they would experience both organizational development and sport system development. As well, CSOs were excited about the benefits and trickle-up effects that would strengthen the ways that CSOs operate.

Organizational development. One CSO board member shared that he hoped for increased professionalism: “I think that our staff will gain a greater and broader awareness of the issues around developing a progressive, and I use this word with some caution, professionally managed

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community nonprofit” (CSO1). Interestingly, one CSO staff member shared a slightly different insight. He felt that many clubs didn’t realize that by meeting the standards of the Program’s categories, those policies, procedures, and/or actions would bring inherent benefits and outcomes as well.

I think some of the outcomes, you know, it's a bit of a challenge because the outcomes can be, you've enhanced your policies, your best practice, you've implemented these things, and perhaps you didn't know that you need them until you actually do need them. (CSO6)

Canada Soccer’s staff concurred. One of the staff commented that he expected it would “help drive sustainability” within organizations by building consistent organizational practices (NSO1).

Sport system development. CSO participants anticipated that they would have increased ability to develop players as a result of achieving their desired levels of licence, and found that to be attractive. “I think it’s to get the players at the highest level they possibly can, and try to get more, everybody on the same page as far as developing players” (CSO8). A CSO staff member believed that meeting the licence standards would offer them increased competitive opportunities in the future: “It keeps doors open to allow us to run programs that we would like to run, that we may not necessarily be running at this point in time” (CSO12).

Participants also suggested that a by-product of strengthened sport system development would be Canada’s national teams performing better on the international stage.

I think it's hoped that the licens[ing] program will help raise the standards around player development and the outcome will be, participation rates will translate into better

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performance in terms of pushing players up the professional pathway and ultimately have the national teams performing better on the world stage. (CSO1)

It was widely accepted that strengthening the sport's system would improve the entire soccer pathway, from the youngest player to the adult player at the highest level. While there was some debate about the role that CSOs had in the development of national team players, study participants agreed that improved international performance was something that was desired by all. As one participant summarized: "The same ideas, the same philosophy, maybe some consistency in clubs across Canada, and try to get more players into the national program as well" (CSO8).

Benefits that come with being certified. Many CSO participants spoke optimistically about the benefits and the trickle-up effects they would receive from becoming certified from the Club Licensing Program. One CSO board member was optimistic that the program would result in greater connections amongst clubs across the country: "I think that we [will] broaden our network of contacts with likeminded, progressive professionals in the game across the country. That would be my hope anyways" (CSO1). Other CSO participants were excited for access to resources and templates, equipment, grants and/or other funding. One CSO staff member felt it was critical for the benefits to be appropriately scaled according to each of the program's four categories' necessary requirements, in order for the benefits to make a meaningful impact for the organizations pursuing those licences.

It's wonderful to get your sticker that says that you are categorized or classified as this level. But if the support and interactions that you have with the governing body are not in line with the needs of those associations at those levels, and providing resources to help their development based on where they're generally going to be at, then it's going to

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create a baseline but it's not actually going to really help with that, that sort of growth in scale with what your organization is, right? For us, you know, although we're 6000 members, growth is important to us. But it's a different type of growth, perhaps, then somebody that's operating in rural Saskatchewan. (CSO6)

PTSOs were hopeful that CSOs would experience positive effects in improving experiences for club volunteers, as they had witnessed the challenges their members experienced.

I think [it would be great] to see some trends in retention of those people that are responsible for leadership within the context of their organizational community club. I think it's a vicious wheel as, I've said many times, you feel like you're on the hamster wheel, and good people end up getting off because they have to live in a world where it is very subjective and people's agendas are on the table (PTSO4)

Similarly, a CSO staff member was enthused that her organization had the potential positive outcome of retaining volunteers:

[The program offers the ability] to make sure you're offering your members a club that functions well, that has good organization, make[s] sure the players are safe and adhering to safety requirements for the players, as well. Good succession management for volunteers who are coming down the pipe, and basically, I mean, you can have great coaching, you can have great teams and players, but if the club isn't functioning well, then the whole thing could fall apart very quickly. (CSO11)

While this administrator commented on succession management for volunteers, she also mentioned many aspects of an organization's holistic management. In fact, a majority of CSO participants shared similar sentiments, hoping that they would experience holistic organizational development in many facets of operations, including building a stronger structural base from

which to increase organizational capacity, gaining access to more resources, and creating safer and higher quality program environments, resulting in increased participant retention.

4.2.3.4 Pressure to adhere.

While CSOs spoke extensively of the first four motivations, some CSOs were quick to point out that they were not pursuing licence with the Club Licensing Program out of interest as much as because they felt that they had to and had ‘no other choice’. When commenting on how his CSO responded, one CSO’s staff member reported: “So I think we responded to it and felt, okay, this is something that we have to do and we need to do rather than we want to do this” (CSO2). For some, the perceived necessity came from CSOs’ governing bodies, as was the case with this board member whose CSO was previously part of a standards-based program:

To be frank, as a ... club [in a high-performance league], we weren't really given a choice. We had to be ... licensed. And I think that that's a salient point in the study. The certification programs do not arrive at the clubs, the clubs don't engage in these programs, in my humble opinion, so much so out of choice. As a ... club [in a high-performance league], it was a mandate from the governing body that we had to have our [certification] ... in order to continue to participate in the league. (CSO1)

Similar comments were echoed by a staff member of a CSO who hadn’t previously been in a certification program. When asked what aspects of the program appealed to their organization, her response was:

Cynically, none of it. But in terms of why we did it, again, because we want to make sure we're in the system rather than out of the system. Because it will help our programs in terms of player recruitment or retention. Because without it, we're probably dead. (CSO7)

Her primary concern, however, was that she felt it was necessary to keep up with her organization's competitors, plus access the competition opportunities and other benefits available to licence holders.

4.2.4 Summary of Themes – Research Question 1

On the whole, CSO participants referenced several of the motivations discussed in this subsection when speaking of their reasons for pursuing licensing with the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. CSOs discussed that they desired to be differentiated from their competitors by being 'measured with the same stick' and that they would appreciate recognition from their PTSO, members, and the community for achieving licensing. CSO participants also spoke of their aspiration to improve their operations, both technically and organizationally, and that they'd like to receive tangible and intangible benefits proportionate to the category of licence they would be awarded. Although CSO participants referenced these motivations, some participants also described pressure and feeling as though they had to pursue licensing, and that it wasn't an option. The motivations presented in this section reflect the motivations of implementation and adoption for the NSO, PTSOs, and CSOs, and while the motivations are inter-related, they also reflect the goals and responsibilities of each level of the soccer hierarchy. The positioning and promotion of the Club Licensing Program during its implementation will be explored next.

4.3 Positioning & Promotion of the Club Licensing Program

The findings outlined in the following section provide insight into the study's second research question: *How did the national and provincial soccer organizations position and promote the adoption of certification to the community soccer organizations?* The section discusses how messaging was personalized towards the target audience and focused on the licensing program being a tool that would catalyze increases in club capacity. The benefits CSOs

would receive as a result of licensing with the program were promoted to incentivize adoption. The section also describes how early adopters were leveraged or promoted to drive implementation of the program, and concludes by touching on the discussion revolving around the perceived consequences of not participating or not achieving certification with the Club Licensing Program.

4.3.1 Targeted messaging to each audience.

The development of the Club Licensing Program began with Canada Soccer engaging in discussions with the PTSOs. Initial conversations centered around the principles upon which the program was built. An NSO staff member shared:

That's kind of the way that I've been presenting it to people anyway, is, we start with the principles. And the principles, I think, are very hard for people to argue with. I think you would be hard pressed to find anybody across the country that works at soccer that would say, 'no, it's not important that it's safe'. So, when you can get that initial agreement that you know, these principles make some sense, then we can start to have some other conversations along the way. (NSO1)

PTSO buy-in to the principles, and the program in general, was vital. The NSO participants described how “a lot of time [was then] spent with the PTSOs, engaging with them and ensuring that they supported the process” (NSO1). Once this was achieved, the NSO moved forward with the research and development of the program.

At the time of interviewing the PTSO and CSO participants (November – December 2018), there was some confusion about the roles of the governing bodies in delivering the program, as well as whose responsibility it was to promote the program to the CSOs. The PTSOs asserted that the promotion and communication of the program was incumbent upon Canada

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Soccer: “you [Canada Soccer] better get your marketing and communications departments working closely with you because how you roll this out has more to do more with marketing and communications ... and the messaging behind this and how it works” (PTSO2). This confusion was contributing to unclear messaging being delivered to the CSOs:

Honestly, I've listened to a few different things. And I sort of get a bit of a mixed message from it. I understand that we're trying to grow the game across the nation, period. The thing is, I get very influenced by what I get from [my provincial organization], what I get from my club, my district and Canada Soccer. So, everybody's kind of putting a little bit of a different spin on it. ... I'll have the conversations with people, and it's amazing how different the message seems to be interpreted from one group to the next. (CSO12)

The NSO participants recognized that there was some role confusion, and were intentional in clarifying the PTSOs' role in implementing the program:

From the PTSO level it's also about them understanding their role and what the expectations are of them because they do have a key role to play in implementation, so a lot of that is more of the informal messaging around working relationships and how we can work together and what your role is versus what Canada Soccer's role is. (NSO1)

Canada Soccer also engaged in conversation with the PTSOs about the types of messaging they would deliver within their own territories. The specifics of the conversation varied for each province and territory because each PTSO's approach would be different “depending on the existing infrastructure within the clubs” (NSO1). Canada Soccer and the PTSOs who had previous certification programs focused the conversation around how to create alignment and best transition from the existing program into the new program. For these PTSOs,

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the program would be positioned as a rebrand, with clarification provided on the differences between the programs to assist CSOs in understanding the differences with the new format. Meanwhile, for PTSOs who did not have a certification program, the conversation began with the rationale of standards and the goals of the program. The conversation then focused on how to educate membership about the specifics of the program, including what it would entail, what the process would look like, and how it would be delivered. For some provinces and territories, this conversation was the first discussion of this nature. The confusion described throughout the subsection suggests that continuous, targeted and proactive messaging would be necessary to ensure implementation of the program occurs as smoothly as possible.

4.3.2 Supporting clubs to build capacity.

Compared to traditional certification programs where certification is granted for reaching a certain level of standard, the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program offers governing bodies (Canada Soccer and the PTSOs) the ability to support capacity building in CSOs so that they can attain their desired levels of licence and meet their organizational goals. “It's about recognizing every organization that is a member of Canada Soccer through a province or territory and trying to convey the message that we're there to help them and help them get better” (NSO1).

Consequently, promotion of the program has focused on the support available to build capacity.

An NSO staff member described how this wasn't initially understood:

I think initially when the concept was revealed, clubs perhaps viewed it as being judgmental. Through the review process, certainly with the National Youth Club license holders, the review process has been the opposite of that. It hasn't been judgmental at all; it's been very supportive and it's been very amicable. It's been about growth and development and less about judgment and categorization. What we've said to every

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organization is if you want to work with us, then we want to work with you, and we will help you to get better, if you want to get better. (NSO1)

The CSOs' assumptions that the program would be judgemental likely stemmed from previous experience working with governing bodies. Shifting the perception of the role governing bodies are meant to fill has been a key element of the messaging:

A lot of our work has been to try and change the perception of what we are there for as a governing body. Often times, people think we're there to make and enforce rules, which is part of our role. I think a better way to describe what we do is that we are there to help organizations hold themselves accountable to the best practices that we'd like to see put in place. That doesn't need to be a confrontational relationship, it can be a very collaborative and supportive relationship. (NSO1)

This opinion was shared by some of the PTSOs as well. A staff member of a PTSO suggested that their role was one of education: "Our role really is all about education so, our job is to educate parents, players, coaches, [and] match officials on what the game's all about, you know, what the standards are, how they can move forward if they wish" (PTSO2).

Further, support and assistance were meant to be ongoing, for as long as necessary for each club to achieve their desired level of licence.

The way I've positioned it in the informal conversations with the clubs is around the power of 'yet' - so you're not there yet, but our job is to help you get there. ... It may take a year, may take two years, it may take 20 years. And over the course of those 20 years, you know, you may decide that you're no longer interested in pursuing that level. But it's never our place to serve as gatekeepers and say you can't. It's our job to say you're not there yet and here's how we're going to help you, and by extension, here's how our

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provinces are going to help you. Because the more organizations that we have operating at that highest criteria or becoming the best version of themselves, regardless of category, the better experience we're going to have for players and the more positively it's going to be perceived across the country. (NSO1)

As this NSO staff member explained, it may take a CSO years to attain their desired category of licence. In some cases, CSOs may not pass their appraisals on their first attempt. An NSO staff member emphasized that the NSO and PTSOs would continue to support the clubs no matter what their road to licensing looked like.

That idea of, you know, the action planning piece for even organizations that aren't going to be provisionally approved initially, we're still recommending to them and hoping that they submit progress against their action plan every six months. That way we can continue to work with them [to] identify the areas where they're improving and kind of chart how close they're getting to where they'd like to be over that time, as well for the areas that don't have full implementation. (NSO1)

The NSO and PTSOs are clearly committed to supporting clubs to build capacity, as ultimately the increase of CSO capacity will translate to a better soccer experience for all.

4.3.3 Incentivizing adoption.

PTSO participants recognized that incentivizing adoption was vital in making the Club Licensing Program attractive to CSOs. One PTSO staff member shared, “I think we need to really focus on the tangible benefits for those clubs to invest the time and money and effort into a [licence]” (PTSO1). A staff member with a different PTSO suggested that the positioning on available incentives would be important to consider: “It’s how you attach the incentives, and we have to be very careful. We’re not taking this lightly. We don’t want to say, ‘things will come

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next year and if you're not this tall, you can't ride anymore'" (PTSO2). PTSOs were more interested in granting access to membership than restricting it.

In fact, the PTSOs understood that access to competition would be a large benefit that would incentivize adoption:

Knowing our landscape, if we put competition standards around the implementation, they'll want it for that reason. I, unfortunately, hate to say it, [but] I'm less confident that the people will do it for the right reasons. That's the disturbing part. I hope I'm wrong, once they get into the process and feel this is achievable and there's recognition for doing the right thing. I'm hoping that culture will change, but right now, under the current culture, it's going to all be driven by what competition do we access, therefore, how can we access the best players and attract the best players. (PTSO4)

The comment here reflects that while one PTSO staff member thought CSOs would pursue a licence in order to gain access to competition, he hoped CSOs would appreciate additional aspects of the program once they understood more about its intent.

Conversely, the NSO participants were more optimistic and believed that the capacity gained by achieving licenses with the program was an obvious benefit that they could promote to incentivize adoption. They also thought that the CSOs would share this view as well:

[The program] will help organizations get better from a governance perspective. I think the things that will very much appeal to [other] organizations will be the guides and the support mechanisms and the examples of best practice that will be put in place through this program. (NSO1)

While the NSO agreed that the external rewards like the benefits CSOs would receive and the legitimacy they would gain with their members were valuable reasons to participate in the Club

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Licensing Program, the NSO staff also hoped that organization and technical development would be intrinsically motivating for the CSOs as well. Regardless of the benefits promoted, the governing bodies keenly understood that promoting the incentives available for those who achieved licences with the program would make the program attractive to CSOs.

4.3.4 Leveraging/promoting early adopters.

Because the program is so large and has so many different stakeholders and components, the program is being rolled out in stages. The National Youth Club license was rolled out first in the fall of 2018. Canada Soccer chose to accept a first intake of applications for the National Youth Club Licence level from CSOs who were licence holders from two previously operating standards-based high-performance leagues, plus CSOs from a PTSO where there previously was no certification program or standards-based league.

NSO staff reported that the Quality Soccer Provider level would be rolled out next, beginning in 2019, and some provinces had already started that process, with other provinces in the preparatory phase. The roll out of the two middle levels would be the responsibility of the provinces (NSO1). In other words, the PTSOs, in consultation with Canada Soccer, had the autonomy to determine the scope and roll out of the levels of the program under their jurisdiction according to the capacity of their organizations. Likewise, CSOs would be able to pursue licensing according to their interest and their capacity to do so.

As a result, both PTSOs and CSOs were excited to jump on board early on. A staff member from one PTSO was proud to be an early adopter of the program: “we’ve completely dived in head first. I would say we’re probably one of the leaders with regards to this specific standards-based program. We’re first out of the gate” (PTSO4). Excitement was palpable at the CSO level as one CSO staff member declared: “Our club has actually been very eager to get

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going. I think our club was the first to approach [our PTSO] saying that we want to get going on this really, like as soon as possible” (CSO13). The support that the CSOs knew they’d receive from pursuing the licence was a key factor in CSOs signing on to pursue the licence: “[Our PTSO] intends to, once we make our declaration, provide us with lots of support, with a point person to help us navigate through the system and make sure we set appropriate timelines” (CSO11). Therefore, the messaging that Canada Soccer and the PTSOs were delivering to their membership generated excitement and stimulated CSOs to begin the work to adopt the licence.

Lastly, some PTSOs chose to publicly promote CSOs who had begun the licensing process. One CSO participant reported: “as [the PTSO] is meeting and arranging and starting the process with clubs, they're publicizing it and saying, ‘we've now started with this club; excited to start the process of club licensing’” (CSO12). When asked if he believed that the PTSO was doing this strategically stimulate other clubs into action, he responded:

It wouldn't surprise me if that was a tactic they were using. And I mean, I would probably support it as a tactic. Because I mean, again, from [our club's] perspective, absolutely, we need to pursue this. ... Some clubs are going to be watching that and say, ‘oh, well, we gotta get going. We gotta do ours too’. Even if they don't really fully understand it, or know what the consequences of doing or not doing it are, they're probably going to, they will be feeling some pressure, just based on the fact that, ‘yeah, everyone around us is doing it so we better do it’. (CSO12)

This CSO board member speculated that by promoting the CSOs who had engaged in the process, the PTSOs were hoping to elicit greater response from clubs who may have otherwise opted not to participate. However, the PTSOs may have been simply recognizing and supporting the early adopting clubs who were choosing to engage in the process. Regardless, promoting and

leveraging early adopters to roll out the program and gain momentum in uptake was demonstrated by both the NSO and PTSOs.

4.3.5 Consequences of non-participation or non-achievement.

While consequences of non participation or not achieving the licence were not actively promoted by the governing bodies, all study participants were well aware that failing to achieve their desired licence, or choosing not to participate in the program, would have impacts.

What we've said to every organization is if you want to work with us, then we want to work with you, and we will help you to get better, if you want to get better. If you don't, and you don't want to participate, that's your choice. You won't have access to the support mechanisms that we're putting in place as a result of the program. (NSO1)

Although the comment by NSO staff members mentions that non-participating CSOs would not have access to the available supports the program would provide, many of the clubs were more concerned about their perceived competitors.

Several of the PTSO participants suggested that CSOs expected their membership numbers would be directly impacted if neighbouring clubs were awarded licences and they were not.

One that they seem to all be in agreement of is they don't want one or the other to go out of the gate before them. Cause they feel like it's gonna potentially hurt their registration numbers, but at the same time, they know that there may be potential national competitions that may be aligned to this in the future, so they know that that's where they should be at least aiming for (PTSO4)

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The staff member of one CSO agreed: “Quite honestly, we're doing this because if we don't do it, we're dead in the water in terms of players leaving us” (CSO7). The perception that CSOs would be left behind by competitors if they did not achieve their licence seemed to be a major concern.

The NSO staff did not share the opinion that the consequences would be dire if CSOs were unable to achieve the same level of licence as their competitors.

It was one of the questions that a lot of them asked: ‘If we don't get in, what happens to us?’ The reality is nothing has to happen to you in this. You have a different focus, and you do a great job of soccer in your community in a different way than what these organizations do. (NSO1)

A different NSO staff member believed that CSO sentiments were made out of fear:

Yeah, I think it is very much the fear of missing out. ... I feel like there is this perception that ‘if we're not at the top level, our whole club is going to explode and implode and we won't exist anymore’. ... That just isn't true; there's no evidence to support that fear. (NSO1)

Unexpectedly, one CSO staff member shared that his organization was facing sanctions by his district, as the district had implemented rules prohibiting league members from pursuing licencing with the program. When asked why that would be, he responded: “I think they feel threatened to possibly lose revenue sources at their own league, even though they’re not able to offer and meet and not follow the standards that are being set now, with this program” (CSO10). The comments made by the NSO above suggest that they were unaware that this was taking place. So, although there was concern of consequences for not participating in the program, it was also discovered that for some, there was concern of consequences for participating in the Club Licensing Program.

4.3.6 Summary of Themes – Research Question 2

To summarize, several strategies were utilized when positioning the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program and promoting the adoption of certification to the CSOs. The messaging utilized to promote the program was personalized to the stakeholder; messaging differed between the PTSOs and CSOs, as well as between stakeholders who had previously participated in certification and those who had not. Messaging focused on how the governing bodies would support clubs to build capacity and the benefits that would result from achieving the licence. The NSO and PTSOs leveraged strong relationships to encourage early adopters, and promoted efforts when they began pursuing the program. Lastly, although there was no messaging communicated around consequences of not participating or not achieving licencing, the subject was still a topic of discussion for study participants. The dimensions of organizational capacity required to adopt and implement the Club Licensing Program will be discussed next.

4.4 Dimensions of Capacity Leveraged

The findings outlined in the following section provide insight into the study's third research question: *What dimensions of organizational capacity were needed and leveraged to engage in certification at the national, provincial, and community levels?* The section presents the salient critical elements, as identified by the study participants across the three soccer governance levels within the five organizational capacity dimensions identified by Doherty et al. (2014) as a paramount within the sport sector: human resources capacity, financial capacity, infrastructure and process capacity, planning and development capacity, and external relationships capacity. Study participants identified human resources, infrastructure and process, and external relationships as the most critical capacity dimensions for implementing and adopting the Club Licensing Program.

4.4.1 Human resources capacity.

NSO, PTSO, and CSO participants all identified human resources as a key capacity dimension required to both implement and adopt the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. Canada Soccer staff were a critical resource responsible for development of the program and the speed with which it could be implemented. NSO staff identified their capacity as ‘limited’ or ‘lacking’ and felt this was a central reason that the implementation of the licence was rolling out slower than anticipated. Consequently, PTSO and CSO participants, for whom the program was not yet fully operational, were somewhat unclear on the level of human resources capacity that would be required within their own organizations, however, they agreed that a large investment of staff and volunteer time would be necessary at all levels. Further, all participants identified two specific elements of human resources capacity that they felt were critical to successfully implement or adopt the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program: buy-in to the common vision, and skill level/expertise of administrative staff and volunteers. CSO participants identified an additional critical element- the skills and expertise of technical staff and volunteers. These elements are discussed in greater detail within the subthemes below.

4.4.1.1 Buy-in to the common vision.

Buy-in to the common vision of the program was identified as a critical element that influenced the human resources capacity dimension. Some study participants identified buy-in to the common vision as a strength they possessed, while others identified buy-in as a challenge or need that would have to be resolved to implement or adopt the program. The NSO staff expressed that “getting everybody on the same page has been the biggest challenge”, but focusing on the Club Licensing Program’s principles helped to achieve buy-in (NSO1). Conversely, the majority of the PTSO participants felt that they were already experiencing buy-

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in to the common vision within their jurisdictions. One PTSO staff member stated: “the staff in itself, that we’ve recruited and hired, have got huge potential. They got huge strengths now but they’ve ... certainly got the right mindset associated to that process” (PTSO4). Staff that possess the desired ethos provide PTSOs with a greater likelihood of achieving success in implementing the program. A staff member with a different PTSO expressed that their membership, due to previous experience with their standards-based program, had the positive attitude in place to facilitate buy-in to both the new program and its vision: “we have the culture shift and the mindset and the philosophical belief. That’s the most important thing here” (PTSO2). CSOs shared that sentiment, with one CSO staff member saying: “We need to have more coaches, and coaches who aren’t just licensed, but coaches who align in the vision of the licence itself” (CSO9). For study participants, buy-in to the common vision of the Club Licensing Program was key.

4.4.1.2 Administrative staff and volunteers’ skills and expertise.

Study participants identified the skills and expertise of their administrative staff and volunteers to be a strength that their organizations could use to their advantage, and considered these staff and their knowledge to be an important factor required to achieve their desired levels of licence with the program. Interesting, participants did not distinguish particular skills between staff or volunteers but rather, they discussed the capacity of "administrators" as critical whether the person was in a staff OR volunteer role, and even referred to their volunteers as staff in some cases thus highlighting the lack of separation in their minds. One CSO staff person shared: “We’re also very strong from a staffing perspective. And the ability to maintain a high standard is something that we’re pretty proud of here, and it’s something that has served us well in [applying for the licence]” (CSO5). Further, participants believed they would experience little

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success without the people they had in administrative roles: “The fact that my general manager is good with governance and policy and procedure, I think is huge. Without that I don’t think we’d be going very far” (CSO3). The sentiment was shared by one of the NSO staff: “We have a lot of really creative people working for us who are able to shift and morph and evolve and change to suit a wide variety of circumstances” (NSO1). For other participants, the administrative staff and volunteers in place at their organizations would be the key factor in achieving their desired licences with the program: “We have the right people in place now. Everything’s organized. We’re eager. We’re young. We have the energy. We want to see the club grow. And I think, if you have a personal stake in the organizations and their success, I think that’s our strength” (CSO13). A PTSO staff member agreed: “We have the expertise as far as technical knowledge, programming knowledge, financial knowledge, risk management knowledge, so a lot of the key voices in the game in those areas work for us” (PTSO2). The skills and expertise of administrative staff and volunteers was widely recognized as a critical element of the human resources capacity dimension across all levels of the sport.

4.4.1.3 Technical staff and volunteers’ skills and expertise.

CSO participants collectively identified that the skills and expertise of their technical (e.g., sport development, coaching, goalkeeping or conditioning development, etc.) staff and volunteers would be a critical element required to achieve their desired levels of licence with the program. Each level of the Club Licensing Program dictates the standards required for technical staff and volunteers at the CSO level (ex. the Quality Soccer Provider level requires coaches to be trained and/or certified appropriately for the program in which they coach, while the National Youth Club Licence requires a technical lead (the technical director, head coach, etc.) and for that person to hold the National B Licence, Children’s Licence, Youth Licence, and Canada

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Soccer Executive Leadership Diploma). Because these certification standards are not required at the PTSO or NSO level (but generally assumed to be at the highest levels of certification), skills and expertise of their technical staff was not distinguished as a critical element for the NSO or PTSO participants. Some of the CSO participants identified that they would have to invest capacity in the area of technical skills for staff and volunteers in order to satisfy the licensing requirements. One CSO staff member shared that they would have to expand their existing staff: “Our technical director is currently part time. And I know the club licensing program requires the TD to be full time. ... We will need to add more staff to deliver the programs properly” (CSO13). Another CSO’s board member disclosed that their challenge would be with the increase of coaching certification requirements for their existing technical staff: “It will become a load on our volunteers when we start to lay off the education requirements and the compliance requirements” (CSO1). Conversely, a portion of CSO participants deemed their existing technical staff and volunteers possessed the skills and expertise necessary to achieve licensing: “We have many licensed coaches with long histories in the game, who have demonstrated the core values that Canada Soccer is desiring of the license holders” (CSO9). Another CSO staff member echoed this comment, simply stating, “I think we’re very strong technically, here, our technical department” (CSO5) and felt that having these skills would be a critical asset to enable them to achieve their desired licence.

Overall, the human resources dimension was identified by study participants to be a crucial area of capacity required to implement and adopt the Club Licensing Program. The expertise and skills of administrative and technical staff and volunteers were identified as elements upon which the success of the program would depend, as well as the buy-in of all staff and volunteers into the common vision of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program.

4.4.2 Financial capacity.

While financial capacity was a topic of discussion for study participants, this capacity dimension seemed to be of less importance than other capacity dimensions discussed throughout the section. The financial requirements to adopt a licence are dependent on the certification level an organization chooses to pursue relative to their current capacity levels. The estimated financial costs of participating in the Club Licensing Program were from as little as a few thousand dollars to as much as \$250,000. NSO staff recognized that they were already challenged with their financial capacity overall: “We have a finite amount of resources.... . It really is about prioritizing the issues that we can deal with, given the limitations that are currently in place” (NSO1). Since the Club Licensing Program was one project among many for the organization, NSO staff acknowledged that there was little that could be done to improve their financial capacity to deliver the program and planned strategically to best utilize what financial capacity they had. Comparatively, PTSO staff affirmed that the Club Licensing Program would require some financial capacity but were confident in their ability to meet the financial requirements of the program and that it would not be a significant challenge for their organizations due to the fact that planning for the program had begun with Canada Soccer in 2017 and the PTSOs had been able to proactively and appropriately budget the necessary financial resources for the program.

Finally, CSO participants from three PTSOs (one PTSO who previously had a certification program, and the two PTSOs who had not) expressed that they would likely experience a strain on financial capacity due to the standards of the program, namely those requiring financial investment for volunteer and coach certifications, equipment, and establishing the required reserve funds. For all participants, the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program

would place some level of strain on the financial dimension of organizational capacity, but less emphasis was placed on this dimension and it was not perceived to be as critical as other aspects of capacity.

4.4.3 Infrastructure and process capacity.

In discussing infrastructure and process capacity, subthemes emerged that were specific to the NSO, PTSOs, and CSOs, respectively. For NSO participants, they found that the Canada Soccer name, brand, and logo “carry a certain level of prestige” that seemed to be driving desire to be affiliated with the program nationally, and considered this to be a strength that their organization possessed to assist in fully implementing the program (NSO1). However, NSO participants were challenged with having the correct technological platform to house and measure the data being collected for the program, and admitted that they did not have any solutions to this challenge at the present time.

PTSO participants expressed that there were two areas within infrastructure and process capacity that they would have to leverage to experience success with the program. The first was governance structure. The two PTSOs who had previously operated certification programs and standards-based leagues anticipated that the structure built from those programs (i.e., awareness of the certification program, previous experience of striving for and achieving standards, and the processes in place as a result of previously certifying) would prove beneficial in transitioning to the new program. The two PTSOs who were new to certification thought aspects of their organizations (i.e., governance boards and the policies and processes they previously had in place) would provide structure that would be advantageous. Second, the PTSOs perceived successful program implementation would require ongoing, methodical marketing and communications to their membership. For some PTSOs, the program would “open a line of

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communication directly to the club[s]” (PTSO4) and they would use it to communicate with the clubs clearly, in the methods that work best for them.

CSO participants spoke of the physical infrastructure (i.e., facilities and field space) needs, and like the PTSOs, also mentioned structure as a critical element of infrastructure and process capacity required to successfully achieve licensing with the Club Licensing Program. Many CSO participants identified organizational and technical policies and processes they had in place as strengths they possessed:

We're probably a little bit better organized and a little bit better setup than maybe we thought we were. We do have a lot of the documentation that's needed. We've got board terms and references, we've got bylaws, we've got a code of ethics for our board members which they sign, we have a code of ethics for the staff. So, we did have a lot of these things in place. (CSO2)

In some cases, CSOs had to write formal policy for informal practices already taking place:

“There are policies that may not be on the books, for example, but are being used, that just have to be formally created and put into documents that can be sent off to Canada Soccer” (CSO5).

Many were pleased that their current operations aligned to the standards of the licence. While it was validating to be seen as aligned to best practice, it also verified that they held a high level of capacity required to apply for the licence. Participants felt that a formalized governance structure would assist them to “develop[] a progressive, professionally managed community nonprofit” (CSO1). Becoming a “professionalized organization” (CSO13) was something CSOs were striving for.

To summarize, Canada Soccer’s infrastructure and process capacity needs revolved around management of their Club Licensing program. PTSOs’ planned to leverage the processes

and structure necessary to facilitate the NSO's program, and the CSOs' infrastructure and process capacity needs related to the standards required to certify with the program.

4.4.4 Planning and development capacity.

Study participants discussed planning and development capacity but this capacity dimension ranked lower in importance than the other capacity dimensions for implementing the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. Since the bulk of NSO program planning was completed prior to the interviews in this thesis, it is logical that this capacity dimension was of less priority at the time of the interviews. However, NSO did speak of how they had prioritized planning and development of the program in order to lay the proper foundation from which to implement the Club Licensing Program. As the PTSO participants were in the infant stages of implementation and CSOs were in the early stages of applying for the program, they both stated that success of the program would depend on appropriate planning which might involve being flexible or identifying creative solutions that would best meet their needs. Overall, conducting the proper planning and being innovative and flexible in that planning was assumed to be necessary, but not as critical as the other capacity dimensions to the implementation and adoption of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program.

4.4.5 External relationships capacity.

NSO, PTSO, and CSO participants all identified external relationships as a key capacity dimension essential to implement and adopt the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. Relationships with external partners, as well as relationships with organizations within the soccer governance system were deemed critical elements within this capacity dimension. NSO staff members spoke of cultivating strong relationships with partners by focusing on the common vision and principles of the program and using a 'relationship approach' to guide their

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interactions with their partners, particularly other soccer organizations within the Canadian system. They aimed to strengthen old relationships and build new relationships with a variety of stakeholders by being open and honest, and supporting each other as they navigated the program.

PTSOs stressed the importance of a strong working relationship with their NSO.

Participants spoke of having solid collegial relations with their national body, but mentioned they needed to determine how to work with each other for this project: “That’s gonna be a bit of a peer discovery between both Canada Soccer and ourselves and we still have some questions of how we’re gonna work together in that” (PTSO2). Once roles were clarified, PTSO participants were confident the organizations would continue to work together successfully.

PTSO participants articulated that relationships with their members would also be imperative to have success with the Club Licensing Program. Working to ensure that the relationships with CSOs would remain positive was a priority for one PTSO staff member:

I think this is a massive relationship exercise where you’re trying to help the groups trust that you’re not creating a system just to police them, just to punish them. You’re trying to create a system that really is in the best interests of all. So, that will be an ongoing thing.

(PTSO3)

Provincial and territorial staff spoke of their desire to cultivate open and supportive relationships with their clubs. One PTSO staff member stated: “it’s about engaging, it’s about creating relationships, interacting, conversing” (PTSO4). For PTSO staff, continuous investment into these relationships was important.

CSO participants discussed that strong relationships with the NSO and their PTSO would be important. “The two people who are administering the program, we will definitely use them as a resource to make sure that we create the documentation that they’re looking for” (CSO4).

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CSOs recognized that the governing bodies offered expertise and resources, thus opportunity to build capacity more easily within their organizations.

A number of CSOs were excited that the program would offer them new opportunities to engage with other clubs across the country. “We have good relationships with other clubs and districts around us so we will probably be teaming up to see what they have, share ideas, [and] look and see what others are doing” (CSO8). This CSO staff member told of reaching out to other CSOs to find out about their best practices to potentially incorporate the learning into their own organizations. Other CSOs were banding together to combine resources and collectively brainstorming ways to best meet their needs.

The league itself [is] talking about what's going on and ... trying to help each other out to get through this. ... The whole league is ... working with each other to try to come up with the best solutions. (CSO3)

Relationships with other clubs were regarded as a critical element of this capacity dimension.

Some of the CSOs asserted they may need to cultivate relationships with external partners to have the capacity required to achieve some of the standards of the licensing program. These varied external partners may provide expertise in health services (i.e., physiotherapy, sports doctors, health professionals trained in concussion protocols, etc.), with specific technical soccer skills (i.e., goalkeeping or physical literacy training, etc.), or with specific organizational skillsets (i.e., universities for interns, organizations offering governance training, etc.). “We have partnerships with groups to satisfy ...the player health side, ... [and] the needs of specialized positions [like] goalkeeping, [and] the onboarding of a skills centre” (CSO9). CSO staff members who had existing partnerships in these areas noted how beneficial the agreements would be to satisfy the standards of the program and how happy they were to already have such

agreements in place. For participants, leveraging relationships with other organizations within the soccer governance system was noted as key to experiencing success with the Club Licensing Program. Cultivating partnerships to satisfy areas of capacity that would otherwise be challenged was also of importance to CSO participants.

4.4.6 Summary of Themes – Research Question 3

In summary, study participants recognized necessity of the dimensions of financial capacity and planning and development capacity but placed greater emphasis on the capacities of human resources, infrastructure and process, and external relationships as capacity dimensions required to implement and adopt the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. The fourth and final research question will be discussed next.

4.5 How is Certification Perceived to Influence CSOs' Ability to Achieve their Mission?

The findings outlined in the following section provide insight into the study's third research question: *How is certification perceived to influence community soccer organizations' abilities to achieve their missions?* This section explores three main themes with resulting subthemes. Two of these main themes (certification enables organizational development and certification is a mechanism for differentiation among soccer clubs) demonstrate the positive influence of certification, whereas the third major theme (certification is not worth the effort) is critical and demonstrates the various challenges and negative influence of pursuing the Club Licensing Program.

4.5.1 Certification enables organizational development.

This section explores four different elements of how certification is perceived to enable organizational development: certification provides a roadmap and confirms direction;

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certification offers holistic organizational improvement; certification builds structure to support the player pathway; and, certification reinforces quality assurance.

4.5.1.1 Certification provides a roadmap and confirms direction.

Study participants expected certification to provide organizations with a blueprint of best practices that would supply guidance toward optimal organizational management. The staff of the NSO suggested that the standards showed organizations what was required to operate as high-functioning, quality organizations: “They’ll have a better understanding of how to run a good program, what’s required from a governance perspective, a financial perspective, an infrastructure perspective, and from a technical and sporting perspective” (NSO1). PTSO participants agreed but implied that this may be completely new information for some organizations. One PTSO staff person mused: “Heck, I think some of them will actually, by virtue of going through this process, realize that they should have some sort of vision and goals to shoot for!” (PTSO3). A CSO participant spoke differently, instead sharing that the program’s licences validated their organizations’ operations and confirmed the direction their organizations were headed in: “It [the licence] actually just falls in line with what we’re already trying to do for our membership” (CSO10). Regardless of whether the information within the standards would be familiar to the CSOs, another CSO participant summarized the sentiment for all: “It gives us a blueprint. A blueprint of what we really need to do as a club in order to offer the programs that we hope to be able to offer” (CSO12).

4.5.1.2 Certification offers holistic organizational improvement.

Certification was considered to positively influence CSOs’ abilities to meet their missions by offering holistic organizational improvement. “There’s a capacity for real holistic community development through all of this” (PTSO4). For participants, this meant that the Club

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Licensing Program offered organizations the opportunity to improve all facets of their operation, across each of the governance, administration, infrastructure and technical pillars. A CSO board member hoped it would improve ‘basically everything’: “If we can successfully navigate the application and start on this path, I think it's going to positively impact our ability to improve basically everything within the club” (CSO12). By experiencing the holistic organizational improvements offered by the program, one CSO participant expected his organization would “becom[e] a better club” (CSO3). Holistic organizational improvement offered through certification with Canada Soccer’s Club Licensing Program was regarded to positively influence CSOs’ abilities to meet their missions.

4.5.1.3 Certification builds structure to support the player pathway.

Certification was perceived to positively influence CSOs’ abilities to meet their missions by building a structure to support the player pathway. Study participants had many interpretations of the player pathway and how the Club Licensing Program could build the structure to support it. For some participants, the implementation of the standards in organizations across the country would provide the structure and potential to improve Canada’s national teams so that they could play and compete at the highest levels of competition available to them, such as the World Cup: “Creating these standards should help create better players across the country, so that could help them in the national program, and ultimately create better players and maybe give them a better chance to make those types of tournaments” (CSO4). Other participants highlighted the licence allowing them to offer every technical opportunity that they could to their players: “[Achieving the licence] allows us to offer everything along the pathway within the game within our country, to all of our members and players” (CSO10). Some participants were optimistic that the principles and raising all clubs’ standards would positively

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affect the player experience for all participants, no matter the level at which they played:

“Hopefully, if all clubs do raise those standards and have these good principles in place, we hope that it translates into a better experience for the players” (PTSO1). In each case, the Club Licensing Program was determined to build structure that would support the player pathway, and this would positively influence CSOs’ abilities to achieve their missions.

4.5.1.4 Certification reinforces quality assurance.

Certification was believed to influence CSOs’ abilities to achieve their missions because it offered CSOs a comprehensive evaluation tool against their operations could be measured. Some CSOs made this discovery when they started to work through the application process: “It’s been good, an eye-opening experience to say, we’re already doing that, we haven’t quite done that, or that’s a different way to do this” (CSO10). Other CSOs were aware that the program offered this evaluative opportunity and welcomed it: “It’s a good way for us to review our club and to make sure we’re doing things the right way, with what best practice is, but also see where we can improve ourselves” (CSO4). This CSO staff member explained that their organization approached the application and periodic appraisal as an opportunity to learn where they exceeded in the industry standard and where they had to improve. He went on to state that his organization was stronger because of the work done in their previous certification program to minimize identified gaps. This reinforcement of quality assurance was key in strengthening his organization’s ability to achieve their mission, and study participants trusted that the Club Licensing Program would do the same.

This section established that study participants believed that the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program would provide a roadmap and confirm direction, offer holistic organizational development, build structure to support the player pathway, and reinforce quality assurance; their

organizations would become better organizations. Based on the previous themes, it was clear that there were many ways that certification with the Club Licensing Program was perceived to positively influence CSOs' abilities to achieve their missions through organizational development.

4.5.2 Certification is a mechanism for differentiation among community soccer organizations.

The second way certification was perceived to influence CSOs' abilities to achieve their missions is the notion that certification sets CSOs apart from one another, something that CSOs desired (and was determined to be a motivation for CSOs in research question one). Two ways that certification was thought to set CSOs apart was by legitimizing CSOs' actions and then becoming a marketing tool, and by building autonomy.

4.5.2.1 Certification legitimizes CSOs' actions and becomes a marketing tool.

PTSO staff provided insight into why CSOs would want to stand apart from their competitors:

A lot of [CSOs] have just been sort of standard quo for years and not upgraded their programs and just thought, 'well, the community that we're in, there's only one club and everybody's going to register with us'. ... Now all of a sudden there's a club and three academies in their backyard and parents are leaving the clubs and going to private academies to get additional training. It's forced the clubs to up their game and have better coaches, better programming and try and attract these customers back. (PTSO2)

CSO participants believed that certifying with the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program would legitimize their actions to their stakeholders. This CSO staff member saw the achievement of a licence as a message with which he could educate the parents of his players:

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The greatest impact it would have, if we were to receive the certification, is it would inform our conversations with our families. We would have something tangible ... that they could sink their teeth into. ... To say, 'oh, our national association says the path forward is this'. (CSO9)

CSOs also viewed certification as a tool they could use to market to the wider community.

It's a status thing, right? So if ... the club next door to you or next city over doesn't have that kind of certification, you can use that as a marketing tool, or you know, just a way to say, 'we've been approved by [our provincial sport organization] to be this level of club, based on these things. And these other clubs don't do that, so come play with us, or come coach with us'. (CSO4)

CSOs planned to promote their achievement of a licence as one of the reasons prospective players and coaches should join their organization, or move from other organizations who had not achieved certification. Both the legitimization of CSOs' actions and utilization of the certification as a marketing tool were seen as ways certification would set CSOs apart from other CSOs.

4.5.2.2 Certification builds autonomy.

CSOs hoped that their organizations' autonomy would increase as a result of certifying with the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. One CSO board member was excited to have greater control of the decision about which teams his organizations would be able to enter into leagues:

We have to ask permission before we can run certain levels of programming. So, the end goal of this is that if we meet this standard, we no longer have to ask permission. That

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now your [licence] says you are at this level, you want to enter that team in the league, you enter that team in the league. (CSO12)

The staff member for another CSO was hopeful that his organization would be afforded greater autonomy when making decisions for their organization and membership because they had demonstrated a high level of organizational ability:

So, if, in theory, we achieve the highest level of national licensing available to us, we believe that it should come with certain member benefits, for lack of better words, that entrusts us, as an organization that meets all these criteria, to make the best decisions possible for our members and the soccer community. So, if we received it and then we're able to have a little bit more autonomy in our operation, that would be terrific. (CSO6)

Study participants were confident certification would raise their organizational autonomy as they proved themselves credible with licence achievement levels, and certification legitimized their CSOs' actions, which in turn would differentiate organization, and thereby becoming a marketing tool. In turn, certification was perceived to set organizations apart, positively influencing CSOs' abilities to achieve their missions.

4.5.3 Certification is not worth the effort.

As noted in the previous two major themes, comments about the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program were largely supportive and expressed interest in the Program, but some of the participants expressed concern about the program, its format, and the capacity required to be a part of it:

I think it's very difficult to say whether this type of program will help us deliver our mission and vision, because we could potentially deliver our mission and vision without

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these programs... . . . I think there's a big question mark around if these programs can do it. (PTSO1)

One CSO staff member didn't expect the program to have any effect on his organization's capacity: "In terms of ability and capacity, I don't think it will have an effect either way. . . . This is something that we will do, and we'll get through, but there are a lot of things that need to be done" (CSO2). This section probes how certification is perceived to not be worth the effort because certification requires a high level of capacity for very little gain.

The Club Licensing Program's licences require an organization to invest significant resources in order to achieve certification. Some participants expressed concern about the cost of that capacity investment, when organizations were already under strain due to the contemporary pressures they faced.

Putting over emphasis on added criteria and requirements, and financials, human volunteer hours, adding more and more onto those individuals that are already invested or are trying to support the kids in the communities, is that going to have a positive effect or add to the decline? That's difficult to say. (PTSO1)

The staff member of one PTSO was unconvinced that the increased expectations the Club Licensing Program placed on CSOs would translate into greater outcomes for those organizations. For this reason, CSOs might be better off choosing to continue operating as they currently were, since certification had not yet been proven to be worth the effort.

It was perceived that the benefits that organizations would receive as a result of licensing with the Club Licensing Program would not be large enough to make the large investment of capacity worthwhile: "I think that's where most of the clubs are saying, 'that's a lot of work for very little'" (CSO3). One CSO staff person believed the National Youth Club licence would

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require her organization to divert a large portion of its resources to the players competing at the high levels of the player pathway: “A disproportionate amount of effort and resources goes towards basically one percent of the players in their club.... It's going to really put a strain on our ability to act as a club” (CSO7). She was not sure that her CSO could handle the requirements. The staff member for a different CSO understood that it would take an initial investment of capacity to apply for their desired level of licence, but expected that the ongoing maintenance of the licence would require capacity as well:

So obviously we think that it will continue to provide us with a certain standard for our membership and for the greater soccer community, but we also recognize that it's going to increase the demands on us again, from already a quite demanding interaction between [our provincial organization], the standards-based league in which we participate, and what's being asked of us on essentially a daily basis as part of that. (CSO6)

He was hesitant to believe that the ongoing requirements would be worthwhile. That sentiment was shared, and a prediction was made that the capacity requirements would only increase: “I think there will probably be more coming down the pike. I'm not sure how much but I guarantee you there's going to be more coming” (CSO5). Consequently, certification was perceived to consume a lot of capacity for very little gain. This and the perception that certification required a high level of capacity suggests that certification is not worth the effort overall and would negatively influence CSOs' ability to achieve their missions.

4.5.4 Summary of Themes – Research Question 4

This section presented the rationale into the perceptions that certification enables organizational development and offers CSOs a mechanism for differentiation from other CSOs, discussing how certification is perceived to positively influence CSOs' abilities to increase their

missions. The section also presented insight into why certification was perceived to be not worth the effort overall, and was therefore perceived to negatively influence CSOs' abilities to achieve their missions.

4.6 Findings Summary

The findings of this study illuminate the complexities of implementing a certification program across a vast nation. The findings demonstrate the varied but related motivations of implementation for the NSO, PTSOs, and CSOs, how the Club Licensing Program was positioned and promoted to encourage adoption of certification for CSOs before examining the dimensions of organizational capacity needed and leveraged to engage in certification at the national, provincial, and community levels, and concluding with how certification is perceived to influence CSOs' abilities to achieve their missions. Overall, study participants were quite excited at the opportunities that the Club Licensing Program presents.

I genuinely believe that the game's going to improve because we're going to create more good environments across every level of the game for kids to enjoy playing soccer. If we do that, then the logical by-product of that is that we will have more kids engaged for longer periods of time, better retention of players, better progression of players, better transition of players to different roles within the sport because they enjoy the sport. In time, a deeper pool of players who can reach a higher level of the sport and hopefully reach our national teams, male and female. It's going to be a long-term process. It's not something that will be measurable in a year's time, it's going to take a period of years, for sure. (NSO1)

Study participants predicted that the Club Licensing Program would become the new way of operating in Canadian soccer: "We'll arrive at a point down the road where people will have a

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hard time fathoming that we didn't have Club Standards for the longest time. It'll just be taken for granted as part of what the expectations are" (PTSO3). Study participants were confident that the Club Licensing Program would become so normal that it would reach a point where the Canadian soccer community would never consider operating without certification again.

5 Discussion

In order to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity, a study was undertaken which began by posing four research questions: (1) What motivated the adoption of the Club Licensing certification program within national, provincial, and community soccer organizations in Canada? (2) How did the national and provincial soccer organizations position and promote the adoption of certification to the community soccer organizations? (3) What dimensions of organizational capacity were needed and leveraged to engage in certification at the national, provincial, and community levels? and (4) How is certification perceived to influence community soccer organizations' abilities to achieve their missions? This study extends the literature on governing bodies in sport management, furthers our understanding of the motivations behind implementing certification programs, and connects the literature between certification programs and organizational capacity by using theory as a way to explore the applied phenomenon of certification, in order to understand the factors influencing its development and adoption. If governing bodies are aware of the factors that influence the success of certification programs, then they will have greater success in the implementation of their own programs, and experience increased capacity within their organization and the organizations of their members. In this chapter of the thesis, I explore the findings of this study in light of related literature. I also discuss practice-based implications and recommendations, and conclude with suggestions for future directions of research.

5.1 Governing Bodies & Certification Programs

Scholarly examination of certification from the lens of governing bodies is minimal. To my knowledge, two articles comprise all of the literature about this topic. Although Van Hoecke

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and colleagues (2009) describe the goals of different governing bodies in implementing the IKGym, IKSport and PASS certifications, the emphasis of the paper is on examining the three systems' objectives, methods, results, and effectiveness, and does not detail the governing bodies' roles in facilitating or managing the certification programs.

Van Hoecke et al.'s 2013 book chapter details the implementation of European football NSOs' Foot PASS quality assurance system for their academy members while considering the role of governing bodies in implementing that system. They suggest that governing bodies, (i.e., NSOs), assuming a centralized control "assert their control over the sport's administration and over the links between the various levels of competition [and] this encourages a professional approach throughout the sport" (Van Hoecke et al., 2013, p. 92). The PTSOs expressed desire to have Canada Soccer assume leadership of licensing and create system alignment from the top to the bottom of the soccer governance system in Canada. This would clarify the player pathway and, in turn, facilitate system alignment, thereby offering greater control over the links between competition levels. Consequently, both Canada Soccer and the PTSOs' motivations for the implementation of the Club Licensing Program support previous findings in the literature.

The certification program's elements of 'classification' and 'appraisal' mirror other certification programs discussed in the literature. At first glance, the 'development' element of the Club Licensing Program seems to be innovative in its focus to support CSOs to build higher levels of capacity, and by extension, achieve higher levels of certification, but the literature indicates that this is not as unique as the Canada Soccer staff suggest. Further analysis of the extant literature reflects that the IKGym and Foot PASS certification programs both provide support to organizations to improve operations (Perck et al., 2016; Relvas et al., 2010; Van Hoecke et al., 2013). It appears that all of the certification programs investigated in the literature

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include the elements of classification, development, and appraisal. An organization must be classified to gain insight as to where they stand in relation to the standards. From there, the organization will understand its strengths and deficiencies and initiate efforts to build capacity to eliminate those deficiencies, to then be appraised against the standards. In doing so, capacity will inherently be built, thus satisfying the development and appraisal elements of the certification program. Where the difference lies between Canada Soccer's program and other existing models is the emphasis appears to be much higher on the development element for the Club Licensing Program. Developing clubs' capacity is intentional, unlike with other certification programs, where the development is a by-product of achieving the certification's standards. Thus, those designing and implementing certification programs must be clear on the outcomes the program is meant to deliver, and design the program appropriately to best facilitate those outcomes. This study illustrates that certification programs have diversity in how they are structured.

Canada Soccer's decision to design a multi-level program with the option for each province and territory to personalize up to two levels according to their jurisdiction's needs appears to be a style of certification program not yet examined within the literature. This model seems appropriately structured when considering study participants' comments about the size and diversity of the soccer landscape in Canada and the NSO's motivation of strengthening the sport. The multi-leveled program allows for the PTSOs to maintain a level of autonomy within their own jurisdictions while responding to the unique needs in each of their respective regions. The findings of this study highlight the necessity for the involved levels of governing bodies (in this case, two levels of governing bodies) to find agreement on the principles and goals upon which the program is built, and clarify each other's roles and responsibilities, particularly if they are meant to deliver the program together. This will enhance the alignment of the sport

governance system and contribute to greater success in presenting unified messaging to membership about the program, and in turn, increasing the interest and, hopefully, uptake of the program by CSOs.

Ensuring that soccer participants experience enjoyment with their programs is a large priority for soccer organizations. Study participants from all three of the sport governance levels expressed desire in improving sport delivery, both organizationally and technically, for their participants. These findings support Van Hoecke and colleagues' (2013) assertion that governing bodies are concerned with the quality of programs offered to the end user, that those programs are delivered efficiently and effectively, and to end users' expectations. Meanwhile, the increased pressures Flemish sports were experiencing led them to the concept of total quality management and performance management (Van Hoecke et al., 2009). Canada Soccer's introduction of the Club Licensing Program as a quality and performance management method to hold soccer organizations accountable will ultimately improve sport delivery and mirrors extant literature, suggesting that certification is a viable solution available to sport organizations when they are attempting to improve sport delivery. As is demonstrated here, certification programs hold promise in both the management and quality assurance of sport, especially when sport is delivered by multiple stakeholders at multiple levels of governance.

5.2 Applying Institutional & Institutional-level Learning Theories

The Club Licensing Program was implemented with the intent to respond to the many contemporary pressures Canadian soccer organizations were facing. Study participants cited the need to bring alignment and order to a disorganized soccer landscape, the desire to change the culture around how soccer in Canada is delivered, clarify the player pathway for end users, improve sport delivery, and develop accountability for those who deliver soccer. Canada

Soccer's decision to implement a program of this format and place a large focus on CSOs' organizational capacity development supports Shilbury and Ferkins' assertion that governing bodies are responsible to develop their memberships' organizational capacity so that they may fulfill their mandates together (2015). Although the program's implementation is in its infancy, should the program be a large success, it has the potential to become institutionalized within the soccer system.

Institutional theory offers a useful lens for interpreting the development and implementation of the Club Licensing Program within Canadian soccer. To return to the definition of an institution, an institution is a "multifaceted, durable social structures(*sic*), made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources" (Scott, 1995, p. 57) and dictates "categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relationships" (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). Certification, through the Club Licensing Program, has great potential to become an institution, both tangibly and symbolically (Scott, 1995; Washington & Patterson, 2011). The principles that the program is based on and the procedural processes that organizations will follow to apply for and maintain their licence will work to establish the Club Licensing Program as an institution.

5.2.1 Institutional pillars.

Aspects of the program present as pillars, of which institutions are composed (Scott, 1995). The Club Licensing Program's foundational elements of classification and appraisal and the four-corner approach to its benefits regularize organizations by offering rewards for licensing. Non-participation and non-achievement restrict clubs' access to the program and its benefits, what Scott describes as a regulative pillar (1995). Further, the program regulates behaviour by defining the principles to which organizations will follow (termed precision) and

by the recognition organizations will receive if they certify (termed obligation) (Scott, 1995). Likewise, the standards and the principles upon which they are built, are normative in nature. Scott (1995) describes the normative pillar as the rules that govern the game, as well as the etiquette on how to play the game. The third pillar, the cultural-cognitive pillar, is the reflexive exchange between the external environment and the internal interpretation that creates meaning (Scott, 1995). Here, Canada Soccer spoke of the goal to ‘change the culture’ of the game by shifting the emphasis from winning to safe, accessible, inclusive and welcoming. As the seven principles and the associated standards become more widely known and accepted, the cultural-cognitive influence will increase.

When reflecting on the participants’ comments and the resulting themes of this study, a tension begins to emerge. This tension is complex, and originates from the hierarchal nature of the soccer governance system and the paternalistic pressures exerted from governing body to ‘subordinate’, for lack of a better term. The NSO staff member’s discussion of ‘mandate’ versus ‘education’ emphasizes the importance of language utilized, but regardless of the language used, this complex tension results in pressure, compelling PTSOs and CSOs to balance their priorities and resources with the wishes of their governing body- in this case, Canada Soccer. This pressure contains elements of each of the three pillars. This hierarchal pressure is a strong representation of the complexity of Scott’s (1995) institutional pillars, and the pillars offer insight into why certification programs are likely to become institutionalized over time.

5.2.2 Stages of institutionalization.

Presently, the Club Licensing Program is between the pre-institutionalization and semi-institutionalization stages of institutionalization. Canada Soccer and the PTSOs have implemented certification in efforts to respond to the challenges they are facing. The concept of

certification is new to half of the country, but awareness is building with medium- and larger-sized CSOs; awareness is widespread in provinces and territories where certification previously existed, but only some of the CSOs in those provinces were previously certified. Most CSOs are open to the idea of the program, but some CSOs are questioning the program's value, and a few of the CSOs openly oppose the program. For these reasons, it is appropriate to label the Club Licensing Program as in the process of being institutionalized and presently at a pre- to semi-institutionalized stage.

5.2.3 Isomorphic pressures.

The sport landscape today “has encouraged governing bodies at different levels to pressure sport organizations into assuming a more professional approach to the delivery and design of the sport product” (Van Hoecke et al., 2013, p. 89). Indeed, the Club Licensing Program can be seen as Canada Soccer's attempt to improve soccer organizations' operations, organizationally and technically. By standardizing the best practices related to the Club Licensing Program's governance, administrative, infrastructure and technical pillars, Canada Soccer is encouraging its member organizations to become more isomorphic in nature. This is in line with Perck and colleagues' (2016) assessment of how IKGym impacted organizational practices of gymnastics clubs in Flemish Belgium. The implementation of IKGym facilitated isomorphic changes to the organizational designs and the strategic planning of the gymnastics clubs (Perck et al., 2016).

Of the three types of isomorphic pressures, Canada Soccer's implementation of the program nationally, with the expectation that all PTSOs champion the use of the program, largely demonstrates coercive isomorphism. The nature of the governing relationship between the NSO and the PTSOs, and the PTSOs and the CSOs exerts pressure on the organization to

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follow the instructions of its governor. The benefits offered by the governing body for achieving licensing further amplifies that coercive power. This was also found to be true for the Flemish gymnastics clubs, as the clubs adjusted their processes to meet the demands of their resource providers (the sport federation) and consequently became more homogeneous in nature (Perck et al., 2016). The complex paternalistic tension and the pressure CSOs felt for not participating or not achieving certification was also a type of coercive isomorphism described by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). Although DiMaggio and Powell (1983) discuss coercive isomorphism as both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent, and overt as well as subtle and less explicit pressure, much of the literature in this area (i.e., Edwards et al., 2009; Kikulis, 2000; Slack & Hinings, 1992; Washington & Patterson, 2011) focuses only on the formal and overt pressure exerted by governing organizations and government. This study illustrates the subtle pressure organizations face to become more isomorphic, and suggests that this type of coercive isomorphism is a large factor at play in the adoption of certification for sport organizations.

Conversely, mimetic and normative pressures have less presence at the current stage of the Club Licensing Program's implementation. Mimetic pressure may become greater for CSOs once all four levels of the program have been released as CSOs become concerned that their competitors have achieved licencing while they not. Normative pressure is likely to come into play when individual coaches and technical directors begin to complete the educational trainings the licences require. Perck and colleagues (2016) made similar conclusions, considering the mimetic and normative pressures to be direct consequences of the coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The three isomorphic pressures combined are contributing to the Club Licensing Program becoming institutionalized.

5.2.4 Institutional-level learning.

Haunschild and Chandler (2008) proposed institutional-level learning as an explanation of organizational change, suggesting that organizations observe the experiences of early adopters and incorporate the information gained into the implementation of an institution so that the organization experiences economic benefits. Yet to be applied to the sport management context, institutional-level learning offers explanation into aspects of the phenomenon at play in this study. NSO staff began by researching certification programs in operation throughout the soccer world (Canada Soccer, 2018a). Although research covered a large swath of the globe, each of these early-adopting organizations would be considered to be of close geographic proximity because of Canada Soccer's positioning in the sport governance chain. This results in faster learning because organizations experience greater interconnectedness due to closer geographic proximity (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). In conducting that research, Canada Soccer engaged in the practices of 'exploration' and 'exploitation'- they discovered a variety of practices and processes that may suit their purposes, but then only adopted the practices and processes that would best meet their memberships' needs. Haunschild and Chandler (2008) describe exploration and exploitation as a binary, as though they occur separately. The findings in this study suggest that organizations may search using both approaches simultaneously in order to achieve the results that best meet their needs. Slow and fast adaptation are described in a similar way (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Again, the findings of this study indicate that Canada Soccer exhibited elements of both slow adaptation and fast adaptation in their planning and implementation of the Club Licensing Program. Slow adaptation was exhibited in the 16-month process that Canada Soccer researched and planned the program, but fast adaptation was

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exhibited when Canada Soccer allowed processes to evolve, both during planning and following implementation, as the necessity for change emerged.

The degree to which PTSOs and CSOs will experience exploration, exploitation, fast and slow adaptation is less than what the NSO will experience because they have less control over the program's design. CSOs will have a much greater likelihood of experiencing inferential and selective copying learning processes. Haunschild and Chandler (2008) state "in opposition to established theory within the institutional literature, the learning literature tells us that sometimes later adoption may not be due to conformity pressures, but may instead be caused by learning processes that occur at the field-level" (p. 640). These two types of learning occur more often when institutions are not yet fully institutionalized. Later adopting organizations are able to better predict the benefits and outcomes they will encounter based on early-adopters' experiences. This is termed inferential learning. Similarly, PTSOs and CSOs may utilize selective copying- the copying of features they believe have been successful elsewhere. One likely scenario of when this will occur is when PTSOs and CSOs observe their counterparts implementing a specific initiative to demonstrate one of the standards, such as a program that fulfills the 'provides a safe, accessible, and inclusive soccer experience' standard at the Quality Soccer Provider level. If they perceive this program to be successful, they may employ a copy of the program within their own contexts to also experience success.

The CSOs spoke of the competition they felt amongst neighbouring and similar-sized clubs and referenced the desire to maintain a competitive edge. Consequently, CSOs are likely to experience field-level competition. Institutional-level learning theory suggests that competitive environments will create heterogeneous outcomes (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). Because CSOs' adoption of the Club Licensing Program is not yet complete and implementation of the

program is still in its early stages, this study was not able to observe this in execution, but the likelihood of the program producing heterogeneous results seems unlikely because of the inherent standardization of behaviours by the certification program's standards.

5.2.5 Summary of institutional & institutional-level learning theories.

Institutional and institutional-level learning theories offer insightful analysis to the implementation and adoption of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. Much of what has been discussed in this section is reflected in Greenwood et al.'s five key tenets of institutional theory, summarized by Washington and Patterson (2011). First, Washington and Patterson (2011) share that environments influence organizations. All three levels of soccer organizations described the contemporary pressures within their institutional contexts that their organizations were experiencing. The second and third tenets of institutional theory suggest that institutional pressures cause organizations to become isomorphic with their environments, and this occurs particularly when organizations are experiencing ambiguity (Washington & Patterson, 2011). The recent implementation of program, plus the metered implementation over the next several years, has contributed to rumours and misinformation that exacerbated CSOs' pressure to adopt the program before the program was fully understood. Finally, initial impressions that certification would increase CSOs' legitimacy contributed to CSOs pursuing licensing, even before evidence of the program's efficacy.

The subsection examined how the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program is currently in a state of pre- to semi-institutionalization, how many of the pressures influencing soccer organizations are isomorphic in nature, and how the institutional pillars have influenced the three soccer governance levels during the implementation and adoption of the program. While not every element of these two theories has explained the phenomenon, institutional theory and

institutional-level learning theory have advanced our understanding of certification in Canadian soccer. The discussion will next explore the dimensions of organizational capacity and their relevance to certification at the national, provincial, and community levels.

5.3 Organizational Capacity and Certification

The dimensions of organizational capacity previously identified in existing literature are relevant when considering the types of capacity required to implement and adopt certification for sport organizations within this study. Study participants reported that all the capacity dimensions were relevant to the implementation and adoption of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, but the human resources, infrastructure and process, and external relationships capacity dimensions were more necessary than the financial and planning and development capacity dimensions. This supports Misener and Doherty's (2009) assertion that the extent to which a dimension is critical for an organization's success is dependent on the organization's context.

5.3.1 Human resources capacity.

Existing literature identifies several critical elements under each dimension that are crucial to capacity (Doherty et al., 2014). Doherty et al.'s (2014) found seven critical elements relating to the human resources capacity dimension: enthusiasm for the task; human capital; that human capital possessing the relevant skills for the tasks at hand; sharing a common focus; having sufficient volunteers; continuity of human resources; succession of human resources; and developing and supporting the human resources available. Study participants reported that implementing the program would require a certain number of people, that those people would need to buy-in to the common vision of the program, and possess the requisite skills and expertise to execute organizational and technical duties. However, one CSO expressed how their organization's people had the energy and were enthusiastic about pursuing certification with the

Club Licensing Program (CSO13). No mention was made of development and support, continuity, or succession, but continuity and succession were instead discussed as outcomes that may occur as a result of the program. These findings support Doherty and colleagues' conclusions and suggest that some types of capacity have the ability to facilitate other types of capacity.

5.3.2 Infrastructure and process capacity.

Study participants identify infrastructure and process capacity as a second important capacity dimension when implementing the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. Organizational structure, clear, ongoing communications, access to facilities and fields, and technological infrastructure were all identified as critical elements of this capacity dimension, which complements existing literature (Doherty et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009). Although Hall and colleagues (2003) discussed access to technological infrastructure as access to a consistent, high speed internet connection, their suggestions remain relevant as technology changes, with business operations increasingly moving to the cloud.

Where Misener and Doherty (2009) and Doherty et al. (2014) speak about the complexities of maintaining external relationships, the participants of this study focused on the necessity of developing strong relationships with other organizations in the soccer governance system and partners to satisfy areas where they were deficient in capacity. A possible explanation for this is that study participants were somewhat speculative about what dimensions of capacity would be relevant because they had not yet been awarded certification and were still in the application stages. Although the NSO participants discussed the considerable effort that would have to go in to creating and sustaining these relationships, the conversation may have

otherwise lacked these elements because the PTSO and CSO participants were not yet in a place to think about the mechanics that would go into creating such relationships.

Doherty and colleagues (2014) identified formalization as an important element of infrastructure and process capacity. Study participants acknowledged their ‘structure’ (i.e., staff and volunteer positions and responsibilities, defined policies and procedures, etc.) to be an advantage; improvements to structure were reflected in CSOs’ motivations for adoption, and how certification was perceived to build a better organization. Participants spoke of their interest to become professionalized and perceived as professional organizations. Therefore, formalization was found to be an important aspect of organizational capacity for this study.

5.3.3 Financial capacity & planning and development capacity.

Participants of this study acknowledged the financial capacity and planning and development capacity dimensions but spoke less about these dimensions than those aforementioned. Likewise, discussion of these two dimensions was simply to say that money and planning would be necessary, but did not dig into the nuances of these dimensions, unlike in existing literature. However, one CSO staff member did share their challenges in struggling to plan for the application of the program and getting swept up in the daily management of the organization and forgetting to plan long term (CSO13). This finding supports the findings of existing literature (Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009) and suggests that other CSOs may experience the same difficulties in preparing to meet the standards when applying for their licences with the Club Licensing Program.

5.3.4 Interrelated capacity dimensions.

Many participants spoke of how those capacity dimensions influenced each other, similar to prior research findings (Misener & Doherty, 2009; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). For several

CSO participants, the ability to satisfy the financial requirements of the licence would directly impact other capacity dimensions, and other outputs required for the program. Wicker and Breuer (2011) also discussed how the human resources capacity dimension significantly impacts each of the other capacity dimensions. This was reflected in participants' comments. PTSOs reported that CSOs had, and would continue to fire executive directors and technical directors who had not bought in to the vision of the program and would be unable to deliver on the standards of the program. Replacing these individuals would help organizations move forward, and improve relationships with the PTSOs. (PTSO2) This demonstrates that the removal of a less than ideal staff person within a CSO would have impacts, both internal and external, to the organization and impact the other dimensions of capacity.

5.3.5 Capacity building.

Many of the themes in this study reflect Millar and Doherty's (2018) definition of capacity building, where capacity building is the concentration of an organization's efforts to resolve their challenges in order to satisfy an organization's needs. The stimulus that instigates Millar and Doherty's model is found in this study (2016), described by study participants as the external and internal factors their organizations were experiencing, coupled with their motivations for implementing the Club Licensing Program. Canada Soccer detailed extensive research and program planning, which can be loosely interpreted as an assessment of the organizational capacity needs, the second step in Millar and Doherty's model (2016). The findings in this study provide evidence of Canada Soccer's efforts to build capacity for their member organizations, thereby increasing the ability to deliver quality soccer- this is the essence of the capacity building model (Millar & Doherty, 2016; 2018). Indeed, the Club Licensing Program is perceived by study participants to positively increase CSOs' abilities to achieve their

missions by providing a roadmap of holistic organizational development, and building structure that supports the player pathway. However, the findings of this study also suggest that certification is not worth the effort, due to the high level of capacity required for possibly negligible benefits. This relates strongly to the complexity of capacity building; building capacity requires a certain level of capacity in order to then generate greater capacity (Millar & Doherty, 2016). The findings of this study propose the dimensions of capacity that must be leveraged in order to build greater organizational capacity.

5.3.6 Summary of organizational capacity and certification.

This study extends our understanding of organizational capacity by exploring the similarities and differences in dimensions of capacity required for governing bodies implementing a certification program, as well as the community sport organization pursuing certification with that program. This examination had not yet occurred in the literature prior to this study. The types of capacity required to be part of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program is very different between the different governance levels. This is reflected in the participants' responses. The capacity needs that the NSO and PTSO participants identified relate directly to the management of the program. NSO and PTSO participants spoke of the manpower, the infrastructure needs, and the relationships that would be required to manage the program. The CSO participants identified major capacity requirements as the skills and expertise of staff and volunteers, the financial ability to complete the certification requirements, the facility and field needs, and the partnerships that would be required to fulfill the standards of the program. As well, the comprehensive model for capacity building offers insight into how Canada Soccer instigated a capacity building process for its member organizations.

This study contributes to the knowledge of organizational capacity by applying what we understand about organizational capacity to the context of certification programs, also not yet undertaken by the literature. Understanding the critical elements of capacity required to implement or adopt a certification program offers governing body practitioners insight into the considerations that should be made when developing a certification program.

5.3.7 Discussion summary.

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity. Institutional pillars, isomorphic pressures, and elements of institutional-level learning were found to be factors influencing the development and adoption of the program. The findings presented throughout the study suggest that the Club Licensing Program has the potential to become both institutionalized, and an institution.

Study participants identified several dimensions of organizational capacity as requirements to implement or adopt the Club Licensing Program. Importantly, the Club Licensing Program was perceived to build organizational capacity for CSOs. Although some study participants were of the opinion that certification requires a high level of capacity and consumes a lot of capacity for very little gain, so therefore is not worth the effort, the main conclusions were that certification builds a better organization and sets CSOs apart. In other words, the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program is perceived to build organizational capacity.

5.4 Implications and Recommendations for Practice

This study adds valuable insight to certification research, an underdeveloped area in the sport management literature. It examines organizational certification within a Canadian context, a first within the literature. The study adds to the current literature by expanding understanding

of the utility of certification to build organizational capacity. It contributes to the scholarly examination of governing bodies leading their members through new initiatives to develop the sport.

The intent of the study was to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity, and I endeavoured to execute a study that is highly relevant in real-time applicability within the soccer community. My hope is that my research can be used to inform policy and program decisions. In the spirit of this sentiment, findings from this study offer several implications and recommendations for those implementing certification programs and those considering pursuing and adopting certification. This section is divided into two subsections: implications for CSOs pursuing or adopting a certification, and those National or Provincial bodies developing and/or implementing a certification program.

5.4.1 Recommendations for those adopting certification programs.

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that CSOs genuinely want to offer the best sport experience they can for their coaches, referees, players, parents, and spectators. This is reflected in CSOs' motivations for adoption: CSOs want to strengthen their organizations to be more effective on the playing field and in the boardroom, they want to stand apart from their competitors, and they want to be recognized as a sport organization that offers a quality participation experience for participants. If presented with the opportunity, CSOs should seriously consider adopting certification for their own organizations. The findings of this study suggest that these interests will be met through certification.

1. The study highlights the necessity of **leveraging human resources** to pursue licensing with the Club Licensing Program.

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- a. The skills and expertise of administrative and technical staff and volunteers, and their buy-in to the common vision of certification were seen to be particularly necessary in order to pursue certification.
 - b. As well, the findings support extant literature's assertion that the human resources capacity dimension significantly affects the other capacity dimensions. Before sport organizations decide to pursue certification, they should ensure that they have the right number of people involved, that those people possess the right skills and experiences, and that those people are invested in the success of certification and the success of the organization.
 - c. If these individuals are in place, sport organizations will have a much greater likelihood of generating the other types of organizational capacity required and ultimately achieving certification.
2. Certification programs like the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program offer CSOs real opportunity to strengthen their organizations because of the program's emphasis on **holistic organizational development**.
- a. If CSOs are able to progress through the levels of certification, they will be sure to experience increased organizational capacity because of the capacity that must be built to meet the increasingly complex standards. If CSOs are interested to build and strengthen their organizations, certification presents a strong opportunity.
 - b. The findings of this study suggest that if and when sport organizations begin to pursue certification, they should approach the certification process with open

minds, and be creative in finding solutions to overcome the challenges that may prevent them from reaching their desired level of certification.

5.4.2 Recommendations for those implementing certification programs.

1. The study found that the NSO was using certification as a **vehicle for change**. The certification program introduced classification and standardization into the soccer environment, but established accountability and facilitated development of member organizations- more important elements of the program. As well, Canada Soccer discussed using the certification program to ‘change the culture’ and shift the focus of the soccer community from winning to the holistic needs of the player.
 - a. The study’s findings indicate that culture change is possible from the implementation of a certification program. This suggests that certification programs offer governing bodies the ability to initiate large-scale change within their membership. If governing bodies are interested to adopt certification programs within their own contexts, they must establish the goals and intended outcomes of the program, and design the program accordingly.
2. Further, PTSOs’ motivations for implementing the Club Licensing Program were to **create system alignment and transform relationships** with both the NSO and the CSOs.
 - a. This finding suggests that governing bodies are interested to reconsider and evolve their roles, their relationships, and their organizational missions as their organizations continue, and not remain stagnant just because they have had success in the past.

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- b. If governing bodies are considering developing and implementing large-scale programs like certification programs within their organizations, they should strongly consider whether a self-assessment is also worthwhile. If it is, governing bodies should take the requisite time to appropriately self-assess by engaging their membership and developing a holistic understanding of where and how the organization should evolve.
 - c. As discussed above, a certification program offers a strong vehicle for change, and engaging in such a self-assessment process after a certification program has been fully developed and implemented would pose significant challenges and be a critically missed opportunity.
 3. Once the decision has been made to implement a certification program, governing bodies must next **consider how the program will be positioned and promoted to their membership.**
 - a. Although the timing of the study in relation to the Club Licensing Program's implementation did not allow a complete understanding of how promotion would impact the adoption of the licensing program by member organizations, the findings suggest that the adoption of a certification program will be greatly affected by how the program is positioned and promoted to membership.
 - b. Governing bodies should consider their program's goals, their and their members' previous experience with certification, and how great the discrepancy is between the programs' standards and their members' abilities to achieve the standards in planning the marketing and communications necessary to implement the program.

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- c. As well, governing bodies should ensure that implementation of the program aligns to the values of the certification program. If the certification program places a heavy emphasis on the development of CSOs, then the implementation of the program should mirror those values by perhaps offering CSOs support and assistance to develop prior to certifying.
4. The findings that indicated there was initial confusion about roles, responsibilities, and messaging about the program between the NSO and PTSOs. Where certification programs are being considered to be delivered by more than one governing body, governing bodies should work to **clarify roles, responsibilities, and the program's goals**.
 - a. This finding is especially important for governing bodies who intend to implement a certification program through multiple levels of sport, and/or with more than one level of governing organization implementing the program. Where certification programs will have more than one level of governing organization delivering the program, it is essential that these organizations build a shared understanding on roles and responsibilities, clearly agree on the principles and goals of the program, and coordinate messaging. The clarity established will contribute to greater success in the program's implementation.
5. The findings of the study indicate that PTSOs and CSOs had mixed perceptions about how the Club Licensing Program would influence CSOs' abilities to achieve their missions. Governing organizations implementing a certification should **proactively manage adopting organizations' perceptions** to increase the positive perceptions of the incoming program.

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- a. Governing bodies should engage in ongoing education about the program, reinforcing rationale for the program and the potential the program offers CSOs.
6. As previously discussed, **adequate and appropriate human resources** will be key to implementing and adopting certification.
 - a. Governing bodies should ensure that their own human resources are appropriately resourced in order to implement their programs.
 - b. As well, governing bodies should contemplate how to best mobilize their capacity to support their CSOs to increase their human resources capacity.
7. Lastly, CSOs emphasized that **recognition for achieving certification** was a highly desired element of certification.
 - a. Governing bodies should consult their members on the specific types of recognition that they would like, and where possible, incorporate them. As well, governing bodies should be sure to provide CSOs with adequate recognition. Doing so will guarantee CSOs' interest in pursuing certification.

A specific report will be prepared based on these recommendations for all research participants following the thesis defense. These findings should prove valuable to sport organizations who are considering developing their own certification programs or adopting certification programs already in existence.

5.5 Future Directions for Research

The exploration of certification and findings in this study open a variety of further avenues for study. Due to the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program still being in the initial stages of implementation, this study was not able to examine the efficacy of the program and determine whether certification will positively influence CSOs' abilities to achieve their

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missions and fulfill each of the three governance levels' motivations for implementation.

Likewise, this study was not able to determine whether the certification program's benefits (i.e., reward, recognition, differentiation, and access to competition) will be meaningfully beneficial to CSOs, or continue to be meaningfully beneficial over the long term. Immense potential remains available to empirically investigate certification with this program. Therefore, future research into the Club Licensing Program's efficacy once the program has been fully implemented, both cross-sectionally and longitudinally, would undoubtedly garner further key insights.

Further, the findings of this study suggest that the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program is meant to result in increased capacity for sport organizations, particularly CSOs. If this occurs, certification offers great promise for other sport organizations attempting to build organizational capacity within their own contexts. However, little is understood about the outcomes of this increased capacity. Investigating these outcomes will offer increased understanding into the complete lifecycle of identifying a need to build capacity, to the process a sport organization would take to increase that capacity, to the outcomes that result from increased capacity.

Prior to this study, research had not compared certification programs to the multidimensional frameworks of organizational capacity. The findings in this study reflect that critical elements of capacity must be leveraged in order to meet certification standards, and in turn, meeting certification standards is presumed to increase organizational capacity. Mapping certification programs to multidimensional frameworks of organizational capacity will increase sport management researchers' and practitioners' understanding of how certification influences organizational capacity.

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Millar and Doherty (2016; 2018) present a comprehensive model of capacity building. The timing of this study did not allow a full analysis of the model to determine its “veracity” (Millar & Doherty, 2016, p. 374). The Club Licensing Program offers a suitable site for a case study examination utilizing the comprehensive model of capacity building for analysis.

Institutional-level learning theories have explained elements of the implementation of certification in Canadian soccer, proving its applicability to phenomena within sport management. Institutional-level learning theories offer great potential in deeper understanding sport management, particularly capacity building in community-level sport, such as with the usage of volunteers and building effective governance and organizational processes. Conducting participatory action research (PAR) with a CSO engaging in certification for the first time would be particularly illuminating.

Finally, this study highlights the difference in focus between Canada Soccer’s approach, and other governing organizations who have implemented certification programs, in that Canada Soccer focused on the development element of certification, while other governing organizations appear to focus on classification and appraisal. Perck and colleagues (2016) utilized statistical analysis to quantify the isomorphic outcomes within Flemish gymnastics clubs. Similar quantitative research would be advantageous to determine any differences in capacity that result from various approaches to certification.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Recruitment Letter to Soccer Organization President/Executive Director

Dear Soccer Organization,

My name is Lara Schroeder and I am a master's student working under the supervision of Dr Katie Misener in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you as you are the President/Executive Director of your organization according to your organization's website.

I am conducting a study that aims to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity. You or someone from your organization is invited to participate.

The study involves phone or in-person interviews with 25 individuals from the various levels within Canadian soccer. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes in length and will take place at a time that is convenient for each participant. I would like to hear your organization's perspectives on the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, and the impact it has on organizational capacity.

The study is being closely monitored by my supervisor, Dr Katie Misener, and the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. I assure you, the final decision about participation is up to each participant.

If your organization is willing to participate, I will send you an email which you can forward on my behalf to the individual(s) who are or would be responsible for the planning, execution, or adoption of a certification program, so that the individual(s) may email or call me directly if they are willing to participate in an interview. We will then be able to establish dates and times that would be best to do an interview. If you have any questions, please contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Researcher:

Lara Schroeder, BSRS
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr Katie Misener, PhD, Associate Professor
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

Appendix B – Recruitment Letter to Soccer Organization Potential Participants

Dear Soccer Organization Representative,

My name is Lara Schroeder and I am a master's student working under the supervision of Dr Katie Misener in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo.

I am conducting a study that aims to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity. I would like to recruit you to take part in the study. This email is being sent on my behalf from your President/Executive Director who identified you as a/the individual who would be or is responsible for the planning, execution, or adoption of a certification program.

The study involves phone or in-person interviews with 25 individuals from the various levels within Canadian soccer. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes in length and will take place at a time that is convenient for you. I would like to hear your organization's perspectives on certification, and the impact it has on organizational capacity.

The study is being closely monitored by my supervisor, Dr Katie Misener, and the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. I assure you, the final decision about participation is yours.

Please read the attached information letter for more details regarding what you and your organization's participation would involve. If you are interested in participating, or have any questions, please contact me directly. We will then be able to establish dates and times that would be best to do an interview.

Sincerely,

Researcher:

Lara Schroeder, BSRS
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr Katie Misener, PhD, Associate Professor
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

Appendix C – Information Letter

Department Letterhead
University of Waterloo

Dear Soccer Organization,

Study Title: Exploring certification programs and organizational capacity in Canadian soccer

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in my study as a Master's student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, under the supervision of Dr. Katie Misener. This letter contains information about the nature of the study and outlines your rights and the possible risks and benefits as a potential participant. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask myself or my supervisor prior to consenting to the study. You will be provided with a copy of the information and consent form if you choose to participate. I would like to invite you to participate in the study.

This study aims to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity. I am interested to hear your organization's perspective on the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program and the impact it will have on organizational capacity. Knowledge and information generated from this study may help other organizations who are interested to develop and pursue certification. At the end of this study the publication of this thesis will share the knowledge from this study with other sport researchers, sport managers, and community members.

The study involves interviews with 25 individuals from the various levels within Canadian soccer. Interviews will be conducted in-person or by phone and will last approximately 60 minutes, in which you will be asked to respond to a series of questions relating to your present understanding of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, your perceptions of the program, and the organizational capacity your organization possesses. Additionally, I may also request copies of policies and procedures, communications like press releases, emails, print documents, internal communications, planning documents, previous or current certification programs, and/or any other relevant documentation for analysis purposes. Analyzing these types of materials will allow me to better explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question(s) you prefer not to answer. You may decide to end the interview or leave the study at any time by communicating this to the researcher. You can withdraw your consent to participate and have your data destroyed by contacting me up until data analysis begins in November, 2018.

You will not receive remuneration for your participation in this study. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. There are no personal benefits as a result of participating in the study, however, you will be contributing to valuable knowledge about sport organization certification programs in Canada and the findings of this study may prove valuable to the future of sport certification programs in Canada.

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis.

Your personal participation in this study will be considered confidential. Your name and the name of your organization will not be used in any paper or publication resulting from this study. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations will be used and you will be assigned a pseudonym in place of your real name and only referred to by the type of position you hold within your organization (e.g. John Doe, President/Executive Director). All information that could identify you will be removed from the data that is collected and stored separately. Data will be securely stored for a minimum of 7 years in an encrypted folder on my password protected computer. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to study data. All records will be destroyed according to University of Waterloo Policy.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (ORE# 23284). If you have questions for the committee, contact the Office of Research Ethics, at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or ore-ceo@uwaterloo.ca.

However, the final decision about participation belongs to you.

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me or my supervisor (see contact information below).

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your involvement in this study.

Sincerely,

Researcher:

Lara Schroeder, BSRS
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr Katie Misener, PhD, Associate Professor
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

Appendix D – Consent Form

Department Letterhead
University of Waterloo

Researcher:

Lara Schroeder, BSRS
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr Katie Misener, PhD, Associate Professor
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

By providing your consent, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

Study Title: Exploring certification programs and organizational capacity in Canadian soccer

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study conducted by Lara Schroeder, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo and Dr Katie Misener, PhD, Supervisor, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask questions related to the study and have received satisfactory answers to my questions and any additional details.

I was informed that participation in the study is voluntary and that I can withdraw this consent by informing the researcher.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (ORE# 23284). If you have questions for the committee, contact the Office of Research Ethics, at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or ore-ceo@uwaterloo.ca.

For all other questions contact Lara Schroeder or the Faculty Supervisor, Dr Katie Misener, by email or telephone as noted above.

- I agree to my interview being audio recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.
- I give permission for the use of anonymous quotations in any publication that comes from this research.
- I agree of my own free will to participate in the study.

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Appendix E – Interview Guide for CSOs

Introduction & Background

Turn audiotape on

Introduce myself and the project (The purpose of the study is to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity.).

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Do you have any questions about the consent form? I would like to remind you that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you may withdraw your consent to participate in this study up to when data analysis begins. You may choose not to answer any of the interview questions. At this time, please give verbal confirmation that you have signed the consent form, and then please forward a copy to me after this interview.

1. What is your role with your organization?
2. Roughly how many members does your club have?
3. Had your organization previously pursued certification/participated in a standards-based league?

If response is yes:

4. What level did your organization achieve?
5. What was your involvement with the pursuit/management of the certification/participation in the standards-based league?
6. What was your organization's reasons for pursuing certification/participation in the standards-based league?
7. How long were you a part of the certification program/standards-based league?

If response is no:

8. Had your organization considered adopting a/the certification program/entering the standards-based league available to you? Why or why not?

Club Licensing Program

9. Describe the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, as you understand it?
10. Describe your involvement with the Club Licensing Program now?
11. At this time, what level of Club Licensing Program does your organization intend to pursue? Why that level?
12. What do you understand to be Canada Soccer's primary drivers for implementing a national Club Licensing Program?
13. What outcomes do you anticipate your organization will experience as a result of achieving your desired level of licence with the Program?
 - a. Do you think that other clubs will experience the same outcomes, or are there outcomes that may be unique to some and not others? Expand.
14. What outcomes do you anticipate your PTSO will experience from the implementation of the Club Licensing Program? Canada (Canadian) Soccer?
15. What aspects of the program appeal to your organization that drive your pursuit for your desired level of licensing?
16. How has your organization so far responded to the national mandate to move to a national licensing program? [Have you supported or objected to the Program?] [Is there concern, excitement, resistance, acceptance?]
17. Does your organization feel pressured to pursue licensing with the Program? If so, in what ways? From whom/where? If not, why not?
 - a. Do you think other clubs in the province/Canada will feel pressured to pursue licensing with the Program? If yes, in similar ways or different ways? Why? If no, why?

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- b. Do you think the provinces/territories feel pressured to implement the Program by Canada Soccer? If yes, how so? If no, why?

Organizational Capacity & Building Capacity

18. How will the pursuit of this licence impact your organization's ability to execute its mission and meet its goals? What specifically might be impacted? [Positive, negative, no impact]
19. Based on what you know and understand about the Club Licensing Program Characteristics and Performance Indicators, how much work will be required to obtain your desired licence?
20. Based on what you know and understand about the Club Licensing Program Characteristics and Performance Indicators, what sorts of resources will your organization have to utilize to obtain your desired licence? [human resources, financial capacity, relationships and networks, infrastructure and process, planning and development]
21. What challenges or needs have been identified that will have to be addressed in order to obtain your desired licence?
 - a. What plans are in place to resolve those challenges/needs?
22. What assets or strengths have been identified that your organization possesses that will be beneficial in obtaining your desired licence?
23. What do you perceive to be the impact of the Club Licensing Program:
 - a. For your own organization?
 - b. For your provincial/territorial association?
 - c. For Canada Soccer?

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24. When the organization has obtained its desired licence, do you believe your organization will have an increased ability to execute its mission and meet its goals? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

- a. Do you believe your provincial/territorial association will have an increased ability to execute its mission and meet its goals? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
- b. Do you believe that Canada Soccer will have an increased ability to execute its mission and meet its goals? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

25. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for agreeing to be a participant!

Appendix F – Interview Guide for PTSOs

Introduction & Background

Turn audiotape on

Introduce myself and the project (The purpose of the study is to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity.).

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Do you have any questions about the consent form? I would like to remind you that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you may withdraw your consent to participate in this study up to when data analysis begins. You may choose not to answer any of the interview questions. At this time, please give verbal confirmation that you have signed the consent form, and then please forward a copy to me after this interview.

1. What is your role with the organization?
2. Did your organization previously deliver a certification program/standards-based league?
 - a. What was your involvement with that program/league?

If response is yes:

3. Briefly summarize your organization's previous certification program/standards-based league? What principles was it based on, how many levels did it have, etc.?
4. Where did the idea for a certification/standards-based league come from?
5. How long was your certification program/standards-based league in existence?
6. What level of uptake did you have with your member organizations?

If response is no:

7. Had your organization previously considered implementing a certification program/standards-based league? Why or why not?

Club Licensing Program

8. Describe the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, as you understand it?
9. Describe your involvement with the Club Licensing Program now?

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10. What do you understand to be Canada Soccer's primary drivers for implementing a national Club Licensing Program?
11. What outcomes do you anticipate your organization will experience as a result of fully implementing the program?
 - a. Do you think that other PTSOs will experience the same outcomes, or are there outcomes that may be unique to some and not others? Expand.
12. What outcomes do you anticipate your members will experience from the implementation of the Club Licensing Program? Canada (Canadian) soccer?
13. What aspects of the program will appeal to your members that will drive the pursuit of licensing?
14. What aspects of the Program particularly appeal to your organization?
15. How has your organization responded to the national 'mandate' to move to a national licensing program? [Have you supported or objected to the Program?]
16. What has your membership expressed about the Program from what they know about it at this moment? [Is there concern, excitement, resistance, acceptance?]
17. Does your organization feel pressured to implement the Program? If so, in what ways? From whom/where? If not, why?
 - a. Do you think the other PTSOs have felt/feel pressured to implement the Program? If yes, in similar ways or different ways? Why? If no, why?
 - b. Do you think the clubs in your province/other provinces will feel pressured to pursue licensing with the Program? If yes, how so? If no, why?

Organizational Capacity & Building Capacity

18. How will the implementation of this licence impact your organization's ability to execute its mission and meet its goals? What specifically might be impacted? [Positive, negative, no impact]
19. How much work will be required to fully implement this program?
20. What sorts of resources will your organization have to utilize to implement this program? [human resources, financial capacity, relationships and networks, infrastructure and process, planning and development]
21. What challenges or needs have been identified that will have to be addressed in order to fully implement this program?
 - a. What plans are in place to resolve those challenges/needs?
22. What assets or strengths have been identified that your organization possesses that will be beneficial in fully implementing the program?
23. What do you perceive to be the impact of the Club Licensing Program:
 - a. For your own organization?
 - b. For your member organizations?
 - c. For Canada Soccer?
24. When your organization has fully implemented the program and the majority of your members have reached their desired levels of licence, do you believe your organization will have an increased ability to execute its mission and meet its goals? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
 - a. Do you believe your members will have an increased ability to execute their missions and meet their goals? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

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- b. Do you believe that Canada Soccer will have an increased ability to execute its mission and meet its goals? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

26. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for agreeing to be a participant!

Appendix G – Interview Guide for NSO

Introduction & Background

Turn audiotape on

Introduce myself and the project (The purpose of the study is to explore the factors influencing the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity.).

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Do you have any questions about the consent form? I would like to remind you that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you may withdraw your consent to participate in this study up to when data analysis begins. You may choose not to answer any of the interview questions. At this time, please give verbal confirmation that you have signed the consent form, and then please forward a copy to me after this interview.

1. What is your role with the organization?
2. Describe your involvement with the Club Licensing Program?
3. What were the circumstances that prompted a discussion to implement a certification/licensing program? [Pressures, opportunities, factors, deficiencies?]
 - a. Were any of these factors occurring at a specific place in the hierarchy?
4. Where did the idea for a certification/licensing program come from?
5. Were there other options that you considered instead of implementing a certification program? What were they?
6. How long was the decision-making process in selecting the certification program as an option from the beginning conversation to the decision to implement a program?
7. Did you refer to any existing literature or any existing models in developing your own?
 - a. What did you add/remove/keep?
8. What sort of research did you conduct about other existing certification programs in making decisions about your own?

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

9. What prompted the inclusion of the different components you included in your certification program?
 - a. Was there anything you considered including but decided against?
 - b. What/why?
10. Did your program evolve in any way during its development? How so?
11. Tell me about the planning and implementation process. Did it occur in stages? How long were the stages?

Club Licensing Program

12. Briefly summarize the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. What principles is it based on, how many levels does it have, etc.?
13. What is Canada Soccer's primary drivers for implementing a national Club Licensing Program?
 - a. Do you believe the PTSOs have their own drivers for implementing this program, or are they implementing because it is a nationally directed program? If yes, what do you think those drivers are? How do they match or differ from Canada Soccer's drivers?
14. What outcomes do you anticipate your organization will experience as a result of the implementation of the Club Licensing Program? Canadian soccer?
15. What outcomes do you anticipate the PTSOs will experience from the implementation of the Club Licensing Program?
 - a. Do you think that some PTSOs will experience outcomes that may be unique to themselves and not others? Expand.

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16. What outcomes do you anticipate the clubs will experience by attaining their desired level of licence?
17. How has your organization presented the program to your membership, as in, what sorts of messages have you shared with members to increase the buy in and adoption of the program?
 - a. How has that message differed between stakeholder groups (CSOs or PTSOs)?
18. Was there any discussion with the PTSOs about how they would present the program to their membership? If yes, what was the discussion? If no, why not?
 - a. As far as you're aware, is the messaging the PTSOs presented to their membership consistent with how your organization has presented the program? If not, how has it differed?
19. Based on my discussions with the clubs participating in this project (which is mostly National Youth Club Licence applicants), there seems to be a large emphasis being placed on the high-performance league aspect of the licensing program. What are your thoughts on this emphasis? Is it in line with how you've presented the program or how the PTSOs are presenting the program?
20. What aspects of the Program will appeal to clubs that will drive the pursuit of licensing?
21. What aspects of the Program will particularly appeal to the PTSOs?
22. Do you think the PTSOs have felt/feel pressured to implement the Program? If yes, from whom/where? Why? If no, why?
23. Do you think the clubs will feel pressured to pursue licensing with the Program? If yes, from whom/where? Why? If no, why?

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24. How has the implementation of the licence impacted your organization's ability to execute its mission and meet its goals? What specifically has been impacted? [Positive, negative, no impact] [The process of pursuing the licence- from intent to implementation]
25. What sorts of resources will your organization have to utilize to implement the program? [human resources, financial capacity, relationships and networks, infrastructure and process, planning and development]
26. What challenges or needs have been identified that had to be/are/will be addressed in order to fully implement the program?
- a. What plans had to be put in place to resolve those challenges/needs?
27. What assets or strengths have been identified that your organization possesses that will be beneficial in fully implementing the program?
28. What do you perceive to be the impact of the Licensing Program?
- a. For your own organization?
 - b. For the PTSOs?
 - c. For the CSOs?
29. When the program is fully implemented and the majority of members have reached their desired levels of licence, do you believe your organization will have an increased ability to execute its mission and meet its goals? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
- a. Do you believe the PTSOs will have an increased ability to execute their missions and meet their goals? If yes, how so? If not, why not?
 - b. Do you believe the clubs will have an increased ability to execute their missions and meet their goals? If yes, how so? If not, why not?

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30. How do you feel that the program's implementation is going so far? Is it going as successfully as you would like?

31. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for agreeing to be a participant!

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

Appendix H – Feedback Letter

Department Letterhead
University of Waterloo

Date

Dear Name of Participant,

Thank you for your participation in the study entitled “Exploring certification programs and organizational capacity in Canadian soccer”. As a reminder, the purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the development and adoption of certification programs in Canadian soccer and how certification is perceived to build organizational capacity.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, we plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or would like a summary of the results, please provide your email address, and when the study is completed, anticipated by May 2019, I will send you the information. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my faculty supervisor by email or telephone as noted below.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (ORE# 23284). If you have questions for the committee, contact the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or ore-ceo@uwaterloo.ca.

Sincerely,

Researcher:

Lara Schroeder, BSRS
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr Katie Misener, PhD, Associate Professor
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

Appendix I – Quality Soccer Provider Standards

Table 3

Quality Soccer Provider Standards

Pillars	Standards
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is located in Canada Is a Member in Good Standing with its governing organization(s) Is compliant with the by-laws, policies, and directives of its governing organization(s) Has basic governance structures Adheres to Canada Soccer Code of Conduct and Ethics
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registers all participants with its governing organization(s) Has basic management and operational structures Distributes information from Canada Soccer and its governing organization(s) to its participants
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has access to appropriate facilities and equipment to provide its programming
Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a safe, accessible, and inclusive soccer experience Provides an enjoyable soccer experience focused on long term participation Operates programming that is aligned to Long Term Player Development stage-appropriate best principles (Recommendation)

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

Appendix J – Provincial/Territorial Youth Club Licence – Level 1 Standards

Table 4

Provincial/Territorial Youth Club Licence – Level 1 Standards

Pillars	Standards
	Demonstrates the Characteristics and Behaviours from the Canada Soccer Standards for Quality Soccer
Governance	Has basic governance documents Is a registered legal entity, compliant with all relevant legislation and Canada Revenue Agency requirements
Administration	Has basic planning documents to guide the organization Works in harmony, aligning values and operations, with its governing organization(s) Is financially viable Has basic management and operational policies and practices Has an identified Administrative Lead with clearly defined responsibilities The Administrative Lead is committed to ongoing development and education Provides financial support for Administrative Lead, Technical Lead, Technical Staff (if applicable), and coaches to pursue ongoing development, training and certification Has sufficient and appropriate staff to deliver its programs Provides or facilitates financial support to players with financial barriers to participation
Infrastructure	Has an actively maintained online presence Has access to facilities and equipment to provide enhanced programming
Technical	Operates programming that is aligned to Long Term Player Development stage-appropriate best principles Has basic technical planning to guide its programs and services Has an established pathway to provide players with access to opportunities for participation in Grassroots, Community, Competitive, and Development/Performance Streams Has an established pathway that provides opportunities for players to continue participation in the Soccer for Life stage (senior and masters) Educates coaches, players, and parents about the Provincial/Territorial and National Player Pathways and Long-Term Player Development model (Recommendation) Has an identified and qualified Technical Lead (refer to Category Requirements for specifics) with clearly defined responsibilities Technical Lead is committed to ongoing development and education Has coaches and team personnel who are properly trained and/or certified for the groups/teams with which they work and competitions in which they participate

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

Appendix K – Provincial/Territorial Youth Club Licence – Level 2 Standards

Table 5

Provincial/Territorial Youth Club Licence – Level 2 Standards

Pillars	Standards
	Demonstrates the Characteristics and Behaviours from the Provincial/Territorial Youth Club Licence Level 1
Governance	Has advanced governance structures and documents and commits to ongoing governance development
Administration	Has advanced, long-term, planning documents that include measures of success Is in strong financial health and demonstrates fiscal responsibility and appropriate deployment of resources Is competently managed and operated and demonstrates appropriate human resource and financial management practices
Infrastructure	Deploys appropriate resources toward administration and operations Has enhanced marketing and communication plans and capabilities Deploys appropriate resources toward infrastructure access and development Has a physical space as a headquarters for operations (Recommendation)
Technical	Has access to enhanced facilities to allow for advanced programming Deploys appropriate resources toward technical programs, services, staffing, and support Is aligned to its Provincial/Territories and National Player Pathways Has advanced technical planning documents that align to the Strategic Plan and Long-Term Player Development principles and include short and long-term goals Has an Annual Plan for all programming, which includes periodized training and competition strategies and schedules aligned to the competition(s) in which it participates for the Learning to Train, Training to Train, Training to Compete, and Soccer for Life stages Has a playing philosophy and training methodology and/or curriculum that is consistent with Long Term Player Development recommendations across all stages Understands and implements Canada Soccer Player and Position Profiles and Characteristics Educates coaches, players, and parents about the Provincial/Territorial and National Player Pathways and Long-Term Player Development model Operates advanced, year-round programming Has programs that remove barriers to participation for and/or target under-represented groups Has a Technical Lead with enhanced certification (refer to Category Requirements for specifics) Has access to an internal Learning Facilitator to deliver Canada Soccer Community Coaching Workshops for the stages at which it operates Has access to a Goalkeeper Coach and provides goalkeeper-specific training opportunities Has a strategy for coach recruitment, retention, development, assessment, and recognition that includes targeting women in coaching Offers non-certification coach development and mentorship opportunities and provides coaches with access to appropriate support Coaches are committed to ongoing development and education Has a Physical Training Plan that includes stage-appropriate testing protocol

CERTIFICATION, CAPACITY & CANADIAN SOCCER

Appendix L – Canada Soccer National Youth Club Licence Standards

Table 6

Canada Soccer National Youth Club Licence Standards

Pillars	Standards
Governance	Demonstrates the Characteristics and Behaviours from the Provincial/Territorial Youth Club Licence Level 1 and 2
	Has optimal governance structures, processes and policies or is committed to their development
Administration	Demonstrates a commitment to continual improvements to its existing governance structures/processes
	Has advanced management and operational practices
	Has advanced operational planning documents that align to the Strategic and Technical Plans
Infrastructure	Has enhanced community engagement plans, capabilities, and practices (Recommendation)
	Has advanced financial practices, development plans, and resources
	Has access to a physical space as a headquarters for operations
	Has access to advanced facilities to allow for the delivery of optimal developmental programming
Technical	Has a facility strategy aligned to Strategic, Operational, and Technical Plans
	Has a Technical Plan that aligns to the Long-Term Player Development Model
	Has a Game Model that is aligned to the playing philosophy
	Has Player Management Pathway and associated support mechanisms
	Supports a holistic approach to player development that takes in to account Physical, Mental, Technical/Tactical, and Social/Emotional development
	Operates optimal, standards-based, programming
	Participates in the highest level of competition available
	Has a Technical Lead with advanced certification (refer to Category Requirements for specifics)
	Has access to Learning Facilitator(s) to deliver Coach Licensing Workshops as guided by Canada Soccer and/or governing organization(s)
Has a Sport Science and Medicine Plan aligned to the Technical Plan	
Provides access to appropriate sport science and medicine expertise and support	
Has access to appropriate technology to support player and coach development	