

Experiential Learning and New Institutionalism in Ontario Higher Education
A Qualitative Analysis of the Experiential Learning Certificate at the University of Waterloo

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.

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Abstract

Recent events in the field of higher education have resulted in experiential learning becoming an institutional priority in many post-secondary institutions. In Ontario, the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel recommended expanding experiential learning opportunities for post-secondary students (2017). This is coupled with other sources, such as Canada's Business Higher Education Roundtable, which suggested that all post-secondary students have at least one experiential learning opportunity by graduation (2018). Experiential learning builds on traditional instructional approaches and fosters engagement between students and course material in non-traditional settings. This thesis presents the findings of a case study, which investigated a particular institution's response to pressures from the organizational field to expand experiential education. The Experiential Education Certificate allows students at the University of Waterloo to engage in a variety of course-based and extra-curricular experiential learning opportunities. This case study relied on qualitative interviews, and content analysis of both obtrusive and unobtrusive documents. Through the combination of semi-structured interviews with instructors, members from the Centre for Teaching Excellence, and members of the EDGE team, I found that this particular program represents a more ceremonial response to organizational pressures, and had not meaningfully penetrated the technical core of the institution. Moreover, faculty members discussed myriad challenges which impact their ability and willingness to implement experiential learning. This research is particularly timely, as institutions review their commitments to experiential learning in the context of a change in government, which may bring new institutional pressures. As experiential learning continues to grow in popularity in higher education, this research leaves room for further investigation which could embrace a multi-cited work.

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I respectfully acknowledge that this research and my academic studies took place on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land promised to Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

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Introduction

It is an exciting time to be researching experiential learning in the context of Canadian higher education. In 2016 the province of Ontario released a report *Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility* (Government of Ontario, 2016), which had a number of recommendations for the province to consider in its mission to prepare future graduates for the technology- and knowledge-based economy of the twenty-first century. In its *Summary of Recommendations*, The Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel made a recommendation for the province to expand experiential learning opportunities for both secondary and post-secondary students, and commit to ensuring "every student has at least one experiential learning opportunity by the end of high school and one opportunity by the end of post-secondary education" (p. 2). This report, and this recommendation have been one of the driving influences, and sources of institutional pressure, on Ontario universities to better equip their students for post-graduation work and living.

Some have argued that the topic of experiential learning in higher education is nothing new, and that it has been happening for decades. For example, Henry (2017), has argued that for generations students have had access to myriad co-curricular, extra-curricular, and work-related opportunities to supplement their curricular learning. The *Higher Education and Quality Council of Ontario* (HEQCO) have acknowledged that experiential learning and work-integrated learning have become 'hot topics' in discussions about higher education. At its core, experiential learning builds on traditional forms and methods of instruction (e.g. lectures, didactic teaching methods, and traditional classroom interactions), and adds in an element of engagement, where learners build-on and apply their learning, often in non-traditional settings. This body has also acknowledged that what is new in the discussions of experiential education is the connection of

experiences and skill development. Further, the commitment of the Government of Ontario for all students to have at least one experiential learning opportunity raises issues of measurement, and how these experiences will be counted (Stirling et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the Premier's Expert Panel's recommendation was well-received and responded to by Ontario universities, who collectively committed to honouring the recommendation (Ontario's Universities, 2017).

The commitment of both the Ontario Government and the collective universities of Ontario to expand experiential education presents an interesting opportunity to investigate the relationships between institutions and their broader organizational environment, and how organizational arrangements such as those between instructors and their institution's administration shapes how experiential learning is being fostered. To this end, I conducted a case study at the University of Waterloo, asking the following research questions: 1) do programs like EDGE penetrate the technical core of academic institutions, and transform teaching and learning? Or, are such programs more ceremonial?; 2) according to institutional actors, what factors impact their ability to foster experiential education initiatives, such as the EDGE program? Below I provide an extensive outline of the newly developed Experiential Learning Certificate, as well as outline the remainder of this thesis case study.

University of Waterloo, and the Experiential Education Certificate Program

The particular case used in the analysis of this research project is the Experiential Education Certificate, referred to as EEC hereafter. EEC began in 2017 at the University of Waterloo, an institution which is considered to be the most innovative university in Canada, and has been so for the last twenty-three years (Maclean's, 2018a). Moreover, it was ranked the third top comprehensive university in the Maclean's 2019 university ranking, which consist of a "significant amount of research activity and a wide range of programs at the undergraduate and

graduate level, including professional degrees” (Maclean’s, 2018a). The University of Waterloo is located in Southern Ontario and is home to the largest co-operative education program in the world (Council of Ontario Universities, 2018; Maclean’s, 2018b).

Experiential learning has become a prominent focus at the institutional level at the University, as it was outlined as an institutional aspiration and initiative in the 2017-2020 Strategic Mandate Agreement with the Ontario government (Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 2018), and was included as one of the eight themes in the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan as *Experiential Education for All* (University of Waterloo, 2013). As an initiative aligned with this strategic theme, the University developed the Experiential Education Certificate, otherwise known as EDGE. The EDGE program consists of various milestones, oriented to better preparing non-co-op students for post-graduation employment across several degree programs. Namely, these programs include Applied Health Sciences, Arts, Entrepreneurship, Environment, and Science. These milestones include a skills identification and articulation workshop, a career development course, three academic or work experiences, and a capstone workshop (EDGE, 2018). While these components will be further outlined below, the main component of interest for this study is the three work experiences; specifically, the academic experiences, as they will best address the research questions pertaining to whether programs such as this penetrate the technical core of academic institutions.

The skills identification and articulation workshop assists students in recognizing the myriad work-related skills they have amassed through their schedule of studies, as well as through volunteer and professional work, and how they might best present and articulate those skills to prospective employers (EDGE, 2018). This component of the EDGE program is

facilitated either by the Centre for Career Action, or included as a component of pre-approved courses specific to this module.

The career development course focuses on students developing core career skills, as well as aligning their professional career goals with their personal values and interests (EDGE, 2018). Under the EDGE program, students can either register for a professional development course through WatPD (the University's professional development program), or through one of the courses which have been pre-approved as equivalent.

The main experiential education component of the EDGE program is the three academic or work experiences. Students completing the EDGE program can either choose to take courses which have been pre-approved as experiential learning courses, or partake in on-and off-campus work experiences. In order for a course to have been pre-approved as an EDGE-eligible course, the course needed to include eighteen hours of work outside of the classroom with a third-party member, usually an industry or community partner. Further, the students submit a reflective assignment on meeting EDGE-specific learning outcomes, and the third-party member submits an evaluation of the student (EDGE, 2018). At the point in which this research was conducted, there were twenty-one courses approved as EDGE-appropriate. Alternatively, students could register in on-and off-campus experiences, such as work or volunteerism, comprising of thirty-six hours of work in a given term (EDGE, 2018). Students who choose to pursue this route need to also take a professional development course through WatPD, submit a reflective assignment regarding EDGE-specific learning outcomes, and have their supervisor submit an evaluation of their performance.

The final component of the EDGE program is the capstone workshop. This component is completed when all other EDGE requirements have been met, or will be met within the same

term of completion (EDGE, 2018). This workshop is facilitated by members from the Centre for Career Action, and is intended to prompt students' reflection on their progress, and create a plan of career action going forward.

Contents of the Thesis

Chapter One: The Context of Experiential Learning in Canadian Higher Education, provides an extensive overview of the existing literature on experiential learning in higher education. I provide context on the theoretical frames which have been popularly used for both framing and implementing experiential learning. This chapter also considers the unique considerations for both faculty and students, as well as considerations for administrations more broadly. I conclude by reviewing some evidentiary claims as to the benefits of experiential education for student learning outcomes.

Chapter Two: New Institutional Theory outlines the theoretical approach which frames the research questions, analysis, and overall analytic perspective of the case study. New institutionalism is an organizational theory which has been used to analyze how organizations are shaped by their environments, and respond to external pressures. I review key propositions of New institutionalism, and make connections to educational sociology, and experiential education.

Chapter Three: Methods discusses the methodological approach which was used to address the research questions. A case study method was used to examine a case of a particular institution's response to organizational pressures, and the development of an experiential learning certificate. While qualitative in nature, this study relied on a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both semi-structured interviews with key institutional actors (e.g. faculty, staff from the Centre for Teaching Excellence, and EDGE program staff), as well as content analysis of

institutional documents. This chapter also details the data analysis process and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four addresses the first research question: do programs like EDGE penetrate the technical core of academic institutions, and transform teaching and learning? Or, are such programs more ceremonial? Through the semi-structured interviews, and in conjunction with key institutional documents, I conclude that the EDGE program is ceremonial, and has not impactfully penetrated the technical core of the institution. While the institution has publicized its commitment to experiential learning, the intentions of the EDGE program were not aligned with the experiences and perspectives of instructors. I suggest this to be evidence of loose-coupling, and the EDGE program relying on a logic of confidence that instructors are teaching in alignment with the program criteria.

Chapter Five addresses the second research question: according to institutional actors, what factors impact their ability to foster experiential education initiatives, such as the EDGE program? Previous works have identified the unique professional and personal considerations for those tasked with implementing experiential learning. In this chapter I extend the work of Coburn (2004), whose work acknowledges the personal considerations for teachers choosing to foster experiential learning. I extend her framing concepts to higher education, and the considerations of instructors in the context of broader organizational pressures.

The thesis concludes with a review of key findings, as they relate to both existing literature and new institutional theory. As well, I review both the limitations of this study, and implications for future research on experiential learning in higher education.

The Context of
Experiential Learning in Canadian Higher Education

Canadian universities are currently answering a national call to better develop and implement experiential learning programming for their students (Universities Canada, 2018) to prepare their graduates for work in the twenty-first century. Broadly, experiential learning programming is seen to provide students with hands-on opportunities to help bridge the divide between theory and practice and equip them with in-demand hard- and soft-skills (Council of Ontario Universities, 2016). According to business leaders, all university students should have the opportunity to participate in at least one form of experiential learning by the end of graduation (Canada's Business Higher Education Roundtable, 2018). The increased demand by government and other educational stakeholders for post-secondary institutions to implement experiential learning opportunities across curricular and co-curricular practices raises a number of questions about the role universities and their constituents play in fostering twenty-first century competencies (Ontario Cooperative Education Association, 2016; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

This chapter will review the existing literature on the topic of experiential learning in the context of higher education. While there are initiatives to foster this pedagogy in Canadian secondary-schools, the recent push by the Ontario government to implement experiential learning in higher education makes this topic particularly timely. Broadly, the literature on experiential learning has been regarded as weak and diffuse (Roberts, 2018), often developing in disciplinary pockets rather than its own field of study, or cross-disciplinary consideration. As a result, the literature on this topic lacks depth and attentiveness to experiential learning as its own field of study (Roberts, 2018). Indeed, one of the challenges to understanding and analyzing 'experience' in education is the conceptual weight which has been placed on the term. The term

‘experiential learning’ has become more of a buzzword in higher education discourse at the expense of developing concrete pedagogy (Seaman & Nelsen, 2011). Moreover, the wide application of this term has served as a limitation to finding a collection of literature which provides a clear, coherent, and accurate depiction of how experiential learning is currently conceptualized in Canadian higher education.

It is my intention that this review will provide the reader with an understanding of the origins of experiential learning, and the theoretical models which influence current conceptualization and implementation strategies. Further, this chapter is organized to consider the unique implications for students, who are the primary beneficiaries of experiential learning; faculty members, who are under increasing pressure to implement experiential learning in their courses; and institutions, which are incorporating experiential learning into their organizational mandates.

Four Villages of Experiential Learning

The term ‘experiential learning’ has been applied broadly across a variety of disciplines (e.g. Business Studies, Geography, Marketing, Sociology), policy and research reports (Council of Ontario Universities; Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario), and media discourse (Murphy, 2018a; 2018b). Warner Weil and McGill (1989) contend in their seminal work that there are two perspectives one may consider when conceptualizing experiential learning. The first perspective considers the various ways in which experiential learning challenges the traditional structures of education such as authority mechanisms (i.e. assessment and accreditation) and instructional approaches. This is reflected in amended organizational arrangements in the academy, as well as influenced by student-centred approaches to teaching

and learning (Baeten, 2010; 2016). The second perspective considers how non-traditional (experiential) pedagogy fits within the existing structure of education and the barriers instructors face when they try to incorporate experiential learning into their courses (Breunig, 2017).

Warner Weil & McGill (1989) further assert that one needs to keep as broad a conception as possible with regard to experiential learning in order to appreciate all of its potential benefits and challenges. They present a heuristic model, and contend that there are essentially four “villages” (hereafter referred to as ‘approaches’), or clusters of interrelated ideas which inform conceptions-of and concerns-about experiential learning. Each ‘village’, therefore captures a spectrum of meanings, practices, and ideologies of those involved in developing and implementing experiential learning in the education system. Moreover, each “constituent” in the education system is seen to hold distinct views of experiential learning based on their respective roles and professional responsibility. Examples of these constituents include policy makers, educators, and institutional entrepreneurs (see DiMaggio, 1988), or those who exert influence on the education system, such as parents and students.

The first approach focuses on the ways in which learning from life and work is assessed and accredited in higher education (Warner Weil & McGill, 1989). According to this perspective, experiential learning can act as a basis for identifying individual learning outcomes, admission decisions, or to shorten the length of a particular program. Experience provides specific knowledge and skills which are relevant to learning opportunities within and outside the classroom, and this village recognizes the potential for this learning to reduce inequalities in access to higher education for those whose educational qualifications have traditionally been discounted or diminished. For example, having one’s previous education and learning accredited

would provide a more accessible and stable transition for women re-entering academia after taking time away from studies to raise children.

The second approach of experiential learning contends that this form of learning has the potential to bring about change in the learning process in higher education (Warner Weil & McGill, 1989). A critical component of this village is the inclusion of reflective exercises that follow experiential opportunities; they are the primary method for students to make connections between what they have learned in class and how they interpret the utility of that knowledge as useable in the real world (Qualters, 2010). Proponents of this village assert two criteria which they consider basic values in experiential learning. The first is that the prior experience of learners should be seen as a resource for further learning. These proponents recognize the unique lived experiences of all learners, and by identifying and building on those experiences, it can be a resource for meaningful and richer learning experiences. Second, learning in the context of higher education should be “active, meaningful, and relevant to ‘real life’ agendas” (p. 7). This village assumes that the shift toward more student-centred approaches to instruction alters relationship between educators and learners (Baeten 2010; 2016). It is this second village which is most related to prominent theories of experiential learning, such as Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984), and emphasized in current discussions of experiential learning in higher education.

The third approach assumes that experiential learning is the basis for group consciousness, community action, as well as social change. In this context, the ways in which one interprets their experience is a reflection of diversity and power dynamics existing in the education system. Essentially, one’s reflective capability is always influenced by their positionality, and this implicates other social theories of hegemony, and power (Warner Weil & McGill, 1989). This has particular relevance for current initiatives to increase the accessibility of

experiential learning, and the focus on diversity and inclusion as these programs develop and become more prominent in the landscape of higher education (Roberts, 2018).

Finally, the fourth approach of experiential learning is more attuned to the personal development of the learner, and suggests that experiential learning may be used as a mechanism which results in increased self-awareness and personal development (Warner Weil & McGill, 1989). Not only do reflective exercises help develop the learner as an individual, but they also help the learner consider their positionality within their group of peers, and this understanding may increase group effectiveness and society more broadly.

There are interconnections between these villages, and it would be a limitation to pedagogy for educational constituents to approach experiential learning solely from one perspective. Indeed, each village considers unique implications and benefits of experiential learning. On the contrary Warner Weil and McGill (1989) encourage constituents to keep as broad a perspective as possible when thinking about experiential learning. In order for experiential learning to be most effective, those designing opportunities for students should seek to recognize the myriad approaches to learning through experience.

Schools of Thought and Conceptualizing Experiential Learning

Broadly, two theorists are most cited when it comes to experiential learning in higher education, John Dewey (1938) and David Kolb (1984). Both contribute perspectives as to how experiential learning should be conceptualized in order for it to be most adaptable to various learning environments, and therefore produce the most successful learning outcomes for students.

John Dewey (1938) is most credited for early work on advocating for including quality learning experiences in education. It should be noted that while Dewey is widely cited for

introducing the concept of experience to education, the term ‘experiential learning’ was not established until much later in the 1960’s (see Chickering, 1976; Seaman, Brown, & Quay, 2017). Dewey’s contribution to education echoed previous social theorists who asserted that formal educational institutions have two operational roles (Dewey, 1938; Durkheim, 1961). The first is the transmission of knowledge that occurs between educators and pupils, and the second is the moral education of learners. However, Dewey acknowledged that the traditional approaches to teaching and learning were becoming outmoded by increasing demands on the education system.

While he was not writing about higher education specifically, Dewey recognized that there was a conflict between the pedagogical mentality of the traditional school model and the “new education” of the day. The new education model was opposed to the autocratic instructional approaches and the lack of *appropriate* experiential opportunities to connect knowledge acquisition with practical use. This was not to say that traditional pedagogy was devoid of experience entirely; rather, they were of the wrong kind (Dewey, 1938). For example, students being ‘drilled’ repeatedly on the same task for the purposes of memorization, and not being able to exercise judgement and original thought in new learning situations. Quality experience in the learning process was suggested to be the solution for this conflict, as it had the potential to not only have immediate impact on the intellectual perceptions of the learner, but also to influence the way learners approached experiences later in life. For an experiential learning opportunity to be of high quality, educators need to think about what the experience is, how it will value the student, and how connections to the classroom will be facilitated (Dewey, 1938; Eyler, 2009; Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). By incorporating experiential opportunities into the learning process, it was assumed that learners would be more equipped to see the

connections between curricular content and the ways knowledge is mobilized and applied in professional settings (Eyler, 2009).

However, Dewey cautioned that not all experience is educative (Dewey, 1938). On the contrary, there are instances where learning through experience, if not framed correctly, can lead to disengaged pupils and negatively impact their future experiences. Ultimately, the value of the experience is predicated on its ability to bridge the divide between theory and practice (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). What makes this approach to learning distinct from Kolb (1984) is the placement of experience in the learning process. For Dewey (1938), experiential opportunities should be used to support or reinforce learning which has already taken place in the classroom. In short, experience bridged the divide between theory and practice.

The work of David Kolb (1984) offers a more concrete suggestion of how experience should be utilized in the learning process in higher education (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory has been widely cited by scholars developing and implementing experiential learning in their programs and courses (Breunig, 2017; Healey & Jenkins, 2000; Holtzman & Menning, 2015; Windsor & Carroll, 2015). This approach has been shown to effectively assess experiential learning opportunities and programs, especially in terms of the impact they have on the learning outcomes of students (Cornell, Johnson, & Schwartz, 2013; Stirling et al., 2017). For example, Cornell, Johnson, and Schwartz (2013) found that implementing Kolb's approach to experiential learning benefitted students; their students better understood real-world applications of the concepts they learned, were more likely to retain what they learned, and had increased confidence in approaching future assignments.

Kolb's learning theory outlines the four stages of the experiential learning process: (1) concrete experience, where the learner engages in direct and practical experiences; (2) reflective

observation, where the learner reflects on their experiences, the perceived experiences of others, and the connection between the two; (3) abstract conceptualization, in which learners are presented with, or develop, a theoretical position or model to generalize what was observed; and (4) active experimentation, where learners plan how to best test their position or model on a new experience, or prepare for a new experience (Healey & Jenkins, 2000; Konak, Clark, & Nasereddin, 2014). In order to successfully complete the process, the learner first participates in an experience, and must progress through all stages of the model. If the learner does not pass through all the stages, the learning process is considered to be incomplete (Kolb, 1984). This presents an interesting distinction from Dewey (1938) in terms of the role experiential opportunities play in the learning process, and when learners are exposed to them. For Kolb (1984), exposure to experience begins the learning cycle, and learners then reflect, conceptualize, and act based on their experience. Dewey (1838), however, contended that exposure to experiential learning opportunities should only happen once students have the requisite problem-solving capabilities (Eyler, 2009).

It is the past work of Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984) which frame much of the contemporary work pertaining to experiential learning (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999; Thorton Moore, 2010). What has been noted, however, is that while recent initiatives acknowledge the work of these scholars, “too often, the scholarly discourse in experiential learning is weak and diffuse” (Roberts, 2018, p. 4). Schwartz, (2012), for example, notes that it is the open nature of the term which makes it difficult to define what constitutes an experiential opportunity. As such, others take the view that “experiential learning is a constructed term which continues to evolve” (Beard, 2010, p. 16). As will be discussed, while diffuse, the literature on experiential learning in higher education does have some consistent themes.

Experiential Learning in Higher Education

In the context of higher education, experiential learning has been viewed as a more pragmatic approach to pedagogy, and as a way to advance the learning outcomes of students beyond what could be achieved through more traditional didactic methods of instruction (Cornell, Johnson, & Schwartz, 2013). *Experience* becomes the “central foundation of, and the stimulus for learning” (Beard, 2010). While this assertion is not contested in the literature, there are three practices which reflect the various ways authors define experiential learning, and describe the processes used for incorporating it into their courses.

The first practice of experiential learning contends that in order for the desired learning outcomes to be achieved, there needs to be direct engagement of the learner outside the traditional classroom. By learning through experiences in the real-world, students are exposed to the curriculum in action, and are able to appreciate how what they learn in class is put into practice in authentic contexts (Thorton Moore, 2010; Wright, 2000). The benefit of this method is that students are able to acquire new knowledge as a result of direct engagement, as opposed to traditional forms of learning which rely more predominantly on thinking about the potential connections to be made, without actually translating those thoughts into actions (Borzak, 1981). The practice of ‘learning by doing’ (McCarthy, 2016) is argued to have a positive impact on student learning outcomes such as promoting greater interest in the subject matter, increased understanding and retention of course material, and fostering a desire and ability to be life-long learners (McCarthy, 2016; Smart & Csapo, 2007). In more recent scholarship, the direct engagement between students and curricular content has been suggested to have positive outcomes for developing skills that are in high demand by professionals (Roberts, 2018). This is particularly relevant given the demand for students to be better prepared for work and life after graduation.

Many authors who discuss the necessity for students to have direct engagements outside the classroom also speak about the importance of critical reflection, which is embedded in the spirit of experiential learning paradigms (Estes, 2004). Hickson (2011) makes the distinction between reflection in-action, where learners consider how they are feeling and thinking while in the process of the experience, and reflection on-action which is more predicated on recollection after the experience has taken place. Hickson (2011) further asserts that in order for reflection to be critical “we need to both understand our experiences in the social context and also to understand how we can use this knowledge to develop our practice in the future” (p. 831). The reflective process ensures that students make the requisite connections between theory and practice which were intended when the learning opportunity was planned. This process also ensures that students remain attentive to curricular connections rather than simply learning more about the world around them outside of an educative context (Qualters, 2010; Thorton Moore, 2010). Through repeated structured reflections during their field experiences (as opposed to simply completing reflective assignments at the end of an experience or course), students are also more likely to apply a strategic learning orientation to new challenges and learning tasks (Eyler, 2009). According to this approach, reflective exercises not only structure theoretical connections during the learning process, but also have the potential to frame students’ outlooks and approaches to future tasks.

A second practice in the experiential learning literature is for scholars to discuss and analyze the academic and professional implications of various forms of experiential learning. For example, Schwartz (2012) distinguishes between field-based experiential learning and classroom-based experiential learning. Field-based experiential learning is the oldest form of experiential learning and has been growing in popularity since Dewey (1938) suggested that

learning through direct experience would improve learning outcomes. Authors have discussed various ways to engage students outside of the classroom, although there are particular opportunities which are recurrent in the literature. These experiential opportunities are: cooperative education, service learning (or community-based learning), internships, apprenticeships, leadership roles, and study abroad (Chavan, 2011; Coker & Porter, 2015; DeCola, Slatter, & Peters, 2013; Katula & Threnhauser, 1999; Mooney & Edwards, 2001).

Classroom-based experiential learning is another mechanism for providing experiential opportunities to students, and has been a growing phenomenon since the 1990's (Schwartz, 2012). While not as widely discussed in the literature, some authors have discussed the benefits to student learning through incorporating short-term experiential exercises in their classes (Windsor & Carroll, 2015; Wright, 2000). These exercises include short-exposure activities to develop methodological experience through unobtrusive methods (Wright, 2000) or the use of mock-factory settings to teach Marx's theory of alienation (Windsor & Carroll, 2015). Both of these examples demonstrate that experiential opportunities do not necessarily need to involve extensive time commitments outside the classroom in order for students to reap the personal and curricular benefits associated with experiential learning. These short-exposure exercises present an attractive alternative to instructors who may have reservations about experiential learning (e.g., time commitment) and are amenable to a variety of programs and courses.

The final practice considers moving beyond the connections between theory and practice, and reports the interpersonal development of students made possible through experiential opportunities. Through experiential learning, learners are exposed to more complex learning opportunities, which encourage introspection. This process allows students to learn a great deal more about themselves, and their relationship to their peers and academic content than would be

possible through traditional approaches to learning (McLellan and Hyde (2012). Indeed, this element of deep learning (Eyler, 2009; Windsor & Carroll, 2005) contributes to students acquiring skills for life-long learning, and the capacity to articulate skill development throughout and after the learning process (Qualters, 2010).

As this literature suggests, experiential learning in higher education contains distinct considerations regarding the benefits and challenges for various constituents involved in the learning process. Namely, students, faculty, and the institution itself. It is therefore noteworthy to further highlight the unique considerations of each group in greater detail.

Students and Experiential Learning in Higher Education

The shift in focus to provide more experiential programming in higher education has considerable implications for the learning outcomes of students, and is closely aligned with concerns about career-readiness for graduates. Non-formal education “embeds learning content in activities across an array of settings by providing wide latitude for self-direction and interpretation on the part of the learner” (Breunig, 2017, p. 215). This assertion is broadly aligned with another recent development in higher education pedagogy that favours more student-centred approaches to learning in order to better the learning outcomes of students (Baeten, 2010; 2016). As a result of implementing student-centred approaches to learning, and by learning through experience, students interact with the world and integrate new learning into existing structures of education, such as curricular expectations (Eyler, 2009). The author suggests that students will be more engaged, and more successful in achieving disciplinary learning outcomes.

Some authors have suggested that there needs to be more involvement on the part of the students if experiential learning is going to be successful as a continued and enduring practice in higher education (Eyler, 2009). For example, Cowart (2010) states that

the key to achieving student support is to demonstrate that course content becomes more relevant, meaningful, and clearly understood when an EL format is used. Once students recognize that the EL process provides unique opportunities to link theory and practice, they are more likely request EL courses (p. 65)

Students have the potential to influence the success of experiential learning programming in higher education, as their interpersonal relationships with their peers can influence how their peers perceive experiential learning, and the attitudes with which they approach future learning opportunities (Cowart, 2010). This recognition is especially noteworthy given that Cornell, Johnson, & Schwartz (2013) found that students may be apprehensive about participating in various forms of experiential learning, or feel incompetent. This is understandable given that the required integration of experiential learning into traditional approaches to learning is quite recent (Deller, Weinegarten, Hicks, 2016), and it is therefore not completely unanticipated that students may not have the background learning and exposure they feel would better equip them to approach these new opportunities with confidence.

The literature also identifies a variety of barriers to different forms of experiential learning which may have prevented students from accessing and benefitting from the distinct learning outcomes associated with experiential learning. These barriers include student awareness about experiential learning opportunities in general; feelings of preparedness to undertake these opportunities; issues around equity and access to experiential learning; financial barriers; and the demand these opportunities may have on existing time commitments and work-life balance (Malatest & Associates, 2018). Further, just as Dewey (1938) noted that not all experiences are educative and not all students will experience these practices the same way, even

in the same classroom. As a consequence, not all students will have the same learning outcomes (McClellan & Hyde, 2012).

Faculty and Experiential Learning in Higher Education

Most faculty members in higher education still rely on the traditional lecture style for delivering course material (McClellan & Hyde, 2012). It is suggested that in this form of instruction educators assume the role of authority figures, and simply dispense knowledge. Students are believed to be robbed of the ability to process meaningful experiences and engage in critical reflection (Estes, 2004). As noted by Estes (2004), epistemological methods of instruction which value authority of the teacher are inconsistent with the commitment of experiential learning and student-centred learning. Accordingly, students learn best as a result of the deep learning which takes place through constructivist learning experiences, where “learners create their own knowledge through interaction with things that are personally relevant to them”. (Lee, Chen, & Wang, 2017, p. 561; Lea, Stephenson, & Troy, 2003; Vermetten, Vermunt, & Lodewijks, 2002). Constructivist learning experiences therefore lend agency to the learner, allowing them to build connections between knowledge and experience as their experiences unfold. The role of the educator in these instances is to provide learners with experiences which are reflective-of and relevant-to to their lives, as well as to the learning task.

To encourage faculty to implement experiential learning in their courses, department, and institution requires knowing their perceptions of experiential learning in general, and where they see themselves being able to play a role in the implementation (Qualters, 2010). Indeed, some departments and faculty members will have unique needs and positions on experiential learning. For example, STEM disciplines will have different needs than liberal arts when it comes to developing and implementing experiential learning.

If educators are going to be effective and successful in incorporating experiential learning into their courses, they need appropriate training and support by the administration (Eyler, 2009). Without clear support by their departments, they run the risk of being labelled as institutional trouble-makers for countering existing hegemonic pedagogy, or be negatively impacted by teaching and course evaluations which are incongruent with this particular instructional approach (Breunig, 2017). There have been expressed challenges in the literature regarding both the ability and willingness of faculty members embracing experiential learning (Cowart, 2010; Holtzman & Menning, 2015; Qualters, 2010). For example, Cowart (2010) noted that for faculty members who have never used experiential learning in their classes, they question whether it is worth the extra effort, as opposed to their current instructional approaches. Faculty have good reason to consider the cost-benefits associated with implementing experiential learning. As Holtzman and Menning (2015) noted, developing meaningful experiential learning requires a considerable time and labour investment on the faculty member. There may also be a lack of institutional or department level culture which acknowledges, embraces, or rewards the effort it takes to implement experiential learning (Holtzman & Menning, 2015). Rather, given its drastic departure from traditional pedagogy, there may be members of the department who do not view this approach as pedagogically sound (Cowart, 2010). Therefore, in order for experiential learning to be adopted by instructors in the program or department level, there needs to be an institutional or departmental mindset which sees value in this approach, and supports those who would like to use it in their teaching practices.

Institutional Approaches to Experiential Learning

Historically, the incorporation of experiential learning in higher education curricula was seen as voluntary (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). In today's environment, things have changed.

Calls for better institutional accountability, transparency, and better preparation of graduates for twenty-first century work have mandated the incorporation of experiential learning into post-secondary programming (Council of Ontario Universities, 2016; Universities Canada, 2018). In this transition period the question which was raised is whether or not experiential learning belongs in the university (Thorton Moore, 2010). This question also connects to a broader discussion on institutional identity that has emerged, and whether or how experiential learning will influence goals or mission of a university. In particular, questions have emerged about whether or how providing a variety of experiential learning opportunities (Coker & Porter, 2015) may reflect and support the diversity of post-secondary level students and their learning needs or aspirations (Coker & Porter, 2016).

Nonetheless, the incorporation of experiential learning into the curriculum remains a pedagogical and structural difficulty (Roberts, 2018), particularly with regard to developing clear connections to departmental and program level learning outcomes (Coker & Porter, 2015). With the increasing interest in providing learners with experiential learning at some point in their education, Coker et al. (2017) discuss whether the priority should be given to providing learners with a breadth of opportunity or if the focus should be on ensuring depth of opportunity and learning. The authors contend that depth of learning has been sidelined with the current focus of providing learners with as many experiential opportunities as possible.

Given the challenges of convincing faculty and students about the utility and value of experiential learning, those programs with formal institutional support (i.e. budget, staff, facilities) are more likely to succeed and be long lasting (Thorton Moore, 2010). One sign of the move to incorporate more experiential learning in higher education is that universities now sort who will and will not have immediate access to experiential learning in the admission process

(Coker et al., 2017). This is evidenced by students being accepted directly into co-op programs and therefore having more access to opportunities to connect classroom instruction to real-world contexts. While traditionalists may hold on to epistemologies which are reflective of theoretical preparation of graduates by transmitting and instilling strong theoretical traditions, others such as McClellan and Hyde (2012) contend that the goal of the university should now be to deliver and facilitate learning through experience. According to this perspective, learning and the generation of new ideas and skills should not be limited to the classroom. While these authors have discussed the benefits to student learning, there has not always been a strong focus on empirically demonstrating the benefits to student learning outcomes.

Evidentiary Claims

While a significant portion of literature on experiential learning has discussed the strategic approaches for combining this experiential programming with traditional approaches to teaching and learning, or has discussed the unique considerations of those individuals involved in the implementation process, there are mixed approaches to empirically demonstrating the proclaimed benefits to student learning, and therefore why this approach is more effective at preparing learners for 21st century work and life.

An overarching theme in these discussions is predicated on course design (McClellan & Hyle, 2012; Radford, Hunt, & Andres, 2015). These examples provide evidence of students discussing their achievements of course and assignment learning outcomes, based on Kolb's reflective stage of experiential education. In this stage, students complete reflective assignments which allow instructors to see what they have learned, and how they are able to connect these experiences to course content. Indeed, active reflection is continually reinforced as a central element to successful experiential education (Eyler, 2009). Some authors provide specific

learning outcomes which are uniquely shaped by the inclusion of experiential learning in the course design. For example, Holtzman and Menning (2015) note the importance of collaboration, and the avenue by which this shaped the intersection of experience and applied research. These authors also noted that the inclusion of experiential learning impacted their approaches to assessment and evaluation, where

rather than receiving project grades and exam scores, students were subject to the kinds of assessments that happen in a professional environment-their efforts were continuously evaluated, revised, and, perhaps most importantly, subjected to ongoing expert scrutiny through collaboration and consultation with other scholars in the field (p. 114).

The role of assessment was also discussed by Windsor and Carrol (2015), who noted that existing methods of assessment, such as final exams, could not fully corroborate student self-reported positive learning outcomes. The authors employed a mixed method approach to investigate the benefit of a short-term experiential learning opportunity on their students' understanding of Marx's theory of alienation. Students were given an article to read, and given a pre-test form, which asked them to indicate one of five responses to the question "I have a clear understanding of the concepts reviewed in the reading". After the experiential learning task, students were given a post-test with the same statement, as well as three questions relating to their interest in the task, their understanding of how it related to real-life, and whether it helped to clarify the concepts of the reading. Students were also asked four open-ended questions about the activity. While students claimed a better understanding of the theory, their exam scores on questions relating to Marx could not always support their assertions. This could potentially speak to an incongruence between experiential learning and existing, or traditional, approaches to assessment.

Survey methods were reinforced in other studies as a method of collecting data on the learning outcomes of students who participated in experiential learning (Coker et al., 2017;

Cornell, Johnson, & Schwartz, 2013). Coker et al. (2017) paired the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) with student co-curricular transcripts in order to assess the impact of breadth and depth of exposure on the self-reported benefits of student learning. These authors concluded that both breadth and depth in experiential learning lead to “acquiring a broad general education, writing clearly and effectively, contributing to the welfare of the community, relationships with faculty and administration, and desire to attend the same institution” (p. 19). Cornell, Johnson, and Schwartz (2013) designed their own surveys, including both open-ended and closed-ended response questions. These authors administered their survey immediately after the students completed the experiential learning task, and once the course had concluded and the grades were released. The survey responses indicated that students appreciated the experiential activity, and had meaningful takeaways from the experience. However, the authors did not include data on final grades. This also suggests a question about the marker of what successful learning outcomes are for experiential education.

The expressed evidentiary claims therefore represent both micro-level investigation, as in the case of student and faculty qualitative self-reports, and more meso- and macro-level claims involving larger statistical datasets such as the NSSE. This study aims to contribute to this existing body, using an approach framed by New institutionalism. This approach will consider the various organizational arrangements at play, how these are shaped by the broader organizational field, as well as the impact on the sense-making abilities of those institutional actors involved. I therefore build on past qualitative investigation into experiential learning, and use a combination of semi-structured interviews and content analysis to build on the predominantly self-report methods which have shaped much of the existing literature.

Conclusion

This review has demonstrated that the topic of experiential learning is applied diffusely throughout the literature. Various authors have applied the term using conceptualizations that are influenced by the classic work of Dewey (1938) and more recently Kolb (1984). Broadly, there has been an institutional shift in Canadian higher education, which seeks to foster the successful implementation of experiential learning in order to better prepare students for work and life after graduation. Through both short and long-term experiences (both within and outside the classroom), scholars argue that effective opportunities provide learners with the ability to engage with curricular topics outside the confines of the traditional classroom, and should encourage personal reflection in order for important connections to be made.

This approach to pedagogy is not without its challenges, however. Both students and faculty face unique challenges in their willingness to embrace experiential learning. Given that this approach is so different from traditional instructional methods, students have approached experiential learning with trepidation and feelings of being inadequately equipped to be successful in achieving both curricular and interpersonal learning outcomes. However, their relationships with their peers have the potential to frame how each come to view experiential learning, and can be a tool for making experiential learning more approachable. This places unique pressures on instructors, as they must implement opportunities with well thought-out connections to the content of the course. There have also been claims that instructors need more support and recognition by departments for the level of work required for successful implementation of experiential learning in their courses. This also references a conversation about how efforts to foster experiential learning on university campuses are recognized and rewarded in the current landscape in higher education.

Institutionally, those programs which have formal supports are ones which are likely to achieve longevity, and ultimately have more impacts on the learning outcomes of students, and instructional approaches of faculty. Given that universities are being encouraged to provide a multitude of experiential learning opportunities, the current environment presents an interesting opportunity to consider the alignment between organizational mandates of higher education institutions, and the delivery at the classroom level. The following chapter will provide a substantive overview of New Institutionalism, an organizational theory which investigates the mechanisms which lead to homogeneity in the structural arrangements of organizations, and their respective fields more broadly. New institutionalism shaped the research questions guiding this investigation, in order to contribute an organizational perspective to the existing literature on experiential learning. Given that Ontario universities are increasingly under pressure to develop programming oriented to 21st-century skill development, using a theoretical approach which considers organizational arrangements, and the relationships and interactions between organizations and their broader environment lends itself to investigating this phenomenon. This chapter will also facilitate the connection of this theory to the field of higher education.

New Institutional Theory

New institutional theory is an organizational theory, oriented to examining how organizational dynamics, including organizational structure and interactions, are shaped by the broader organizational environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Sapir & Oliver, 2017). In their original work, Meyer and Rowan wrote that,

organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work and institutionalized in society. Organizations that do so increase their legitimacy and their survival prospects, independent of the immediate efficacy of the acquired practices and procedures” (1977, p. 340).

Since then, new institutionalism has gone through several corrections, modifications, and developments, as it is widely applied to a variety of organizational studies (see Scott, 1987; 2008). The most significant change is the attention to the relations between organizations and their environment, as opposed to within or between organizations (Yuzho & Mehari, 2015). Within the field of education, new institutional theory has been used to account for the structural and organizational arrangement of schools, as well as account for relations within the broader organizational field (Binder, 2007; Coburn, 2004; Spillane, Mesler Parise, & Zolthers Sherer, 2011). While there are many examples of new institutionalism being applied to public elementary and secondary schools (Gamoran & Dreeben, 1986; Hallet 2010), and private schools (Aurini, 2006), attention to higher education institutions has been adopted much later by educational and social science researchers (Yuzho & Mehari, 2015). Moreover, there has been less research attending to micro-level institutional analysis. This presents an interesting gap, and opportunity for further empirical research. It is the intention of this chapter to provide a substantive theoretical overview of new institutionalism, as this particular approach is well-oriented to examining the organizational arrangements at play in the particular case of

experiential learning at the centre of this research, the EEC. The subsequent sections outline the key theoretical propositions, and facilitate connections to experiential learning, and higher education more broadly.

The main goal of all educational organizations is to seek or maintain legitimacy

Essentially, according to new institutionalism the main goal of all educational organizations is to seek or maintain legitimacy by achieving the social and economic resources that allow for their continued survival. Those who best conform to existing legitimized models of organization and operation are more likely to receive the resources required for their operation, and simultaneously precipitate the legitimized model. Significant in this process is that the adoption of existing models is not driven by aspirations or considerations of operational efficiency. Rather, the process creates an organizational field with relatively homogenous organizational structures, where conformity is pursued at the expense of technical efficiency (Binder, 2007; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Indeed, while organizations, such as universities, may structure themselves and their operations in ways which conform to frameworks established by the broader organizational environment, these arrangements may compromise the efficiency of their technical performance.

Within the field of education, schools brought the educative process under a socially standardized set of institutional categories, such as students, educators, curriculum, and school structure (see ritual classifications, Meyer et al, 1981). This was not, however, in order to rationalize the process of creating strong technical outputs (learning outcomes). Rather, these arrangements were a means to ensure organizational conformity in order to receive resources, thereby creating a contingency axiom (Meyer, 2006). This is essentially a process of institutionalization, which creates an institutional logic, or expectation of what an organization

is, what its functions are, and how these functions should be enacted (Aurini, 2012; Levin et al., 2018). For example, recall that classically, the role of educational institutions was a dual process of knowledge transmission and moral development. Institutional logics, then, create the structure of what an educational institution is, and how it should operate in order to successfully fulfill the demands of its dual role. With the advent of experiential education, and the increased pressure for academic institutions to prepare graduates for 21st century life, these new developments are potential sources of change to the existing institutional logics of universities.

This is not to say that the process of conformity is nescient to the impact on the technical performance of organizations. Meyer and Rowan (1977) noted that in the process of responding to environmental pressures, organizations often struggle to link the requirements of conforming their technical activities to their formal structure. The formal organizational structure reflects the technological imperatives of educational organizations, and liaises between the technical core and the institutional pressures of the broader organizational environment (Scott, 2008). This will be elaborated further in discussions on decoupling processes.

Institutional environments consist of varying, sometimes even conflicting institutional logics

Within educational organizations, the behaviours by which individuals perform their professional roles are constituted by unreflective routines, where most of the views and interests of the actors are formed by the broader institutional logic (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). At the technical level, institutional logics combine with the local, embedded meanings. It is at this level that actors make sense of and interpret institutional vocabularies, and act on those interpretations (Binder, 2007). Moreover, it is at the local level, rather than the formal institutional structure, that actors engage in bricolage, where they combine and recombine available and legitimate scripts and cultural artifacts they find around them in their institutional environment (Binder,

2007; Douglas, 1986). Indeed, there is a utility, and taken-for-grantedness with regard to the impact of institutional logics on organizational behaviour. For example, Colyvas and Powell (2006) note that the ways in which individual actors behave based on how they conceptualize their roles in the broader organization represent what has become institutionalized, and the associated cognitive and behavioral scripts that accompany the process of institutionalization. This concept of taken-for-grantedness provides a cognitive element, useful for explaining how the social order of organizations is reproduced (Colyvas & Powell, 2006). It represents and encapsulates the pre-determined and reproduced schemas which guide interactions within the organization. Importantly, the extent to which organizational practices become embedded routines, the more they become unquestioned. This has particular utility for guiding interactions, as it reduces “the cognitive load associated with decisions, as well as decrease risk by providing well-rehearsed modes of communication and action and ready-made categories for resolving uncertainties” (Colyvas & Powell, 2006, p. 311; Berger & Luckman, 1967). This is not to say that institutional logics impact all actors in the same way. On the contrary, organizations which have multiple subunits, such as universities, “are likely to be home to multiple and negotiated local meaning systems” (Binder, 2007. p. 551). Indeed, universities are highly bureaucratized institutions, with multiple units which carry their own unique mandates and needs. These units represent various campus constituents, departments, and offices, all of which support the broader institutional logic of the university. Through the process of institutionalization, individual roles, scripts, and interactions become taken-for-granted, which subsequently creates the routines and classifications of identities of individual actors at the local level of educational organizations. Given that local-level institutional logics are shaped by the broader institutional logic of the

university, it follows that local-level operations and ideology are indirectly influenced by the dominant organizational model of the time.

Once a field is formed, there is an inexorable push towards homogenization, and the dominance of a single model of organizational arrangements

Following the creation of institutional logics, organizational fields form and shape the ways in which individual organizations compete for legitimacy. Once an organizational model becomes legitimized and receives the social and economic resources needed for it to continue to survive and function, it follows that all other organizations which are in that environment and also in need of these resources will model themselves after the prevailing model (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Ultimately, the operational and organizational decisions regarding structure are made based off prevailing rational myths of what the most successful organizational structure is.

Rational myths are the forms by which ceremonial rules from the organizational environment are transmitted from the formal structure to the technical core of an organization (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Essentially, these myths become operational based on how particular structural and behavioural arrangements exist in the prevailing legitimized model, and have been precipitated through organizational conformity. Over time, these myths become codified, and their solidification in the organizational environment makes it necessary for other organizations to incorporate them into their operational culture (Aurini, 2006). However, while these myths may be considered rational in terms of conforming to/precipitating prevailing legitimized models, they do not always have positive implications for the efficiency of the organization in terms of its technical performance, and may even conflict with the practical activities of the organization (Hallet, 2010). For example, didactic teaching methods have been widely adopted as the most common form of instruction in higher education, and have become prolific in the

educational environment. While implementing this instructional approach may be what is considered to be most rational to the organizational arrangements of the university, with respect to conforming to the broader environment, it does not always allow for meaningful student engagement and the deep-learning associated with other instructional methods. On the contrary, as was discussed previously, there are many proponents who advocate for experiential education and its ability to provide the type of learning not possible with didactic teaching methods. Nonetheless, deviation from this instructional method could compromise the legitimacy of a university, given the deviation from established pedagogy, and therefore refutes broader organizational norms. It is not until there is enough pressure for change in the organizational priorities in the broader environment that rational myths and organizational culture changes. Overall, rational myths assist in transmitting patterns of organization that lead to conformity, or isomorphism, in the field of education.

Once an organizational field has become institutionalized, conformity in organizational design and relations is facilitated by three isomorphic processes, namely coercive, mimetic, and normative

Isomorphism is the institutional process which leads to homogeneity of organizations, with respect to their structure and organizational arrangements, within a given field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). As was previously mentioned, single models of organizational arrangements come to dominate these fields, and organizations model themselves after those pre-existing legitimized models. By doing so, organizations attempt to situate themselves in ways which would make them more competitive in terms of achieving legitimacy. In the instances of educational organizations, Meyer et al. (1981) note that in their modelling of existing legitimized models, it is less essential that teaching and learning activities are efficiently coordinated, or

even that they are in close conformity with broader institutional logics. Indeed, wholesale adoption may mean that schools compromise their technical outputs by embracing models which can compromise their technical efficiency.

New institutionalism provides three mechanisms for isomorphic change. While not necessarily mutually exclusive, the following mechanisms represent various factors that lead to homogeneity within a particular organizational field, and therefore create organizational arrangements which become highly resistant to change.

1) Coercive Isomorphism: Coercive isomorphism is the pressure to conform to other pre-existing organizational structures which results from some sort of hierarchical influence within a particular organizational field. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), coercive isomorphism “results from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organizations function” (p. 150). It is evident that within organizational fields there are hierarchical arrangements, where organizations are subject to the influence of others, who either have achieved legitimacy or are in positions to provide resources. These organizational pressures have the potential to be influenced by government mandates. This is particularly relevant in the field of higher education, given the strong influence of government resources to areas such as university funding, and the priorities by which the funding is allocated. Therefore, by prioritizing funding projects, government has a significant impact on organizations in higher education, and thereby influence the ways in which these organizations reprioritize their own institutional logics. This follows from assertions previously made by Meyer and Rowan (1977) that, as a result of state influence, organizations within a given domain, such as education, become increasingly homogenous in structure, and organize around particular rituals of conformity. It is

therefore evident that, as a result of providing funding (a source of legitimacy), government is able to influence how educational organizations structure themselves in order to best compete for these resources, and therefore exert pressures between themselves to organize in similar fashions. While this form of isomorphic pressure is evident of top-down influence, mimetic isomorphism results from organizational uncertainty, and the means in which organizational structure is influenced between organizations in the same field.

2) Mimetic Isomorphism: Mimetic isomorphism recognizes the influence of uncertainty, and the power this position has to influence organizational structure and arrangements. This uncertainty is attributed to ambiguity in organizational technologies, and organizational goals (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In the field of education, organizational technologies involve the classroom-level practices such as instructional approaches, and organizational goals include the desired learning outcomes of students (Aurini, 2006). When there is ambiguity regarding how these technologies and goals should be met, educational organizations look to others, and borrow their innovations and arrangements. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) also note the ritual element of this borrowing, in that when an organization needs to demonstrate its legitimacy, or experiences ambiguity, it looks to previously existing legitimate models to imitate their structure. This also speaks to the relative lack of diversity in organizational fields. For example, the university climate in Ontario contains very little variation in the ways universities organize themselves, and carry out their technological imperatives. Therefore, in instances of pedagogical innovation, or new organizational developments, these developments would face environmental pressures to conform until they are able to receive resources and claim legitimacy. There are also considerable normative forces which contribute to the homogeneity of organizational arrangements in higher education.

3) Normative Isomorphism: Educational organizations also experience various normative processes that lead to homogeneity within the broader educational field. In part, this stems from professionalization, “the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 152; Larson, 1977). Essentially, the professionalization of occupations leads to homogeneity in the field, as there becomes an expectation of the types of professional roles within organizations. For example, in the field of higher education, instructors are hired based on requisite credentials which become normative across all institutions, such as possessing doctoral degrees, as well as research and teaching experience. Meyer and Rowan (1977) also note that within organizations, normative obligations enter into social life as facts which are considered by actors. There are myriad examples of normative rituals that take place in higher education that homogenize organizational culture, such as standardized curricula, approaches to institutional governance, convocation ceremonies, and physical structure, to name a few. Each normative ritual becomes reproduced in some fashion across the organizational field, as organizations seek to ensure that they can provide the same benefits and services to their constituents as their competitors. However, as has been noted, the ceremonial adherence to normative processes in no way equates to organizational efficiency. Indeed, organizations may ceremoniously adopt prevailing models, but engage in a process of decoupling in order to buffer their technological performance from their formal structure.

In response to environmental pressures, and in order to assert claims of legitimacy, organizations engage in a process of buffering between their formal structure and technical core

It has been noted that, by complying to external pressures which lead to isomorphic arrangements, organizations orient themselves in ways which are not necessarily more efficient, but in ways which would make them more competitive for resources. Indeed, this may even be seen as irrational organization, as organizations structure themselves in response to pressures, over their intended functions. However, in an effort to have greater claims to legitimacy, educational institutions engage in a process of buffering, where they separate their formal structures from the technical work performed within them (Aurini, 2012; Meyer et al., 1981; Spillane, 2011).

Previously, Meyer and Rowan (1977) contended that, especially in cases of coercive isomorphism, institutional rules have a high degree of generalization, and may not be exactly commensurate with the specific conditions of technical activities. This is exemplified in the field of education where government mandates, and concepts of legitimacy may not be suited to technical performances at the course or program level. This was discussed with didactic methods being the prevailing instructional approach, despite claims which assert it is not necessarily the most effective means of achieving successful technical outputs.

It would be irrational for organizations to change the methods and mechanisms with which they carry out their technological imperatives in order to keep pace with their competitors. Rather, they require the ability to demonstrate compliance with prevailing organizational arrangements, while still carrying out their technical performance with a degree of agency that best suits their individual institutional needs and abilities. Loose coupling operates as a mechanism for educational institutions to respond to changes in their organizational environment. Essentially, it is the process whereby organizations ceremonially adopt the broader

changes and developments in their external environments, without fully enacting them at their technical level. Loose coupling is the ceremonial presentation of a tight linkage between formal organizational structures and work activity. Moreover, this process hides gaps between these two organizational levels that could demonstrate inefficiencies or incongruence, that could compromise their claims to legitimacy (Aurini, 2006; Hallet, 2010).

Not only does the process of decoupling impact the relations between the technical level and organizational field, but it also impacts the relationship between the authority figures of an organization's formal structure, and those at the technical core. In loosely coupled systems, the activities and decisions at one level do not necessarily reverberate in pattered ways elsewhere (Gamoran & Dreechen, 1986). In the field of education, Gamoran and Dreechen (1986) note that at the administrative level, actors promote the values and themes which are reflective or broader priorities in the organizational environment, and leave the technical activities to instructors. Therefore, while administrators have the capacity to respond to the environmental pressures, and communicate their organization's compliance and conformity, the actual delivery of the technical mandates remains separated, and subject to the interpretations of local actors.

This process is assisted by the logic of confidence which exists in the organizational environment, where "parties bring to each other the taken-for-granted, good-faith assumption that the other is, in fact, carrying out his or her defined activity" (Meyer & Rowan, 1978, p. 101). Essentially, the logic of confidence is the unspoken, or taken for granted trust that permits organizations to ward off inspection that could potentially uncover inefficiencies or inconsistencies (Aurini, 2006). With this trust in place, efficiency and consistency are predicated on the ceremonial adherence to the changes in the broader environment.

This chapter has discussed the central tenets of new institutionalism. While the discussion provided a substantive overview of the theory, there are interesting implications for merging organizational sociology with the recent shift in institutional goals and processes toward experiential education. Given that experiential learning has only recently become an established educational priority in higher education, as outlined in the previous work of the Premier's Expert Panel, the implications for contributing an institutional perspective to the development and implementation of experiential programming in higher education is particularly timely. To date, there has been somewhat limited qualitative research on experiential learning in higher education, particularly from an institutional perspective. This study therefore makes use of a particular institutional response to pressures from the organizational field in Ontario higher education, and is framed by new institutionalism in order answer the research questions outlined in the following chapter. The following section will therefore provide an overview of the primary case used in this thesis, the Experiential Education Certificate at the University of Waterloo, as well as the methodological approach of the research design.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used for this research project. I draw on interviews with staff and faculty associated with the EDGE program, an experiential learning certificate at the University of Waterloo, intended to provide non-co-op students with experiential learning opportunities and personal/professional skill development. Further, I employ content analysis of policy documents, senate proposals, course outlines, and course descriptions in the undergraduate calendar to address the research questions guiding this case study: 1) Do Programs like EDGE Penetrate the Technical Core of Academic Institutions? Or, are they More Ceremonial Compliance?; and 2) According to institutional actors, what factors impact their ability to foster experiential education initiatives, such as the EDGE program? What factors, if any, do organizational arrangements play? These research questions are influenced by the propositions of new institutionalism, and speak to the impact of organizational pressures on the technical core of academic institutions. Through the use of interview and document data, I hope to make not only empirical contributions to the existing body of qualitative work on experiential learning, but also further the application of new intuitionism to higher education, and experiential learning more specifically.

Qualitative Research Methods

Given the nature of the research questions guiding this study, it was imperative to engage directly with individuals at the University of Waterloo who were involved with experiential learning, and could speak to the organizational relations which shaped its implementation. A qualitative approach is therefore favourable, as the lived personal and professional experiences, as conveyed by the participants themselves would best address the research questions. Not only does each constituent in the education system hold distinct views with respect to experiential

learning, but much of the empirical evidence on the benefits of experiential learning are predicted on student self-report surveys (Coker et al., 2017; Cornell, Johnson, & Schwartz, 2013). This emphasis presents an interesting methodological gap to examine a particular institution's response to foster experiential learning; particularly, the organizational relations and perspectives of those involved in the process, which could impact the degree to which experiential learning has been successfully implemented. Indeed, the need for direct engagement and involvement of the research participants is well aligned with qualitative orientations (Creswell, 2014). Despite the small participant pool, the inclusion of various institutional constituents with various personal and professional experiences can speak well to the relationships between organizational structures in higher education, and the connection to current initiatives to foster experiential learning at this level. The use of documents adds an additional element of data triangulation (Denzin, 1978); I compared and contrasted the experiences of the interview participants with data sources which have traditionally tightly-coupled instructional efforts and organizational imperatives in higher education.

Case Studies

In order to examine the topic of experiential learning, and how it has been implemented in higher education, I conducted an in-depth case study of the University of Waterloo's EDGE experiential learning program. Given the time and resource constraints of this project, it was not feasible to conduct a large-scale qualitative investigation into experiential learning across Ontario higher education institutions. Rather, a case study approach allowed for a more rigorous analysis of a single case, representative of a larger shift in the pedagogical landscape of higher education, and the increasing pressure to prepare graduates for life after academe.

Case studies can produce richly descriptive data (Merriam, 2009). This particular research strategy seeks to produce description and analysis of a bounded system, where the particular case is representative of a larger phenomenon occurring in society (Merriam, 2009). I have outlined above the current climate in Ontario higher education, where the government and others are exerting pressure on academic institutions to demonstrate their commitment to fostering experiential learning. The EDGE program is therefore a case of an institution's response to these pressures, which have been exerted across the organizational field of higher education in Ontario. The selection of a particular case, and the decision to conduct a case study more generally, does have implications for the findings of such research. Flyvberg (2006), for example, makes reference to cases as potential "black swans", noting that there may be pre-conceptions that one cannot generalize on the basis of a single case. Authors such as Hammersley, Foster, and Gomm (2000), further echo the assertion that case studies should consider the relationship between individual cases and the context in which they occur (i.e. all social phenomena occur in the context of a broader social environment). While Small (2009) notes that there are limitations to the relationship between particular cases and the larger phenomenon or population they are expected to represent, there is validity in small-sample research (see also Erickson, 1986; Merriam, 2009). Indeed, Flyvberg (2006) notes that while case studies may not always be appropriate, depending on the particular research problem, or be able to produce the kinds of generalizations which have been valued in the social sciences, they nonetheless highlight the "force of the example", which the author asserts has been under-appreciated in social science research. Importantly, just because the knowledge and findings are not broadly generalizable, does not mean they cannot contribute to the knowledge of a field or discipline (Flyvberg, 2006). As such, this project is not generalizable to all experiential learning

initiatives in Ontario higher education; however, it nonetheless provides insight in to a particular example of an institutional response to the pressures that all universities in Ontario face in the context of their organizational environment.

The Experiential Education Certificate program is a particularly interesting case, in that it combines both curricular and co-curricular forms of experiential education, and is specifically oriented to work-integrated learning, a recognized subset of experiential education (DeClou, Sattler, & Peters, 2013; Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2017). Moreover, this program was developed as an institutional initiative to better equip non-co-op students for work and life after graduation. Therefore, while this particular case is unique to the University of Waterloo, and was chosen on convenience given the timeline and resources of this research project, it nonetheless represents a response to high level discussions taking place across the field of higher education in Ontario (Canada's Business Higher Education Roundtable, 2018; Council of Ontario Universities, 2016; Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities).

Interviews

The primary research method of this case study was semi-structured interviews with institutional constituents at the University of Waterloo who are involved with experiential learning. Interviewees consisted of EDGE administrative members, including managerial staff; an instructional developer and faculty liaison member from the Centre for Teaching Excellence; and faculty members from various departments across campus who teach EDGE-approved courses. This particular approach was best suited to address the research questions, as each participant held unique professional perspectives regarding the process of developing and implementing experiential learning on campus. As discussed by Scott and Garner (2013), the central objective of a qualitative interview is to “understand the meanings, ideas, opinions, and

perspectives of the interviewee” (p. 280). Moreover, qualitative interviews aim to uncover a rich and nuanced understanding of the attitude formation and consequent behaviours of those individuals relevant to the research project (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). In order to produce the kind of description necessary to address the research questions, it was important to utilize a method that would give participants the ability to articulate their perspectives, as well as provide justification to their responses. As such, a semi-structured approach was used, rather than a purely open or purely closed interview style.

The semi-structured interview is one which lends itself to research projects where the investigator has specific questions and thematic inquiries, yet also wants the flexibility of the participant to be able to contribute their own responses and justifications. Moreover, this method is well suited to follow-up inquiry, allowing the investigator the latitude to probe further and ask for additional details on participant responses (Turner, 2010). Importantly, this particular method lends power to the participant, as they are able to actively shape the interview process (King, 2004). Indeed, Roller and Lavrakas (2015) note that the flexibility of this method allows the interview participant to guide the direction of the interview based on their responses and allows the investigator to change the order of the interview questions to suit the flow of the interview.

A key consideration of using this particular method was to access participants who had relevant involvement in experiential learning and could therefore contribute unique perspectives to the research questions. Given the small scale of this research project, it was important to include a variety of institutional constituents who had different levels of involvement and experiences with experiential learning, in order to achieve as holistic an understanding as possible. Interviewee participants include: a) staff who are directly involved in EDGE’s development and current operations; b) members of the University involved in supporting

experiential education such as the Centre for Teaching Excellence and the Centre for Career Action; and c) faculty who teach EDGE-approved courses. In total, there were twelve interviews conducted: three members from the EDGE program; three members from the Centre for Teaching Excellence, and the Centre for Career Action; and six faculty members. Each participant group had their own interview guide (see Appendix A), each with its own thematic topics which would guide the course of the interview to allow for comparability among the interview responses (Scott & Garner, 2013).

Sampling and Recruitment

This study includes twelve participants who occupy professional roles at the University of Waterloo. Each participant was purposively recruited based on their professional designations found on the University of Waterloo website. This approach is aligned with Lincoln and Guba (1985), who suggest that purposive sampling is ideal for naturalistic inquiry as the researcher is able to increase “the scope or range of data exposed [...] as well as the likelihood that the full array of multiple realities will be uncovered” (p. 40). As mentioned, given the variety of individuals involved in experiential education, each participant group was selected in order to provide diverse perspectives and personal experiences with this particular pedagogical approach. Each participant was sent a standardized recruitment email. There were three email templates pertaining to each participant group (see Appendix B)

In order to recruit participants from the EDGE program, I used their University of Waterloo websites to identify four individuals whose professional titles suggested varying duties in developing and implementing the program. This included managerial level roles, as well as instructional support roles, and outreach roles. These individuals could contribute to a more meso-level perspective on the systematic organization and operation of the EDGE program,

given that some were present for the building of the program, and had first-hand knowledge of the senate approval process to authorize the program. Moreover, these individuals were also responsible for fostering connections with various departments and faculties during the first year of its operation, and could speak to the institutional-level connections, how they were formed, and the nature of those relationships now. After the initial recruitment emails were sent, Susan, the manager, requested a meeting in-person to learn more about the project and what was being requested in terms of participant roles and contributions. In this instance, Susan acted as a gatekeeper (Aurini, Heath, & Howells, 2016) to the program, and it was important to broker as strong a relationship as possible in order to gain access to the professional experiences and perspectives of those in the program. Susan and I met for one hour, where I explained the thesis project and the kind of information I was looking for. As a result of this meeting, she requested to be the facilitator, and make introductions between myself and those who she felt would have as much to offer the project as possible. This altered the participant pool, as she facilitated contact with university professionals who were not originally considered for recruitment. This included members from WatPD and the Centre for Career Action. In total, I interviewed four individuals in this pool of potential interviews.

Two individuals from the Centre for Teaching Excellence were recruited in order to contextualize the supports for teaching and learning initiatives on the University of Waterloo campus. These individuals were recruited based on their professional designations, as indicated through the University of Waterloo website. Namely, these individuals represented roles involved with integrative learning, curriculum and quality enhancement, and faculty liaison.

In order to recruit faculty members, I referenced the online list of EDGE approved courses. Once the courses were known, I used the online undergraduate calendar to get a list of

the faculty associated with each course. In total, there were twenty-one EDGE approved courses at the time of recruitment. In some instances, there was more than one faculty member associated with the course. In these instances, the first faculty member was sent a recruitment email. In total, twenty-one recruitment emails were sent. Of that, six faculty members responded that they would be interested in participating. These individuals were subsequently sent the consent form, and an interview was arranged at a time and place which was most convenient for the researcher and participant. Six faculty were not able or interested in participating. Included in this number are three individuals who had expressed interest, but never responded to the consent form and follow-up request for an interview. Two of these six individuals cited time constraints. From these individuals, I requested their course outlines in lieu of an interview, with no response. Finally, one individual responded saying that they were not a part of the EDGE program, and therefore did not want to participate. The remainder of the twenty-one initial emails were not responded to.

Interview Protocol

Each interview began with a review of the participant consent form (see Appendix C), where participants were advised of the aims and goals of the project, the types of questions they would be asked, as well as their ethical rights. This consent form was provided to all participants prior to their interview, and participants were asked to review the form prior to signing their consent to participate in the project. Participants were also given the chance to ask any questions they had about the project, including their ethical rights, and were also advised that they could stop the interview at any time. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure their responses to the interview questions could not be directly associated with their real identity and professional markers (i.e. names, professional titles, department affiliation, etc.). Further, all

participants were advised of their right to withdraw their responses from the study up until April 2019, when the data analysis was completed and submitted for review.

Interviews took place throughout the months of October and November of 2018. These interviews ranged in duration from twenty-five minutes, to over an hour in length, with the majority lasting forty-five minutes to one hour. All interviews were digital-audio recorded with the consent of the participants to assist in accurate transcription. The researcher also took handwritten notes to supplement the audio transcript. After the completion of each interview, the researcher asked if the participants had any documents they would be willing to share for the content analysis portion of the research. All faculty participants provided their course outlines, and one member of the EDGE program provided an outline of the reflective assignment used by students in their three work or academic experiences. Finally, following each interview the researcher took detailed memos, organized into theoretical memos, methodological memos, and personal memos. Throughout the research process, and in the spirit of the iterative nature of qualitative research methods, the researcher frequently referenced these memos to make changes or considerations in the flow and structure of subsequent interviews.

Each interview group had their own interview schedule, with questions oriented to their own professional roles with experiential learning. The EDGE administrator schedule had three sections. Section one included questions asking about their involvement with the program, how it came to be, and what sort of definitions/conceptualizations were they using to understand experiential learning. These questions were asked in order to understand what they believed to be inclusive of experiential learning, and why a program such as EDGE was needed on a campus which is already renowned for another form of experiential learning. These participants were also asked about experiential learning as a pedagogical tool, and how assessment (both of the

students and of the program) fit into their operations. These questions were aimed at understanding where these participants interpreted the program's in the first year, their relationships with those who are involved external to their office, and how the program is evolving as it continues to grow.

The CTE interview schedule was more constrained, as there is no 'official' involvement of CTE in the EDGE program. However, the interview schedule did ask CTE participants to comment on any perceived relationship between themselves and/or their department and the EDGE department. The interview schedule also consisted of questions intended to uncover the instructional supports which currently existed on campus, and where an instructor would go if they were looking to develop experiential learning in their courses.

The interview schedule for faculty teaching EDGE courses first asked questions regarding the nature of their relationship with the program, how the relationship was developed, and how/why they use experiential learning in their courses. These questions were asked in order to not only see how their conceptions of experiential learning and their relationship with EDGE aligned or differed from the EDGE participants, but also to see if there would be variability between instructors. Instructors were also asked about their assessment methods for experiential learning, as well as their course alignment with the EDGE program. These questions were intended to understand their current pedagogical approaches, how experiential learning is communicated in their courses, and how they perceive the nature of their relationship with the EDGE program.

Data Analysis

The data analysis portion of this research was conducted in two separate phases, corresponding to the two methodological sources: interview data, and textual data. Both of these

data sources were analyzed separately, and then combined in order to produce robust responses to the research questions.

Interview Data

After the interviews were transcribed, they were checked for accuracy of transcription with reference to the audio file of the interview. Transcription was facilitated through NVivo transcription services. This process involved uploading the audio file of each transcript to NVivo, which would then transcribe the audio into a Microsoft Word document. Following this process, each transcript was read in conjunction with the audio file to ensure that interviewee responses were accurately transcribed. As such, production of the transcript was the first part of the analytic process (Wainwright & Russell, 2010). Overall, there were 112 pages of transcription produced across the interviews. Following the creation of interview transcripts, the Word files were imported into NVivo 12, a qualitative data management software, to assist with the subsequent analysis. Each participant transcript was imported with the pseudonym of the participant, and therefore maintained confidentiality.

Once the data was imported into NVivo, they were analyzed using an open-coding approach. During this process I reviewed each transcript to develop descriptive codes in order to explore the data. This was facilitated by identifying parts of the text which were most pertinent to the research project, and assigning codes to the collected text and themes (Aurini et al., 2016; Wainwright & Russell, 2010, p. 647). During this process of data identification (Reid, 1992, cited in Meeriam, 2009), the open coding approach was informed by the primary research questions guiding the study, as well as the questions from the interview schedules. This ensured that, eventually, the coding process would produce results directly applicable to the overall inquiry of the research design. Throughout the first cycle of coding, a codebook was developed which contained all the participant quotations which had been coded to a particular node. For

example, the node “Conceptualizing Experiential Learning” focused on the interview questions which asked participants how they defined experiential learning, and what forms of experiential learning were taking place in the EDGE program. Each interview was continually analyzed for codes, and reanalyzed based on new codes which had emerged in other interviews. This process was also supplemented with the interview notes and memos taken both during and after the interviews. The use of these notes assisted in identifying important themes and also in recollection of important conversations which took place during the interview, thereby adding further context to the responses of the interview participants.

Once the first cycle of coding was completed, I began the process of second cycle coding, or data manipulation (Reid, 1992, cited in Meeriam, 2009). The first phase of coding had produced a set of descriptive codes which were informed by the questions in the interview schedule. During this phase of analysis, I reviewed the descriptive codes and formed analytic connections in order to produce analytic codes, which could be organized to more directly apply to the research questions, as well as to the propositions of New Institutionalism and existing literature on experiential learning. Indeed, during this process the first cycle codes were further developed and reorganized in order to better more accurately analyze the individual interview responses, and determine their appropriate connections to the specific research questions. For example, the existing code “Conceptualizing Experiential Learning” became a master node, with several parent and grandchild nodes which better captured the individual logics which shaped one’s interpretation of experiential learning, as well as any associated benefits and challenges to its implementation. This was ultimately assisted by consulting the interview guide and referencing the connections and associations between the interview

questions and the broader research questions guiding the study. In the end of this cycle, there were 9 top-level codes, and 22 supplementary-level codes.

In this stage, the direct quotations from participants were selected for use. Following the selection of the quotations, I engaged in the process of member checking, in order to ensure that the quotes I intended to use were as accurate a reflection of the participant's intentions as possible. I compiled a list of quotations for each participant and organized them by three broad themes which emerged in the interview data. Namely, these themes were: Relating to organizational structure of the University, and the impact on Experiential Learning; Relating to the impact of EDGE/Experiential Learning on the "technical core" of academic institutions; and, Professional Roles, and the impact of Experiential Learning. Each participant was sent a standardized email which outlined the purpose of including the quotations, reiterated their consent options, and requested a two-week response time to indicate whether they consented to the use of their quotes. After the process of member checking, four participants asked for some of their quotes to be reframed, and one participant withdrew completely from the study. The final product of this component of data analysis therefore represented an ethically robust pool of data, with direct connections to the research questions.

Simultaneous to the coding of the participant interviews, I engaged in the content analysis of the obtrusive and unobtrusive textual data which was gathered through and alongside the participant interviews.

Content Analysis

Content analysis was a second qualitative method of data collection and analysis used in this case study. This particular method was critical in order to understand how the EDGE program is framed, officially. Specifically, the array of documents which were gathered

highlighted not only how the program was developed (e.g. Senate proposal and approval, and policy documents), but also the specific mechanisms by which experiential learning has been implemented at the technical core of the University (i.e. the specific forms of work-integrated learning). By combining multiple research methods, this case study embraced methods triangulation (Denzin, 1978) as a source of rigour. This particular method was used to extend, compare, and contrast the interview contributions of the research participants, using a variety of obtrusive and unobtrusive textual sources. As defined by Roller and Lavrakas (2015), content analysis is a systematic and process-driven method of inquiry, involving “the systematic reduction of content, analyzed with special attention on the context in which the data were created, to identify themes and extract meaningful interpretations” (p. 230). This is supplemented in the work of Krippendorff (1980), where it is asserted that “the context relative to which the data are analyzed must be made explicit” (p. 26). In this study, the documents which were collected and analyzed are framed within the context of 1) the institution’s response to external pressure to foster experiential learning; and 2) inter-organizational relations between the administrative level and the technical core.

Unobtrusive data was collected during the initial phases of the research project, between August and October. The unobtrusive data was accessed using purposive sampling and inclusion criteria. Essentially, I attempted to access all available data with reference or relation to the EDGE program. I began with a scoping search on the University of Waterloo website, using keywords such as ‘experiential learning’, ‘EDGE’, and ‘experiential learning program’. This led to documents like the *EDGE Core Competencies*, the EDGE brochure, the University of Waterloo 2013-2018 Strategic Plan (including the *Experiential Education for All* commitment), the University of Waterloo 2017-2020 Strategic Mandate, the University of Waterloo 2017

Senate meeting minutes and agenda regarding the development of the EDGE program, and other University of Waterloo website information on experiential learning¹.

Some academic departments had their own online content which outlined experiential learning efforts in their department. However, this material was not included in the collection of textual sources, as I wanted to maintain focus on institutional-level documents, or those course outlines from participants who were teaching EDGE-approved courses. The course outlines for EDGE-approved courses were requested at the end of each faculty participant interview.

As these sources of text data are publicly available, no research ethics clearance was required, nor any freedom of information requests. Ultimately, it was these documents which aided in forming a conceptual understanding of experiential education at the University of Waterloo, and were key in developing the interview questions which guided the participant interviews. Altogether, this comprised 190 pages of text.

Content Analysis

I began by analyzing the unobtrusive data early on in the research project, as noted above, in order to form a conceptual understanding of the ways in which experiential education is enacted and portrayed at the University of Waterloo. This process was heavily informed by the existing literature on experiential learning, and the noted pressures on universities to be able to prepare graduates who are can articulate their relevant skill development. With an understanding that universities are currently responding to a demand from their external environment to foster experiential learning, I used an inductive approach to establish a grounded understanding of the University of Waterloo-specific initiatives which were being developed, as well as the institutional priorities. The documents were read, and re-read in order to develop themes.

¹ Since the completion of the data collection and analysis, website data now includes access and links to Waterloo ExL, a program which was implemented toward the end of the data collection which is a forum for faculty collaboration regarding the development of experiential learning into their courses.

Understanding that there is often a difference between policy and practice, this data was used to develop the themes of the interview schedules, and frame the interview questions which would uncover the perspectives of the participants (including faculty course outlines) and determine how aligned they were with the unobtrusive data described above. These data were coded using the same codes and two-cycle coding process as the interview data.

The process of content analysis also involved an iterative component, as the analytic codes from the course outlines were then used to re-analyze the undergraduate calendar descriptions of all of the EDGE approved courses, not just the ones which were included in the interviews. By doing so, I was able to glean a partial, albeit informative, picture of the inclusion of experiential education in these courses, and their alignment to the EDGE program.

Multiple Methods

As outlined, the data analysis component of the research relied on interview data and content analysis. When addressing the research questions of the study, the data from the interview method was relied on most heavily, given the depth and richness that the participant contributions provided, and the way in which they augmented or contrasted the unobtrusive textual data garnered at the beginning of the research process.

The content analysis was used to supplement the findings of the interviews. This analysis was used to grasp the official intentions of the EDGE program, as well as determine how experiential learning was being implemented at the course level in the technical core of the University. It was therefore to use this data as a secondary and subsidiary source, and supplement the verbal contributions of the interview participants. This is not to say that the content analysis data was non-informative. Rather, it served a different purpose in the research and informed the findings in a different way than the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with University of Waterloo policy regarding research with human participants, this project began once it received full clearance by the Office of Research Ethics.

The primary ethical consideration was the confidentiality of research participants. In the context of this study, there was the potential for both personal and professional repercussions against the participants if the data were not subject to confidentiality. This was especially true in instances where participants had dissenting opinions of current policies or institutional practices at the University. In order to ensure that participant responses were separated from their identifying information and markers, all participants were assigned a pseudonym. Once the interview was completed, participants data was anonymized, and stored on an encrypted laptop. While the researcher did keep a master list of the pseudonyms, this was stored separately on the laptop from all interview data, and as a password protected file.

The anonymization process may have also contributed to the quality of the data, and produce more robust participant contributions. During the pre-interview meeting, and in review of the consent information, participants were advised of the anonymization process, and that their responses would not be associated with their true identity. Knowing that their responses would not be associated with their identity may have allowed participants to be more willing to discuss personal and professional views of experiential learning that they had not been willing or able to voice in more formal channels. However, given the small scale and small participant pool of the study, participants were informed that complete anonymity was not entirely realistic, as others may be able to identify them based on their contributions. As an additional ethical measure, and a source of member checking (Merriam, 2009), participants were allowed to review their contributions prior to their inclusion in the findings of this project. As noted above, this process resulted in one participant withdrawing their consent.

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach, and specific research methods taken to both design and carryout this case study on experiential learning at the University of Waterloo. A qualitative orientation was instrumental in producing robust findings, as it allowed the experience and voices of the participants to remain at the forefront. Guided by new institutional principles, participants discussed their experiences with experiential education, and the development and implementation of the EDGE program. While each had their own professional experiences, there were differences in the degree to which faculty related to the EDGE program, and how the program was officially framed in both the strategic planning documents, as well as the interview responses of EDGE participants. The following chapter will outline the key research findings.

Q1: Do Programs like EDGE Penetrate the Technical Core of Academic Institutions, and transform teaching and learning? Or, are such programs more ceremonial?

The University of Waterloo has put forward a commitment to better prepare graduates for the twenty-first century, equipped with the skills and competencies they will need to thrive and succeed.

Whether enhanced by research opportunities or real-world experience, Waterloo is proof that higher education can't — and shouldn't — be constrained by classroom walls. As the pioneer and the world's leading provider of post-secondary co-operative education, Waterloo has long recognized that learning is stronger when knowledge is tried and tested. Experience-based learning produces graduates that are uniquely employable — ready to not just fill jobs, but to lead (University of Waterloo, 2013)

Previous works have investigated twenty-first century learning outcomes, and their impact on educational institutions. The pressures to foster these learning outcomes are driven not only by economic and labour requirements, but also their ability to deepen learning, and new educational demands by students (for a current overview of 21st century learning outcomes, see Ministry of Education, 2016). Recently, this phenomenon has begun to surge in higher education (Eyler, 2009), and post-secondary institutions have had to respond accordingly.

Universities have operated with relatively stable and similar organizational structures, which have conformed to existing pressures and organizational demands. Recently, there has been a shift in the organizational field which has spurred new considerations for how universities react to the pressures, in order to better prepare graduates with twenty-first century skills (Coker et al., 2017; Kuh, 2008). This shift has placed new organizational demands to foster experiential learning as a mechanism to transmit those skills. As such, this presents an opportunity to study whether organizational responses coming from the administrative levels of these institutions actually penetrate down to their technical operations.

Responding to Pressures Emanating from the Wider Environment of Schooling: Institutional Commitment to Experiential Education

The University of Waterloo is broadly perceived to be the most innovative University in Canada, and holds the world's largest co-operative education program. This, however, is just one of the many diverse forms of experiential learning which can be implemented in higher education. In its 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, the University affirmed a commitment to continued investment in experiential education for its students through the strategic theme *Experiential Education for All* (University of Waterloo, 2013). Included in this theme was an implementation plan for continuing to foster other forms of experiential learning on campus, in addition to its well-established co-op program. This plan outlined strategic action items, supplemented with indicators of progress, as well as anticipated results. Together, there were seven action items for the experiential component of the Strategic Plan, one of which was “creating a recognition and incentive program to encourage instructors to incorporate experiential opportunities into non-co-op programs” (University of Waterloo, 2013). Jointly, the associated progress indicator was “more instructors incorporate experiential education into non-co-op programs”. However, there was no discussion in the Strategic Plan on ways in which faculty members would be enticed to include experiential education into their courses, nor how this process would unfold.

The experiential education theme was further affirmed in the University's 2017-2020 Strategic Mandate Agreement with the Ontario Government, which outlined specific initiatives the University was committed to implementing, for which EDGE was included (Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 2018). Susan, a participant from the EDGE program, discussed that across the University campus there was recognition that more needed to be done to better equip non-co-op students with rich experiences outside the classroom,

at the time that EDGE came on scene there was a recognition across campus that we need to broaden our role in experiential learning. We are considered to be one of the leaders in the experiential learning sphere but that primarily is driven by being the world leader in cooperative education in the higher-ed scene. But there was a recognition that well is that enough? Or if we're going to be known in the experiential learning world, how can we really make an impact and be a leader across all forms of experiential learning of which co-op is one subset. (Susan)

Susan indicated that when the EDGE program was being developed, the associate deans and department chairs were consulted, and requested to compile a list of all their courses which included experiential learning. Further, it was during this development process that the requirement for eighteen hours of third-party involvement was decided on. Susan noted that this time requirement came out of the mapping exercise which was used to identify courses with experiential components, and therefore served as a benchmark for how long students would need to be engaged with third party members. While this was seen as suitable standard, neither of the EDGE participants could distinguish why this particular length of time was chosen as the benchmark. As such, with respect to the course-based experiential learning opportunities, the program conducted a framing process to capture existing experiential learning opportunities on campus, but no new courses were developed which were tailored to the program. Rather, this framing process identified the pre-existing courses which met the newly developed EDGE-inclusion requirements.

Through the Strategic Plan, and the Strategic Mandate Agreement, there was a commitment from the University to the provincial government, as well as the University's constituents that experiential education for non-co-op students would be a priority of the institution going forward. These two institutional documents therefore outline the University's response to organizational pressures and acknowledge a commitment to better develop programming and incentives which would allow experiential education to become a sustained

institutional priority. This also suggests implications for tight-coupling (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), as there were expectations of alignment between the government and EDGE curricular requirements, and the technical performances of the experiential learning courses. Altogether, there exists a picture of an institutional commitment to fostering experiential education at the University of Waterloo, which is tightly-coupled to government expectations of what experiential education should look like.

Amending Ritual Classifications: Technical Performances of EDGE-Approved Courses

Conventionally, academic institutions have adhered in some form or another to the ritual classifications of the curriculum, students, and faculty (Meyer & Rowan, 1978). Meyer and Rowan (1978) outlined these classifications as they pertained to education in the traditional school system, with each having their own standardized criteria that constitutes their identity. In maintaining adherence to these classifications, institutions increase their claims to legitimacy as they perpetuate the dominant organizational model in education. This study presents findings which suggest these classifications have become amended with the implementation of experiential education through the introduction of the EDGE program (and its associated inclusion criteria), and the isomorphic pressures described above.

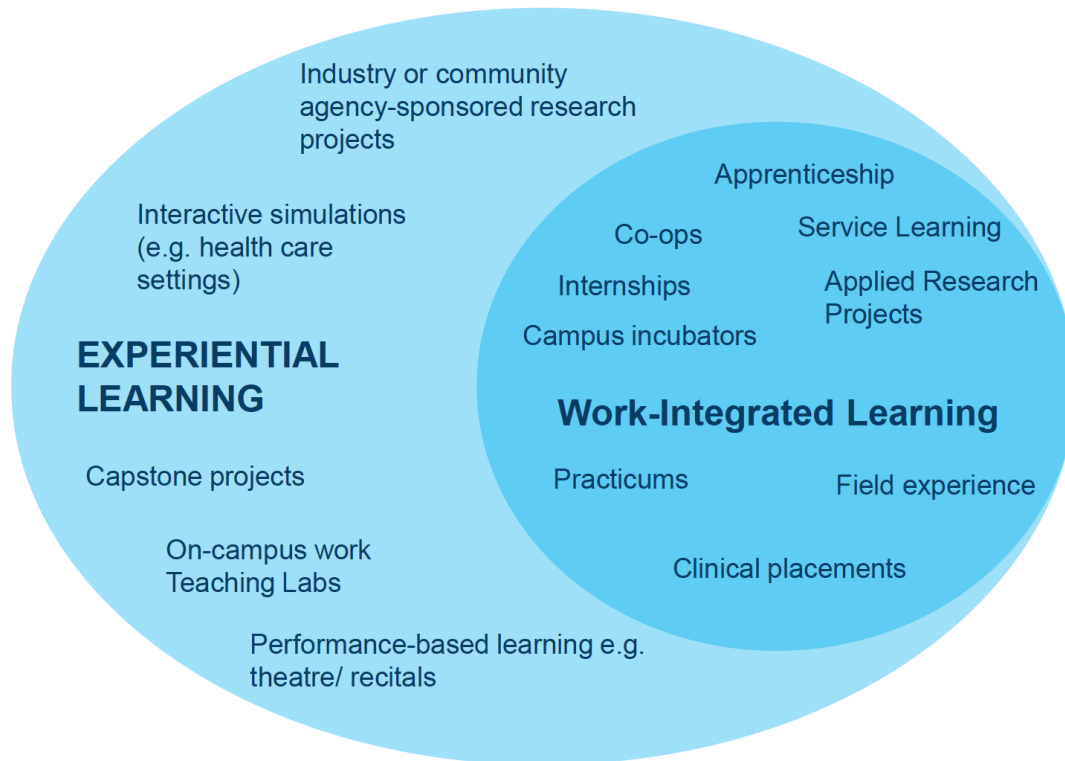
Amended Curriculum Classification: With the University's commitment to fostering experiential learning and its departure from traditional pedagogy, it is evident that there are possibilities for the curricular practices being impacted. While traditional lecture-based approaches favour a didactic approach to instruction, experiential learning embraces a more constructivist approach (Cornell, Johnson, & Schwartz, 2013). Despite the differences between these pedagogical approaches, both tactics are ultimately coupled with the inclusion criteria of the EDGE program, and the government's curricular expectations more broadly.

At the technical core of the University, the EDGE approved courses combine curricular content with work-integrated learning experiences. Work-integrated learning was the identified sub-set of experiential learning forms which the EEC was oriented towards, as outlined by Lesley who is an administrative member of the certificate program.

I think it's probably best described as work-integrated learning. So there has to be interaction with an employer. So, it goes beyond just experiential and has to have that industry relationship and completing work for a third-party. (Lesley)

Of the instructors who were interviewed, all had some component of work-integrated learning in their course; moreover, the forms of work-integrated learning were diversely represented across the participants. For example, while Peter's course was working with business leaders in their community on a community-engaged project, Nick's students were participating in apprenticeship placements. However, as these courses pre-existed the development of the EDGE program, their inclusion as EDGE-courses is not evidence of external pressures penetrating the technical core (at least with respect to the EDGE program itself).

These particular approaches to experiential learning were aligned with examples indicated in the MAESD's graphic on experiential education, which makes a distinction between experiential learning opportunities and work-integrated learning opportunities. Essentially, while all forms of work-integrated learning are considered experiential learning, they have unique requirements and dynamics which distinguish them from other forms of experiential learning.



(Figure 1, image from Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2017).

The adherence to the EGDE principles of work-integrated learning was also represented in EDGE-approved courses whose instructors did not participate in the interview process. In consulting the EDGE course calendar descriptions, it was apparent that majority of the courses which were listed had forms of experiential learning included in their design which aligned with the category of work-integrated learning. These included activities such as practicum experiences, field-based courses, and community learning projects, among others. However, four of the twenty-one courses made no reference in their calendar description to the form of experiential learning which students would be participating in. As was noted in the EDGE inclusion requirements, approved courses should involve eighteen hours of work with a third-party member, and that member should be able to provide an evaluation of the student performance to the EDGE office once the course is completed (EDGE, 2018). Of the courses

whose instructors were interviewed in the data collection, all had partnerships with some sort of industry or community member, who engaged with students and the course structure in varying capacities.

The program development was influenced by the MAESD definition of experiential learning, and the pre-approval process was influenced by the course inclusion criteria which were developed by EDGE as requirements. Both of which have a particular skew toward work-integrated learning. In developing the EDGE program, the EDGE team embraced the six-point definition of experiential education which was developed by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD). These six criteria specify that the experience must: 1) occur in a workplace or simulated workplace; 2) expose students to authentic workplace demands; 3) include meaningful and purposeful activities; 4) enable students to apply program subject matter knowledge and essential employability skills; 5) include structured, purposeful activities and reflection; 6) ensure the experiences are evaluated and counted towards course credit or credential completion (Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2017). Notably, as indicated by participant responses and literary sources (Wilson & Mackie, 2019), this MAESD definition is more affiliated with the central tenets of work-integrated learning, where students blend the lessons learned from the experiences in educational and professional settings and develop the competencies required for professional practice (Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2017).

The MAESD definition can be interpreted as a source of external pressure on the University, as it established best practices which should be in place for all experiential education initiatives. As corroborated by Susan, the criteria laid out in the Ministry definition is what they determined to be best institutional practices, and in order for any initiative to be able to count as

experiential in nature, they need to be mapped up to these practices. However, as the courses existed and operated with experiential learning included in them prior to the development of the EDGE program, the current operations of the program is more evidence of ceremonial response to external pressures. Indeed, none of the faculty indicated that they changed the way in which they delivered their course after it received the EDGE designation; so, these courses have not been impacted at the technical level due to the creation of the EDGE program.

Amended Faculty Classification: Conventionally, the role of faculty members has been to transmit knowledge onto learners. This one-sided form of pedagogy has been critiqued for being too faculty-centred, and for not considering what is best for the learning outcomes of students (Baeten, 2010; 2016; Cornell, Johnson, & Schwartz, 2013). While experiential learning amends the roles of faculty and their relationships with students, their role is amended yet again by the specific inclusion criteria of the EDGE program. As faculty whose courses count as EDGE experiential learning opportunities are required to provide students with learning experiences outside the classroom, many have developed relationships with third party members to assist in the educative process.

Faculty members indicated that the relationships with their third-party members were either facilitated by themselves, or through pre-existing relationships that were established prior to their teaching the course. None of the participants had brokered relationships with their industry partner for the purpose of having their course approved by the EDGE team. All began teaching their courses once the approval process had taken place, for which none were involved with. Some instructors discussed the purposive recruitment of partners who were able to contribute elements to the course which were outside of their own expertise. Chelsea, for example, noted that when looking for an industry partner it was important to consider the

contributions they would make to the course, such as professional experience or the ability to grant industry-relevant certifications that would supplement her own course design.

I tried to look for third parties that are experts in their fields- they bring some skill that I don't have right [...] So I guess it comes down to if they're experts in their field, if they have some skill that needs to be offered to the students that I can't do then that's where it's best to bring in someone else that can do that aspect (Chelsea)

In Chelsea's course, the partners provided an environmental certification to the students, something she did not have the credentials to provide them. However, she noted that the certification program was a three-day workshop, in which the partner would come and work with the students, and then leave once the certification process was complete. In this practice, the partner took over instruction of the course for the certification period, and then control reverted back to her, and the course progressed on.

[the partner] came in for three days and so it was like a three-day intensive- they were the ones that were leading the course content and the development and stuff. And then after that it kind of reverts back to myself. (Chelsea)

In this instance, the partner only provided the certification, and did not actively work with the students outside of the classroom context, or for a period longer than the certification process. There was also no indication that students remained in contact with the certification party once the process had ended. This not only opens discussion about the usefulness of this credential post-graduation, but also the nature of the relationship between the partner and the students, and whether it was impactful enough for the partner to be able/willing to provide an evaluation of potential EDGE students.

Pre-existing professional networks were another method of forming partnerships with industry and community outlets. David mentioned that in his department, the partnerships are formed almost exclusively based on informal processes of recruitment,

The clients are usually people that we have had conversations with in some other context, where we've said, you know, we're talking to them of something they're working on they've come as a guest speaker and have talked about something, and then we've spoken to them afterwards and said would that be something you would be interested in having our students take a look at? So -it's we don't have an application program or something to find clients. They're are usually connections have been made through personal or professional contact (David)

For David, there was an element of serendipity to the interactions he had with potential third-party members. Essentially, the nature of future courses was partially dependent on the chance encounter he had with industry professionals over time, as there was no purposeful recruitment strategy like Chelsea used.

Similar to how David recruited individuals from a network of previous events or department functions, Nick noted that his years of involvement in his disciplinary field, as an industry professional himself, had allowed him to amass an extensive amount of professional contacts which he now relies on to connect students with apprenticeship placements outside the classroom.

Because I'm a clinician in the field, I have quite a few connections. I have been doing networking like for 15 years working in this area. So, people retire or sometimes- you know I've even had deaths. So, you constantly have to find new connections. (Nick)

Also noted here is that there is a need to keep up-to-date with current professional moves in the disciplinary field, as the movement of professionals in the field can potentially impact the future placements of students.

When the interview data was analyzed in conjunction with the course calendar descriptions and course outlines, there was variation in how clearly these partnerships were communicated to students who would be reading these texts and potentially interested in taking these courses, or already enrolled. Many of the calendar descriptions and course outlines made specific reference to the type of experiential learning form which would be included in the

course (e.g. field trip, apprenticeship, civic engagement); however, these descriptions varied in the level of detail which was provided to outline what the learning experiences would involve, the expectations of student roles, and the nature of the relationship with third-party members. Both of these document types can be interpreted as mechanisms of coupling, as they communicate the modes of experiential learning taking place, and communicate the course details and expectations to students. Given the variability in how the specific experiential learning form would be implemented, if at all, the variation suggests that these outlines are characteristic of loose-coupling. While the calendar descriptions go through an approval process at the University Senate, and therefore may be considered to be more tightly-coupled, they are worded in a way which provides individual instructors with the agency to teach their courses as they choose.

Some of the course outlines which were provided by faculty participants included information on the role of the third-party member, as well as the involvement they would have in the assessment of students' work. For example, Peter's course syllabus specifically mentioned that the community-partner would be involved in the assessment of the students and their final projects. In his interview, Peter elaborated that the industry partners in his course would contribute evaluations which would count as 10% of the students' final grade in the second semester of the course, as it was a two-semester course.

the client evaluates a bit of professionalism and how [the students] interacted. But mainly it's about what kind of value did they get from the student group? And that doesn't necessarily mean a tool that they can directly implement. It's just how well did [the students] address the topic and provide some insights that encourage the company to move forward and think about it? (Peter)

Peter's course had similarities to both Michelle, Nick, and David's courses, where there was a sustained involvement between students and industry partners for the duration of the course,

given the type of work-integrated learning experiences being offered. In contrast to Chelsea, whose course had a partnership for certification and was otherwise run by her (in an experiential environment, albeit), these courses had greater involvement of the partner in the process of the course, including student assessment. All of these courses, however, share an assumption from the EDGE administration that they continue to operate in ways which satisfy EDGE-specific requirements, and thereby allow students to count them toward their certificate. This is further evidence of a loosely-coupled arrangement, as there was no concrete oversight to ensure that the approved courses were operating with alignment to the program's expectations. Rather, discussion with faculty members such as Chelsea suggest that these courses may not be meeting the EDGE requirements.

With respect to the implementation of experiential learning at the technical core of the University, it was apparent that there was a disconnect between the EDGE administrative members' perspectives of the EEC, and the professional experiences of the faculty participants. Keeping in mind the small sample size of faculty participants, it does not appear that the EDGE program has penetrated the technical core of the curricular practices of the University. The designation of pre-existing courses originated in the framing exercise to identify courses which had elements of experiential learning included in their design. Faculty teaching these courses did not partner with third-party members for the purposes of meeting EDGE inclusion criteria. As such, there was some evidence of their relationships, and the role of the third-party member potentially not being able to fulfill EDGE program goals (e.g. third-party evaluation of student learning and development). Rather, the course calendar descriptions loosely-coupled course delivery and experiential learning activities from the calendar descriptions and EDGE inclusion criteria.

The Logic of Confidence: Ensuring Course Alignment to EDGE Program Expectations

The logic of confidence speaks to organizational relationships, and the shared assumption that members are performing their duties in accordance with expectations (Meyer & Rowan, 1978). In this process, rather than performance measurements, there is a taken-for-granted assumption that organizational imperatives are being met. Nonetheless, the EDGE team practiced an ad-hoc process to ensure there was maintained alignment between course delivery and EDGE expectations.

Members of the EDGE team who participated in interviews outlined the mechanisms by which the EDGE team would communicate with faculty members who had a student in their class wanting to count their course participation toward their experiential learning requirements. Lesley noted that there is a systematic process for liaising with faculty members teaching the EDGE-approved courses.

we can get access to the students who are in the pre-approved courses. So, we can identify the EDGE students who are in those courses. We find out if they want to count their experience in that course towards EDGE. If they do, we reach out to the instructor to chat with them [...] I haven't had to do that yet but that would be the time when you confirm that there's still 18 hours and that it's still a legitimate course. [...] we let them know that there's EDGE students in their courses and we talk to them about the third-party evaluation and that it needs to be fed back to the EDGE team. So, there is that relationship piece (Lesley)

Susan acknowledged, however, that at the time this research was conducted there was no institutional framework to ensure that the learning outcomes and course descriptions which were available in the undergraduate calendar were being enacted at the technical, or instructional level. Nor was there the infrastructure to identify which courses have been identified as having experiential learning components. Essentially, aside from the list of pre-approved courses, there were no mechanisms to identify all the courses on campus which had experiential learning components to them. This would have implications for being able to demonstrate technical-level

conformity with the broader EDGE expectations, and demonstrate that experiential learning was occurring in courses across the various programs at the University of Waterloo in ways which satisfy the tenets of work-integrated learning, and the MAESD definition. However, she indicated that there have been discussions about how to build a system of identifying these courses, so that all institutional members are informed on which courses include experiential learning,

One of the things that's proposed is that some courses could perhaps be tagged. So if they meet a certain set of criteria they could be tagged with what it's going to be called- experiential learning tag- or something within our course management system and then once it's tagged with that piece instructors would have to go, let's say or the department chair would have to go to Senate to get that course change before the tag could be removed. So, the tag itself would be almost and understanding of- there'd be a policy element behind it. (Susan)

During the time of data collection, the systematic process outlined by Lesley, where the EDGE team would confirm that the pre-approved courses were maintaining alignment with the program requirements, acted as a provisional insurance policy to ensure these courses remained eligible for students to declare as one of their experiential learning opportunities. That being said, Susan acknowledged that there were some issues with the optics of this continued consultation process with courses, given that they had already been approved,

So, the challenge to that is that is the optics of that to a student right now I think aren't always good. Because the students could look at this list and say "awesome I'm going to do this course for my EDGE milestone". Then we go and chat with an instructor and we figure out it's not the same course that we once approved, so we'd have to remove it actively from our list. So, there's a lot of coming and going happening right now. (Susan)

While Susan acknowledged that this process was not the most efficient in terms of the time demands on EDGE personnel and the student, there was no indication to her that there were negative faculty attitudes toward the EEC, nor negative implications for the operations of these courses. She indicated that since the EDGE program is so novel, the team does not have the

personnel resources to broker individual relationships with instructors; as well, they had not yet been able to reach all departments across the campus. Staffing resources therefore posed a challenge for engaging with faculty across campus. The inability to do so thus far can evidence the lack of new course development, or ‘bottom-up’ initiatives from the technical core to align other existing courses with the principles of experiential learning, and the EDGE program requirements. Until the EDGE program is able to broker stronger relationships with faculty, and proactively engage across campus, they will continue to rely on the pre-approved courses which were included in the initial mapping exercise, which does not meaningfully penetrate the technical core of the institution, but rather reframes existing opportunities for experiential learning.

Departmental interactions were a noted form of presenting the EDGE program to faculty members and to get them thinking of including work-integrated learning in their courses.

*So, there is a capacity issue there too with the program being quite young. Certainly, being open to speaking to anybody about EDGE, but it's a really small team too. So being able to maintain those relationships [with faculty] is crucial. I don't think there are any negative relationships- but I think there's room for it to be stronger, certainly, and that will take time and possibly a larger staff team to really accomplish, I would argue.
(Susan)*

Relationship appeared to operate on a logic of confidence that these courses were continuing to operate in ways which maintained alignment with EDGE-specific requirements for work-integrated learning experiences. This is primarily based on the pre-approval process, which relied on the undergraduate course calendar descriptions, and the inclusion of the associate deans across the University of Waterloo campus. This seems to suggest that the EDGE program has not meaningfully penetrated the technical core, as instructors are not considering the alignment of their instructional approach with the requirements of the program. Rather, they continue to teach

in alignment with the way the course has previously operated, sometimes without knowledge that the EDGE program exists.

Loose Coupling:

Loose coupling is the process by which organizations buffer their technical core from the influences of their organizational environment. This allows them to demonstrate their compliance to changes in the organizational field, while maintaining a degree of agency at the technical level (Hallet, 2010). Given that changes in the environment may have negative implications for the efficiency of the organization at the technical core, institutions are able to separate their administrative structure from the day-to-day operations at the ground level. This allows the administrative actors to respond to environmental pressures, while leaving the technical operations to those involved at the core of the institution (e.g. instructors; Gamoran & Dreehen, 1986). Moreover, this process allows institutions to hide gaps which could demonstrate inefficiencies and potentially compromise their claims to legitimacy in the broader field (Aruni, 2006).

The relationship between EDGE and the courses which had been pre-approved appeared to be loosely-coupled, given the negligible impact of the program on the technical operations of these courses. The loosely-coupled nature of this relationship was evident when speaking with faculty members and asking them what their relationship was like with EDGE, and how it informed or impacted their teaching practices.

Faculty Relationships with EDGE: The instructors who were interviewed for this study, although being faculty members who teach EDGE-approved courses, had varying

understandings of what the EDGE program was, and all discussed having non-significant relationships with the program. These perspectives add to the assertion that the EDGE program has not meaningfully penetrated the technical core, and is evidence of loose-coupling within the University's organizational arrangements. Given that these instructors were teaching courses with experiential learning components prior to the development of the EDGE program, it suggests there was an existing effort to include experiential learning somewhere in the degree options for students, and that it did not necessarily manifest in response to the current institutional pressures, nor the creation of the EDGE program.

In terms of understanding what the program was, Peter was able to provide the most articulate conceptualization, but noted that he was not aware of ever having a student who was in the EDGE program.

So I know it's a certificate that you can get, that if you're not doing co-op that can give you that extra hands on learning- that experiential piece that you're missing out on when you're doing the co-op. [...] I don't know of any students that I have that have formal interaction with the EDGE program in terms of trying to get that certificate. I know of it, but I haven't interacted with them. (Peter)

While Peter was aware of what the EDGE program was, and the general intentions of the certificate, this was a level of knowledge that the other faculty members did not have, based on their interview responses. None of the faculty members shared any experiences of having interactions with someone from the EDGE team in a capacity that gave them any useable knowledge of what the program was. Chelsea shared that she received an email from the EDGE program which asked her to continue promoting the program in her course, and this was when she not only learned that EDGE was a program at the University, but also that her course had previously been approved for inclusion as a part of the program.

I got an email just asking if it was okay if I continued- that if we can kind of set aside some class time to talk more about the possibilities and I thought it was a great idea and

it was a good thing to do [...] I hadn't heard of it, and then the only way you really hear about it is if your course is associated with them, but sometimes it's not necessarily you going out to get the help from EDGE- it's EDGE approaching you. (Chelsea)

This points to a weak level of communication between the EDGE program and the faculty members, which appears to involve vague correspondence. The experience with this level of communication was extended by Michelle, and her experience of non-communication. Whereas Chelsea had some level of communication through email, Michelle had a resolute response that she had never had any form of communication from EDGE. While she knew the program was related to experiential learning, she was very clear that she could not provide any detailed information about it.

I don't know honestly what the EDGE program is. I've been teaching the department's experiential learning courses for several years. But I'm not sure if that's the same as being part of the EDGE program? I don't have a relationship with EDGE. I've never spoken to anyone. And no one has spoken to me. (Michelle)

A common sentiment that was shared by faculty participants was that they had little understanding of what the program was about. This presents further evidence of the loose-coupling between the program and the technical core, and a logic of confidence from the EDGE team; the reliance on the approval process which took place with the associate deans and department chairs meant that there was no significant interaction with the faculty. Susan noted that while the EDGE team formed positive relationships with these administrative actors during the consultation process which shaped the EEC, their relationships with these members has not yet been reflected in significant relationships with the faculty members who are teaching the approved courses,

So at the associate Dean level I'd say [support] is really strong. And then when you get deeper to the instructor by instructor or department chair by department chair it's spotty and it totally depends on whether we've had a student come through that particular course or program yet. (Susan)

Just as this ‘spotty’ relationship from the perspective of the EDGE team demonstrates the lack of penetration to the technical core of the institution, Michelle suggested that the overall push for fostering experiential learning has also not manifested itself in department interactions in a significant way, nor in the instructional approach being offered in courses,

I think most [courses] are pretty traditional lecture-based courses. So, clearly at the institutional level, the Department, [experiential learning] matters. There’s recognition that it matters. I don’t know how much- we’re not standing in the hallway chatting about it. (Michelle).

Essentially, given that faculty members were not involved in the development of the EDGE program, or in the consultation and course pre-approval process, for the participants in this study, their courses were approved without their knowing or involvement. Indeed, many of the instructors learned that their course was approved as EDGE-eligible either through an email from EDGE, or when they took over the instruction of these courses from previous faculty.

Based on the perspectives offered by the faculty participants, it appeared as though the EDGE correspondence emails were intended to be sent to a recipient who had working knowledge of what the program was, or was at least somewhat informed as to the existence and intention of the program. That being said, not all participants indicated that they had received those emails. As Michelle noted, she had never corresponded with anyone from the EDGE team. Chelsea was the only faculty participant who shared that she discussed EDGE with their class, even though she had no knowledge if any of her students were participants of the program, and potentially considering her course as one of their experiential learning requirements. None of the other faculty members discussed whether they had made any mention of the EDGE program to their students.

Lack of Formal Recognition: Interestingly, EDGE was not mentioned in any of the course outlines or calendar descriptions of the approved courses. It therefore is not overtly

represented in typical information sources which would provide students with details regarding the content, assignments, and assessment methods of a course. Although Susan previously mentioned that there are ongoing discussions for developing an identification system, the noticeable absence of EDGE inclusion may speak to the degree to which experiential learning has penetrated the institution more broadly. While this may have implications for students who want to declare a particular course for one of their experiential learning milestones, the faculty participants were not aware of any students who had been in their classes and were completing the EEC. Further, a general sentiment was that these faculty members did not know how the process would unfold with the EDGE office, should they be approached by a student wanting to count their course experience as one of their experiential learning opportunities; specifically, what their role would be, and how/if the role of the industry partner would change. Although the particulars of the consultation process between the EDGE team and faculty members was previously discussed by Susan and Lesley, it did not appear that faculty were informed of what their course inclusion in the EDGE program actually meant. This confusion was evident in the recruitment process of the research design for this case study, in which many faculty members responded to the initial recruitment email with questions regarding what the EDGE program was, and whether their courses were included in the EEC. Specifically, one instructor was listed as teaching an EDGE-approved course, but declined to be interviewed, citing that they were not a part of the program.

Attempts at Recoupling

Recoupling is the act of creating tight coupling where loosely coupled arrangements were once in place (Hallet, 2010). While this process was previously seen as antithetical, given Meyer and Rowan's (1977) assertions that tight coupling and surveillance would compromise claims to

legitimacy, and potentially destabilize arrangements in the organizational field, Hallet (2010) found that recoupling has utility for linking micro- and macro-level arrangements. Interestingly, there was evidence of recoupling initiatives taking place from the faculty-level upward toward the EEC.

Of the faculty members who were interviewed, only Nick and Chelsea expressed an overt interest to continue working with EDGE, or having their other courses assessed for EDGE eligibility. Given that all the existing EDGE courses were based on a pre-approval process, having new courses come forward for approval and inclusion may present opportunities for recoupling, and for courses to begin aligning their content and pedagogy with the EDGE program. Moreover, introducing a course tagging system that Susan mentioned could be another option for creating more tight coupling of experiential learning on campus.

During the course of her interview, Chelsea acknowledged that she felt comfortable enough to reach out to the EDGE office with any questions she may have, but wished the relationship could be better.

I feel comfortable enough that it had a question or something like that I would email, but other than that I don't...if you're not directly talking to EDGE [...] you don't see or hear from EDGE that much. Which is- I guess that's bad too. It could be better. (Chelsea)

if we had more communication it could be better. [...] I don't know what the possibilities are with EDGE, or what resources they have available, so maybe a greater relationship would be way more beneficial. But right now, it's fine. It's working fine. (Chelsea)

While Chelsea was content with her relationship with the EDGE program, she recognized that there was room for improved communication to continue fostering the partnership between her course and the program. Nick also mentioned wanting to continue developing stronger relationships with the program, to the point of expressing an interest in having some of his other courses assessed for eligibility.

I have to admit I've often wondered "well what about some other classes?". I think this other [course] should count as an EDGE, too. But I haven't, because I just- like I have three jobs- I haven't had a lot of time to advocate- but probably, now that I'm talking to you, it probably would be worth my while to find out if some of my other classes could be approved as well (Nick)

Nick's interest in having other courses considered for EDGE-approval may signal that experiential learning, specifically under EDGE, is beginning to penetrate the technical core of the institution, as at least one instructor in this study expressed interest in beginning the process of having some of their other courses assessed for EDGE eligibility. While he noted that there are barriers for instructors to fostering experiential learning, after reflecting on his interview, he continued to be interested in further pursuing EDGE recognition.

Without more proactive connections and networking by the EDGE program, and reaching out to faculty across campus, any momentum from the technical core could be limited to those faculty who have a working knowledge of the program. Which, as demonstrated through the faculty interview, is not many.

Discussion

These participants presented an interesting dynamic between what has taken place administratively, where the University has committed to developing experiential learning on campus, and the perspectives of those who teach the courses which have been approved as meeting this institutional commitment. While the EEC does have a sizeable list of courses which have been approved as meeting the program's experiential learning requirements, the faculty who teach these courses are not necessarily teaching these courses with the EEC in mind. As some instructors did not know their course(s) were included in the EDGE program, some had elements which may not align with EDGE requirements (e.g. short-term third-party engagement, unsubstantial third-party relationships with students). Further, where faculty did not know they

were a part of the EDGE program, this would translate to the third-party members not being informed. This may have implications for their future relationships, as it could change the nature of their contributions and engagement with the course and its students.

The lack of faculty knowledge about the EEC in general, nor whether they have had a student in the program suggests the technical core has not been significantly impacted. Overall, it would appear that in its present standing, the EEC is more evidence of a ceremonial response to institutional pressures to foster experiential learning. However, the interest of some faculty to continue on in their relationship with EDGE, as well as the consideration of having other courses assessed for approval could suggest that this impact on the technical core is changing, and that processes of recoupling may be taking place.

Logic of Confidence at the Technical Core: Another factor which should be acknowledged when considering the technical impact of EDGE on the organizational arrangements of the University is that at the time of this research, the EDGE program was only in its first full-year of operation. This may have influenced the level of knowledge and understanding that the faculty participants had when it came to the EDGE program in general, and also their own roles and responsibilities in the program. Given that faculty responses were different from EDGE administrators when it came to the way they ran, or were expected to run their courses, I suggest that EDGE is operating on a logic of confidence that their approved courses are being taught with alignment to the undergraduate calendar course descriptions, and based on their consultations with the associate deans and department chairs. As previously noted, four of the twenty-one EDGE calendar descriptions did not make any mention to experiential learning forms, and some of the course outlines which were provided by faculty did not mention the work involved with the community or industry partner. Further, based on the interview

contributions of the faculty members, one may consider the strength of the relationships which are created between the students and their industry partner. Essentially, courses may not currently be operating in a way which creates the kind of relationships which would be necessary for the industry partner to be able to provide a reflection on the work-ability and contributions of the student, as required by the EDGE program. Given that none of the faculty participants had experiences with the EDGE approval process, or facilitating student connections to the program, what could not be gleaned was whether the existing partners would be able or willing to provide an evaluation of the students, nor how that would impact the nature of their relationship with the instructor and the course. Together, the calendar descriptions and previous consultations may act as mechanisms of loose coupling, which separate the EDGE criteria from the curricular practices at the classroom level. That being said, it was evident that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that EDGE courses continue to meet requirements and recouple expectations when an EDGE student would like to count a particular course for their experiential learning opportunity.

Institutionalizing Experiential Learning: The disconnect between the faculty members' knowledge of EDGE, as well as the information which was provided by EDGE administrative members and outlined in the unobtrusive textual data may also be evidence of the extent to which experiential learning has been institutionalized for non-co-op initiatives. Given that the Strategic Mandate with the Ontario government and the Strategic Plan for the University are relatively recent commitments to foster these initiatives, it is understandable that the focus of the EDGE program has been on pre-approving experiential learning courses. The extent to which programs like EDGE penetrate the technical core may change when instructors begin reaching out to have their courses approved, themselves. This would signal a shift in pedagogical focus, and demonstrate active approaches to fostering experiential learning from the technical level of

the university, as opposed to the current top-down model. There was some evidence of this already happening, both in the interview data as well as broadly across the University. Specifically, both Chelsea and Nick expressed an interest in furthering their relationships with EDGE, and Nick wanting to explore the possibility of having other courses of his evaluated for EDGE eligibility. Further, the University of Waterloo has developed the experiential learning community through Waterloo ExL, in order to create a common where faculty can network and develop experiential learning for their courses and programs. Indeed, fostering experiential learning at the technical level, while a challenge, does seem to be taking root and making some headway at the faculty level. This movement, in conjunction with existing literature on the personal and professional considerations for implementing experiential learning, presented an interesting opportunity to consider the individual-level/professional-level logics that impact the adoption and implementation of experiential learning on campus.

Q2: According to institutional actors, what factors impact their ability to foster experiential education initiatives, such as the EDGE program?

The previous chapter provided a response to whether programs like EDGE penetrate the technical core of academic institutions. It was asserted that in its current state, the EDGE program demonstrates a ceremonial response to external pressures on the institution to better prepare graduates for twenty-first century learning outcomes. This chapter will investigate various factors that impact the willingness or ability of institutional actors to foster experiential learning.

Experiential learning in the field of higher education involves various actors around University campuses, all of whom contribute in unique professional ways to the operation of the institution. This investigation situates individual perspectives within broader organizational pressures to foster experiential learning initiatives. Arguably, given the diverse organizational roles, these members have unique positions which impact both their ability and willingness to buy into experiential learning, and thereby determine how effectively and sustainably it will be fostered in their respective institution.

Faculty-Specific Considerations for Fostering Experiential Learning

Broadly, the University's use of the MAESD definition of experiential learning has framed initiatives at the institutional level, and is seen to create a top-down pressure from administration onto the technical core, and is "pushing experiential learning" as an institutional priority.

now there's sort of a top down commitment from the university really pushing teaching and pushing experiential learning, and that's being met with enthusiasm at the [faculty] level as well. Now it's like "OK now this is something to celebrate and it's something to get behind and support". And I think there's just more enthusiasm and support from the institution (Peter)

This suggests that there is some translation of institutional level pressure from the organizational environment onto the technical environment of the University. And yet, as demonstrated in the last chapter, there has not been meaningful penetration into the technical core. This suggests that there are factors at play which are influencing the degree to which experiential learning is being fostered by those operating at the technical level. Coburn (2004) suggests that the nature of the messages impacting the technical core influence the ways in which teachers respond to these pressures, and change their teaching habits. Notably, she introduces the concepts of congruence, intensity, pervasiveness, and voluntariness (see Coburn, 2004). In doing so, she further develops and applies new institutional arguments to organizational changes in schooling environments. While her argument is oriented toward grade school teachers, I extend her argument to the responses of instructors in higher education. Specifically, I draw on her theoretical concepts to make analytic connections to the experiences of participants in this study, and how they have responded to the institutional mandate to foster experiential education.

The faculty participants in this case study cited myriad factors which influence their willingness and ability to incorporate experiential learning into their courses. While all of the faculty participants acknowledged a willingness to continue using experiential learning in their courses, some were more enthusiastic about this particular pedagogical approach than others. Three distinct considerations were discussed by participants as impacting their willingness to continue or begin fostering experiential learning. Namely, these factors included 1) various time considerations, 2) the impact of experiential learning on their level of control in and over their courses, and 3) the contrast between experiential learning and traditional pedagogy.

Time: Time was a consistent factor discussed not only by faculty participants, but was also acknowledged by the EDGE team, as impacting the success of student-centred approaches

to teaching. Susan acknowledged that time considerations can be with respect to multiple factors, such as brokering relationships with third-party members, blending experiences with class time, and finding a balance with research obligations.

I think instructors recognize that to do experiential learning well is quite onerous, right. To get to the point where you have found an organization whether it's a for profit or not-profit sector. Where you've built relationships up enough that they're willing to come into your class, or willing to engage your student body, willing to take on students that's an art in itself...For some of them it's just time, "I just don't simply have the time. I'd love to do that, I see the value, I can't find the time to do that amidst my reach research and everything else". (Susan)

These time considerations were echoed by faculty participants. Ensuring there is alignment between the experience and the course was a consideration which was mentioned by Chelsea. She noted that in her experience, one of the steps that takes the most time with incorporating experiential learning activities is ensuring that there is alignment and connection between what is planned as experiential and the rest of the course content and delivery.

It takes a lot of time to plan everything out, plan out what the students are going to do, align that with your learning outcomes, and then hope that nothing changes. So, it's a lot; it's a lot of responsibility, and a lot of work, and a lot of time (Chelsea)

In Chelsea's course, her experiential component involved fieldwork excursions off-site of the University of Waterloo campus. In this respect, a specific example Chelsea discussed as logistically challenging and time consuming was interacting with bussing companies.

I find a lot of its just logistics- like making sure that I know the bussing companies actually have us booked and they're getting us to the site- the right site (Chelsea)

While Chelsea mentioned the time considerations for implementing experiential learning, she noted that during last Winter she had a teaching course relief, in which she devoted a considerable amount of time to course development in her experiential learning courses. She noted that during this time administrative tasks such as budgeting, networking, and follow up communications occupied a large portion of her time.

A second consideration with respect to time is the balance between developing and implementing experiential learning activities in-course, and other professional obligations and career development responsibilities. Specifically, Lisa noted the tension which could exist and be experienced by tenure-track faculty, and that this trajectory required time commitments which made fostering experiential learning unlikely.

Faculty members have limited time for course preparation because they prioritize their research, and therefore taking time to attend CTE workshops or implementing advanced teaching methodologies is unlikely (Lisa)

Moreover, Lisa suggested that research is the priority for those who are tenure-track, or trying to become tenure-track, as research and scholarly output (e.g. academic works) is what is recognized by the University for tenure consideration, in addition to teaching ability (see University of Waterloo, Policy 77- Tenure and Promotion of Faculty Members). As such, there were unique implications for how well, or sustainably, experiential learning would be fostered in the existing system of incentives and recognition.

Most of us do not have an incentive to be good teachers. We're interested in being good researchers because that actually gets you tenure. You get far more recognition for research than you get for teaching and that's why experiential education may not become a priority for tenure-track faculty members. (Lisa)

Conversely, David noted that because his department is so young, and interdisciplinary in nature, tenure-track roles and responsibilities were not really a consideration for him and his relationship with experiential learning.

I'm a staff member rather than a professor or tenure-track or anything like that. I don't have the same sort of viewpoint that way. I know that it's a challenge for some of our faculty members to tackle things when they've got other things they need to do until they've achieved tenure. We're fairly young department and so not everyone in our department has tenure yet. (David)

David's professional role was another consideration in this statement. As he himself was not a faculty member, he contributed a unique outlook on the tenure-track balance with experiential

learning. Peter suggested that, in his interpretation, full-time faculty members would have a greater ability to foster experiential learning than a sessional would, given the job security that comes with the position, and knowing they would be teaching the same course again. Further, knowing that one would be teaching their same course again contributed a degree of agency or ownership, that incentivized them to develop the course further.

as a sessional instructor you almost don't have the same amount of time here...as a faculty member you just need to have more time because you're not trying to balance a part time job and being a sessional instructor. You can piece stuff together stuff, so this is your responsibility, and it's your course, and you know you'll be teaching next year, so you can put more time and effort into sort of constructing exactly what you want (Peter)

Peter's comment provided an interesting contradiction to Lisa's position, as both interpreted full-time or tenure-track positions differently with respect to their ability to foster experiential learning. Each appeared to be of opposite dispositions as to whether a tenure-track faculty member would have the time to commit to incorporating experiential learning in their courses. Of the instructors who were interviewed, while time was a consistent factor impacting their willingness to foster experiential learning, their professional roles and career situation/trajectory could also influence their willingness to foster experiential learning in their courses, as there were mixed interpretations on the degree to which there were real professional incentives for investing in this teaching method. However, given the small sample size, this was not a finding which could be examined or corroborated further with the other participants.

These divergent positions suggest that there is a lack of congruence between the time considerations for developing experiential learning and the existing reward and incentive system at the University. In order for there to be lasting and meaningful development of experiential learning at the technical core of the institution, there needs to be incentives for faculty members. It is these rewards that could incentivize instructors to consider experiential learning more

seriously, as it would bridge the existing divide between labour and reward. Cowart (2004) notes that responses at the technical level to institutional pressures will only take place if there is a high degree of congruence between new ideas and existing beliefs. Other authors such as Holtzman and Menning (2015) suggest that a particular barrier to successfully fostering experiential learning is the existing institutional culture which does not adequately reward the time and effort it takes for instructors to develop these approaches. This was a noted limitation in the Strategic Plan of the University of Waterloo, where there were no specific indicators of progress related to incentivizing faculty to develop non-co-op related experiential learning. New incentives would need to recognize the existing challenges associated with the time it takes to develop this method, and work toward developing an institutional culture which recognizes and rewards those who take the time to foster experiential learning.

Degree of Faculty Control: The faculty participants acknowledged that along with the increased time demands for creating meaningful experiential learning opportunities, there was the potential that implementing experiential learning could reduce their control over their courses. This was not a particular challenge which was discussed in the existing literature on experiential learning, and therefore presented the possibility of a new insight into faculty challenges with fostering experiential learning, and responding to institutional level pressures. The potential for less control was discussed both with respect to the faculty relationship with the course, as well as the implications for course delivery and assessment.

Peter noted that when he began teaching his course, it already had experiential learning included in it, and he had stepped in to teach it as a contract faculty member. He found that there was less time to prepare for a course with experiential learning incorporated into it, which presented challenges given that it is a more onerous pedagogical method.

you always come in either short notice, you're filling a gap from someone on sabbatical, or someone's gotten sick, and you're jumping into a course and there's an existing framework and maybe it's not exactly what your strengths are, and you're trying to use it or adapted it [...] There was always barriers to try to expand experiential learning as a sort of sessional instructor. And then having controls over and responsibility for the course (Peter)

Interestingly, none of the faculty members who participated in this study (irrespective of instructor status) had direct experience adapting a course to include experiential learning into it in order to meet the EDGE inclusion requirements. All of the participants began teaching these courses after the approval process had taken place. While previously discussed in *Chapter Four*, this finding reaffirms that there were existing (non-co-op) experiential learning opportunities on campus prior to the University's commitment to fostering other forms of experiential learning. As such, these are not necessarily in response to current institutional pressures. Rather, the approval and framing of these courses in the EDGE program represents a ceremonial response to recouple existing examples of experiential learning under the banner of its recent institutional commitment in the Strategic Mandate.

Another element of control which was discussed by faculty participants related to the loss of control over the structure of the course when third-party members are involved. Chelsea, for example, noted that while the third-party is able to contribute expertise outside of her own, it can be somewhat serendipitous with respect to how well they mesh with the existing course flow.

I bring in a third party not knowing how that will go over, or teaching style. I've had problems with timing. They won't convey "oh I need so many hours" or "we're going to start the class time at this time". They'll just say "oh you know whatever" it's on their schedule, whereas that's really hard for me because I'm kind of trying to organize the students and the transportation or location and all of that. (Chelsea).

While time was previously discussed with respect to *developing* experiential learning (e.g. planning and organization), Chelsea's experience suggests there are further considerations for *implementing* these activities, and that there can be challenges with how well those activities

blend with the existing course structure. Chelsea also acknowledged that given the uncertain nature of some of these activities, there are implications for the optics toward students.

sometimes I take the fall for it appearing to be unorganized even though in the back end I am trying to be organized [...] So it's kind of giving over control to someone else which is really hard. (Chelsea)

Chelsea's position highlights that despite the increased time demands for organizing experiential learning activities, there is still the potential for less of control when it comes to the implementation stage. While she did not suggest that there was an overall negative impact on the learning outcomes of the students, the optics of disorganization could have implications for both the student and faculty willingness to engage in experiential learning in the future.

While Chelsea did have formalized experiential activities, and clearly outlined learning experiences in her course outlines, David's course embraced a more constructivist approach. In his course, the learning objectives were well established in the course outline, and the experiential learning projects had been outlined, but the particulars and assessment remained completely open.

It's the we don't know what the project is. We don't know what the outcome is. We don't know what the- what constitutes a good job. And I think that's a challenge. (David)

David's course outline includes a caveat to students who have enrolled, which addresses the open-ended nature of the course and the potential for student discomfort given the "quicksand complexity of real-world problem-solving" (David). As well, while student assessment was tied to the learning outcomes of the course, it was ambiguous in nature given that the project was co-created between the third-party member and the students. Further, the student works were dually assessed through a combination of the third-party member assessment, and student peer evaluation. So, from the position of the instructor in the course, they only assess the reflective

assignments submitted by students at the beginning and end of the term, and help guide the students to meet the requirements and expectations of the third-party member.

The variation in approaches speaks to the relative variability of how experiential learning can be conceptualized (Seaman & Nelsen, 2011). Although these instructors demonstrated different levels of control over their courses, the serendipitous nature of success and learning outcomes may be a factor which deters faculty from approaching experiential learning as a pedagogical tool. As was noted, these faculty did not themselves champion the experiential components of their course, but inherited them when they took over the instructional role. That being said, while Chelsea, David, and Peter noted there were elements of their having less control in the course, the student-centred approach of experiential learning meant that this loss of control was balanced by more agency and responsibility for students.

Given that there was little direction coming from EDGE to these instructors, this speaks to the relative lack of pervasiveness (Coburn, 2004) for how experiential learning has been interpreted and implemented across campus. Coburn (2004) noted that responses to institutional pressures can be influenced by the multiplicity of encounters with these messages. Essentially, the more frequently instructors encounter or are exposed to institutional pressures, the more likely they were to respond to them (e.g. alter their teaching practices). As such, the less pervasive that discussions and messaging from the administrative or program level are for experiential learning, the less likely it is that there will be significant responses from the technical core.

Previous works have advocated the need for additional guidance when implementing experiential learning, such as with Eyster (2009), who noted that if experiential learning is going to be successfully implemented, instructors need appropriate training and administrative

supports. While there were EDGE inclusion criteria which were developed after these courses began operating, they are not teaching on a basis to align with these guidelines, as the guidelines were not a part of the original course design. This is not to say that all experiential learning courses need to be tightly coupled in their design and operations; rather, there is a relative lack of coordination between the different institutional actors, and this impacts their engagement with the institutional pressures. This could address the varying level of control demonstrated by these faculty, and the rather piecemeal status of experiential forms in the EEC.

Contrast to Traditional Pedagogy: Experiential learning is a pedagogical approach which diverges from the traditional lecture format, and didactic teaching methods. In doing so, it embraces a more student-centred approach, allowing for more engagement with diverse learning opportunities to connect curricular knowledge to real-world contexts and problems (Baeten 2010; 2016, Eyler, 2009). Chelsea conceptualized traditional pedagogy as being more instructor-centric, while experiential learning offered opportunities for students to learn in collaborative ways.

[traditional pedagogy] is professor focused, information giving, as opposed to the students actually learning from each other and learning together. (Chelsea)

This assertion mirrors previous literary sources who note that traditional pedagogy is both instructor-centric (McClellan & Hyde, 2012), and therefore not commensurate with the epistemology of teaching methods, such as experiential learning, which favour student-centred approaches (Estes, 2004).

Many of the instructors who participated in interviews had group-work incorporated into the structure of the course and balanced between collectivist learning and individual reflection. For example, in David's course, while all of the work with the community partner was done in

groups, students were required to submit two (graded) reflective assignments to track their own personal development throughout the term.

There were two perspectives which were offered by instructors with respect to their view on implementing divergent pedagogy. Michelle acknowledged that while there is value in experiential learning for students, the markers of effective learning in this approach are beyond what she has taught previously or been trained to do.

I think its super cool, but I wasn't trained for this... these experiential learning courses are... the students are doing their activities independently. I'm evaluating reflection exercises which is something I've never assigned before. I wasn't myself assigned as a student. And the students' final projects are a lot more creative. So, it's the students' experience that is different from what I'm used to supervising. My role as an instructor, the types of things I'm asking them to do is different. (Michelle)

Michelle was one instructor who had been tasked with teaching an EDGE-approved experiential learning course when she was hired into her position, but had no previous experience using experiential learning as a teaching method. As she also noted, experiential learning was not something that she had been exposed to when she was a student. So, there was some separation between the teaching styles she was exposed to when she was a student and how she was now being asked to teach and assess. In her course, students took part in civic-engagement activities for the semester, and therefore engaged in individual learning. As well, her course was offered online-only; so, her experience is unique to the other faculty members whose courses were offered through in-person delivery, and collectivist learning environments. Given that Michelle had not opted to implement experiential learning, but rather inherited it based on the courses she was assigned to when she began teaching, Coburn's (2004) concept of voluntariness is useful in understanding this implementation process. Coburn (2004) noted that in the absence of regulatory reform, the response of instructors to the institutional pressures will be voluntary in nature. In Michelle's case, she was not in a position to voluntarily implement experiential

learning, as it was mandated in her course load. Given that the entire process of supervising and evaluating experiential learning was outside her previous experience, Michelle was less committed to fully embracing it as others were in the study.

Other instructors had a more optimistic view of experiential learning, and how student learning in these types of courses takes a different form than in lecture-based courses.

they have to be more open ended, where there isn't a known endpoint. They're not something that you can write a final exam on because how would you figure out what the questions are when you don't know what the answers could be. So, I think it's something where the learning happens from the experience, rather than the memorization of known facts. So, it's not rote learning its discovery learning. (David)

The contrast between traditional pedagogy and experiential learning becomes starkly clear in this assertion. David acknowledged that there is a distinction not only in terms of the flow of experiential learning courses (i.e. rote learning vs. discovery learning), but also that there are implications for how learning is assessed, as the ambiguous endpoint means that there cannot be structured examination questions. Rather, one should embrace the open-ended nature of experiential learning, which is oriented to learning by discovery

The distinction from traditional pedagogy was also discussed by Nick, whose course was a for-credit course, but based on a pass-fail style of assessment. In his course, because there was no final grade assigned to the student, he discussed that the very philosophical approach to learning is impacted.

we rely on the lived experience of other people... we problem solve together it's not just the professor being the expert. Everybody has a rich experience. You know, we value everyone equally. I know that's often lip-service. It's hard to put that into practice for a lot of people say- it's a buzzword to have equality and all that. But definitely we try to get people to self-reflect and think what could have been done differently if it challenged me. Hopefully it helps you to become more mature. To promote self-reflection, and maturity, and growth in your field no matter what stage you're out. (Nick)

Nick's course had a balance of individual and collectivist learning approaches. While his course was an apprenticeship, involving one-on-one relations between the students and their employer/mentor, students would also meet six times throughout the term to discuss course topics, and reflect on their progress and experiences in their placement. As such, there was a balance between in-class and field-based learning, which was underpinned by the inclusion of reflective practices. Students in this course needed to submit two reflective papers, using a structured reflective model to help guide them (e.g. Gibbs reflective cycle, see Hickson, 2011).

What is evident in these two perspectives on experiential learning is that this method is not congruent with traditional forms of teaching that instructors are used to and have been trained in. The congruence with didactic teaching methods is therefore another factor which impacted faculty willingness to foster experiential learning. It did not appear that there had yet been an attempt to make experiential learning more pervasive at the technical level of the University. While it was committed to as an institutional priority, this pedagogy is not congruent with existing values and approaches for rewarding scholarly excellence such as tenure. From the interview responses, while it is clear that there is a top down approach to communicating this priority, it does not have the intensity, or regulatory framework for faculty members to willingly buy-into it. As it currently stands, without those regulatory changes experiential learning stands as a pedagogical approach which is more voluntary, and based on the instructional interest of faculty members.

Discussion

There were a variety of factors discussed by participants in this study which influenced their willingness as institutional actors to foster experiential learning. Many of the factors which were discussed either reflected or added to existing barriers which have been identified in

scholarly literature. While this analysis has uncovered current attitudes toward experiential learning, factors such as increased organizational pressure, as well as new and emerging institutional imperatives may influence future perspectives

Timing and Reflection: Timing and reflection are key elements of rigorous experiential learning designs. While both are considerations for faculty and students, the prevalence with which they were discussed in interviews warrants its own discussion section. Many participants discussed that there are implications for student learning depending on where experiential learning is scheduled in the degree progress. Further, faculty need to consider the ‘level’ of the experiences. This was specifically discussed by Betty, who contrasted high-impact experiences with other traditional forms of experiential learning which are outlined in the MAESD definition (for an overview of high-impact practices at the University of Waterloo, see Appendix D). This echoes previous discussions which have taken place regarding the depth and breadth of experiential learning, and the implications for student learning outcomes, as well as how pervasive these opportunities are for students (Coburn, 2004; Coker et al., 2017).

The timing of experiential learning, both in courses and degrees more broadly, relates to the classical debates on experiential learning, and the models which could be used for implementation. While Dewey (1938) suggested that experiences should be used to support or reinforce learning which has already taken place, the Kolb (1984) outlined four stages for how experiential learning should be structured and implemented. It appeared from consulting the calendar descriptions of the EDGE courses that the bulk of the experiences are very end-heavy, and occur at the end of student’s degrees. It was suggested by participants like Peter that this was positive, as students would not have the requisite knowledge required to make successful connections if these experiences were happening earlier in their degrees. Others disagreed, and

asserted that it would be better for students to be exposed to experiential learning earlier on in their degree. This would be doubly impactful if those experiences were reinforced by others later on in their degree. While these participants favoured continual experiences, Betty noted that there needed to be caution with how this was put into practice, as it could become very overwhelming for students if many of their courses sporadically developed experiential pedagogy. While this suddenness is unlikely given the time it takes for successful experiential learning opportunities to be developed, it is nonetheless important to consider this position, given the continued push for experiential learning to be fostered on campus. The diverging perspectives on how and where experiential learning can and should be placed within the overall degree structure for students points to a potential for institutional recoupling. As it stands, the loosely-coupled framework for experiential learning on campus has meant there are a plethora of opportunities, with some being formally recognized, such as in the EDGE program. Given that the EDGE program tried to re-frame existing experiential learning opportunities under the banner of a certificate program, there is a relatively piecemeal structure at the present moment. As the institution maintains its commitment to providing a variety of experiential programming for non-co-op learners, institutional actors should think about how this will continue to be framed in order for students to achieve the maximum benefit, and for how instructors will continue to, or begin to buy-into this method. An example of perhaps informal recoupling is the creation of the Waterloo ExL community.

Reflection was another literary theme which was consistently discussed by participants. While majority of the faculty discussed reflection at some point in their interview, all of their course calendar descriptions had reflection mentioned. It is interesting that despite the noted factors influencing faculty willingness to implement experiential learning, that where it was

being implemented, it was aligned with the best practice of reflection which is pervasive in the literature on effective experiential learning. This suggests that although there are distinct factors which may deter faculty, when experiential learning is being implemented, it has been done so with best practices in mind. When analyzed in conjunction with all the EDGE-approved course calendar descriptions, reflection was a consistent theme, although it was not mentioned in some calendar descriptions. Nonetheless, not only did faculty discuss having reflective exercises in their courses, majority had multiple points of reflection throughout the term. Where this occurred, many had introductory reflective exercises where students would do a pre-assessment of themselves and the skills and knowledge they bring, and then a concluding reflection on their experience in the course.

Critical reflection is considered to be a key element of experiential learning pedagogy (Estes, 2004), and has been distinguished between reflection in-action, and reflection on-action (Hickson, 2011). As the goal of reflection is to ensure that students are making the intended connections between theory and practice, it was interesting that many instructors included multiple reflective pieces throughout their courses, rather than end-only reflection. End-only reflection, while positive in some regards, does not capture the progressive development of the student, and allow them to build reflective skills in the same way that repeated reflections do. This would be even more impactful if experiential learning were to become more pervasive, thereby providing multiple opportunities for reflection throughout student degrees, and making connections not only between course content and experiences, but also on continued growth and development by reflecting on past course objectives and skills. If experiential learning is to continue being fostered, these reflective skills will be invaluable to students.

While the instructors discussed the reflective exercises in their courses, none were able to share about the EDGE-specific reflection assignment which is completed by both the student and industry partner. While the distinction between the two would be that the course reflection would be reflecting on course experiences, content, and intended learning outcomes, the EDGE reflection would be in respect to skill development, work with the partner, and EDGE program learning outcomes. Susan did note that since the reflections are on two different processes, students would need to submit the EDGE reflection, and are not able to double-count the course reflections for their EDGE milestones. However, the instructors who were interviewed were not able to provide any further details about this process, as none had ever had a student using their course for an EDGE milestone to their knowledge. This speaks to the previously noted disconnect of EDGE faculty members from the certificate's operations, and the minimal impact on the technical core of the institution.

Faculty-Specific Considerations: There were a number of considerations which were noted by faculty members as influencing their ability and willingness to foster experiential learning on campus. Broadly, these considerations mirror many of the challenges which have been discussed previously in the literature. The most consistent factor was the additional effort it takes for experiential learning to be successful, in comparison to traditional lecture format. While many faculty members still embrace the traditional lecture style format (McClellan & Hyde, 2012), the inclusion of experiential learning required new skills, new commitments, and new forms of assessment which, as noted by Michelle, some did not feel they had been trained for.

Some noted that there is consistent tension between their roles as researchers, and their roles as teachers at the University. Within the current model of tenure and promotion, faculty noted that research is prioritized over teaching, and that unless there is a change to this model, it

was unlikely for some to bother with advanced teaching methodologies, as these were not incentivized in a way which acknowledged or rewarded the time and labour investments. Eyer (2009) discussed this point, and advocated that if experiential learning is going to be successfully implemented in a way which makes it a sustained approach, faculty need not only appropriate training in this method, but also require the support of the administration. While this support has been slow coming, there has been evidence of forward momentum in providing faculty with the tools and networking they need in order to champion this approach.

What became evident through the interview process was that the fostering of experiential learning is a continued work in progress at the University. It did not appear that all the faculty who used this approach were fully swayed, as to whether they would rather this instructional approach over traditional pedagogy. As discussed in the previous chapter, this may be reflective of the slow impact on the technical core, and we may not be at a critical stage yet where there is a change in attitude, and warmer embrace of this approach. The overwhelming majority of faculty participants provided greater detail on the challenges they were facing, and what resources they needed if this approach was something which would be continued and sustained. Essentially, it did not appear that there was complete faculty buy-in at the point when the data was collected. However, with the steps which are being taken, and the sustained pressure on higher education to foster this method, these attitudes are worth revisiting.

Conclusion

The organizational field has been influenced by government mandates for institutions of higher education to produce graduates ready for the 21st century workforce. This has resulted in a greater call to develop, build on, and implement experiential programming for all learners, and has been solidified in the commitment for all graduates to have at least one experiential learning opportunity by graduation (Canada's Business Higher Education Roundtable, 2018). In order to examine the impact of this pressure on institutions, I conducted a case study at the University of Waterloo, using the newly developed Experiential Learning Certificate as an example of a particular institution's response to developing experiential learning. This program was identified in the University of Waterloo's 2017-2020 Strategic Mandate Agreement (Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 2018), and further solidified in its 2015-2018 Strategic Plan (University of Waterloo, 2013). In conducting my case study, I sought to investigate whether programs like EDGE actually penetrate the technical core of academic institutions, or if they were more examples of ceremonial compliance. Further, I investigated the factors that impact the willingness of institutional actors to foster experiential learning.

Main Findings/ Contributions

This research contributes to the application of new institutionalism in higher education, and identifies a case of a particular institutional response to pressures from the organizational field. This study attended to the inter-organizational arrangements at the University of Waterloo, and how those arrangements responded or were influenced by the formalized Experiential Education Certificate. Therefore, by adopting a research design which was influenced by new

institutionalism, this research extends this particular theoretical approach to a topic which has not yet been the subject of organizational analysis.

As it is currently implemented and operated, the EDGE program is evidence of a ceremonious institutional response to pressures emanating from the organizational environment. As mentioned, Ontario universities are under renewed pressure to foster experiential learning, and provide graduates the skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century workforce. The program is in its first full year of operation. At the outset, the program relied on a pre-approval process, to recouple existing examples of experiential learning under the banner of the Experiential Learning Certificate. The program itself is the process of a top-down approach, typical of organizational pressures emanating from the organizational environment onto the technical core. However, in speaking with faculty, many mentioned having non-significant relationships with the EDGE program, indicating the relationship remains loosely-coupled in nature. As such, I suggest that the EDGE program relies on a logic of confidence, as established by the undergraduate course calendar descriptions. Given that no new courses had been established on the basis of the EEC, nor the fact that faculty had pre-existing third-party relationships, it does not appear that the program has penetrated the technical core of the institution.

Faculty members also discussed various factors that contribute to their willingness and ability to foster experiential learning in their courses. Namely, these included factors relating to time, their degree of control over their courses, and the contrast of experiential learning, and traditional approaches to pedagogy. Paired with the principles of new institutionalism, these findings extend previous descriptive factors which have been identified in the experiential learning literature. These factors suggest that there are challenges that inhibit faculty's ability to implement

experiential learning. Interestingly, despite there being a lack of institutional incentives for faculty members to foster experiential learning, those who were implementing it were doing so with some identified best-practices from the scholarly literature. For example, the inclusion of multiple-reflective exercises throughout the learning experience, as opposed to end-only reflections. These challenges, however, stand in the way of experiential learning impacting the technical core of the institution, as there has not been significant action at the ground level. Rather, there has been a top-down approach of the EEC, and there have not been the necessary incentives for faculty to take on experiential learning, given the noted challenges. While the majority of faculty participants discussed the challenges of fostering experiential learning, these perspectives are worth revisiting, given the current organizational climate which continues to provide institutional pressure to engage in experiential learning.

This work suggests that experiential learning, within the context of higher education, remains a prominent topic and that institutions may be fostering more ‘lip-service’ than meaningful implementation. In the context of EDGE, there are unique organizational relations at play when it comes to implementing experiential education, and these have implications for how willing faculty may be to adopt such an instructional approach. As such, there are considerations for the future of experiential learning, and its persistence in higher education. Namely, if there are considerable faculty related barriers, and there are insignificant approaches to implementation, how sustainable is this pedagogy, and are students likely to have beneficial learning experiences and learning outcomes?

Limitations

This study was not without its own limitations. I encountered a number of factors which should be considered when interpreting the findings of this research. These factors leave room

for future investigation into experiential learning in higher education. The limitations mainly related to factors surrounding the recruitment of participants, and the participant pool in general.

Gatekeepers

With respect to the data collected from the EDGE team, I was restricted to the access provided by the gatekeeper, Susan. Although Susan was able to facilitate connections between myself and the EDGE participants, there may be others from the EDGE team, or other individuals on campus who are involved with EDGE, and were not included in the connections the gatekeeper made. For example, my original recruitment strategy included participants who make classroom visits, faculty connections, and act as program liaisons with the broader institution; they were not included in the list of individuals Susan helped facilitate connections with. These individuals may have valuable experiences which could have contributed to a fuller picture of the current operations of the program, challenges, and plans for future development.

I relied on Susan's formal position in the program to gain access to those who were in positions to respond to my questions. However, these connections were steered by Susan. In addition to requesting interviews with EDGE personnel, I requested to sit-in on meetings related to further program development and operations. This was not possible given the loosely-coupled organizational structure of the program, as well as staffing changes which were occurring at the time of recruitment. These department-level interactions would have been interesting to observe, as I wanted to gather as much data as possible with respect to who was involved with the program, how it was operating during the time of data collection, and what their plans were (if any) for continued outreach to faculty.

Although the EDGE-related interviews were fewer in comparison to the faculty interviews, I was able to gain a considerable amount of unobtrusive textual data on the program which helped to augment and contextualize the interview contributions of the participants. The use of the unobtrusive data provided a rich description of how the program is framed officially by the institution, and provided context of how the program currently operates and is offered to students. As such, while more interview data would have been ideal in order to hear perspectives and objectives of the program from individuals who are actually involved in the current operations, the use of textual data provided a suitable secondary source of information.

Participant Sample

There are many courses which had been pre-approved as a result of the EDGE program development. Altogether, EDGE had twenty-one courses which had been approved under its inclusion criteria at the time of recruitment. While I reached out to all listed faculty members, there was a relatively low number of faculty responses. This is not to discount the value of small-sample case studies, and the ability to investigate particular cases which are representative of a larger phenomenon in general. I was still able to get rich data; but, given the number of courses which were pre-approved, there are certainly other instructors whose personal and professional experiences could have added to the data. Specifically, there could be unique differences between the faculties whose courses have been approved for EDGE. For example, the faculties of Environment, Applied Health Sciences, and Entrepreneurship likely have different experiential learning activities, goals, third-party partnerships, and learning outcomes. Interviewing faculty members who represent diverse professional and institutional backgrounds would have yielded more rich data, arguably, and potentially contribute varying experiences with EDGE, and experiential learning more broadly.

The inability to recruit as diverse a participant sample as I intended may be attributable to the time in which recruitment took place. As faculty were contacted toward the end of the Fall 2018 semester, many may have been occupied with various professional responsibilities which made it difficult to agree to an interview. In future, it will be valuable to reach out as early as possible, while still within the boundaries of institutional ethics recruitment policy. Moreover, outlining a variety of interview method possibilities may entice future participants, as methods such as video chat interviews (e.g. Skype, FaceTime) would mitigate potential problems with scheduling interviews face-to-face.

Nonetheless, of the faculty who I was able to interview, there was diverse representation of different faculties. In addition, many of the faculty represented diverse professional backgrounds (e.g. previous sessional faculty, those actively working in non-academic settings), and were all able to provide valuable accounts of their experience with experiential learning, their interpretations of this instructional approach, and its prevalence at the University of Waterloo. The use of textual data to supplement the number of interviews and their findings was also a useful tool to address this limitation. Just as I was able to rely on unobtrusive data to augment the EDGE participant interviews, all the faculty participants were willing to provide their course outlines, which contributed to a sizeable amount of text data to supplement their interviews. With respect to the interview method, supplementing qualitative interviews with textual data proved to be an invaluable tool to accessing as much data as possible.

Participant Withdrawal

Given the small sample size, this study was also impacted by the withdrawal of one key participant from the EDGE team. After the interviews were transcribed and coded, I engaged in the process of member-checking, and sent each participant the selected quotes from their

interview I intended to use. Upon receipt of their quotes, one participant withdrew completely from the study. While I was still able to collect a sizable amount of interview data from the other participants, the withdrawal of an EDGE participant impacted the rigour of the findings, as they were based on fewer interview responses. Given that all of the faculty expressed not having significant relationships with the EDGE program, having more interviews from those operating the program may have contributed interview data to analyze the nature of these relationships. If revisited, this study would have benefitted from a broader recruitment strategy for recruiting EDGE participants, and recruiting beyond the initial list of names provided by the gatekeeper.

As noted above, I mitigated the impact of participant withdrawal by supplementing interview data with a number of policy documents such as the Strategic Plan and Strategic Mandate.

Implications for Future Research

This case study was able to investigate a single example of an institutional response to pressures in higher education. Ultimately, institutions should consider how they will frame the unique benefits of experiential learning in comparison to traditional instructional methods, and organizationally, how it will be implemented and measured. As this study demonstrated, there was not a high level of faculty awareness about the EDGE program. Future iterations of experiential learning programs must consult or include faculty in program development, as they are ultimately the ones who will be teaching the courses which have experiential learning blended into them. As well, institutions should consider the incentives provided to faculty who are implementing experiential learning. Although programs such as EDGE operate in response to pressure from the organizational field, those with sustained institutional support are more likely

to have successful implementation and continuance. If corroborated with incentives for faculty, there may be a greater likelihood for bottom-up initiatives from the technical core, which would allow experiential learning programs to become more than ceremonial institutional responses.

This is particularly timely, as institutions review their commitments within the context of working with a new government, which may bring new institutional pressures of its own. Given, the small sample size, and being a single case, the findings are not generalizable to the broader movement of experiential learning in Ontario higher education. Nonetheless, the continued pervasiveness of experiential learning messaging in higher education provides a bountiful opportunity for continued analysis from a new institutional perspective. This project, for example, can easily be extended to a multi-cited qualitative investigation of experiential learning across multiple institutions. While EDGE certainly had unique requirements, which may vary from other experiential education programs, the broad organizational challenges that have been identified are not unique to many initiatives in higher education.

Given that experiential learning, in all its forms, continues to grow in popularity at the university level, I aim to extend this research design, and consider a multi-sited qualitative work, investigating multiple institutional responses to sustained or new pressures from their external environment. This would have particular implications for applying the principles of new institutionalism to this particular topic more broadly, such as analyzing instances of isomorphism, and whether there are similarities and other comparisons between institutional responses. Or, conversely, whether there are organizational differences between the implementation of experiential learning between institutions, and the implications for claims to legitimacy. While it may be overly ambitious to attempt to analyze the entirety of experiential learning at various institutions, in my future graduate work I suggest restricting the analysis to

particular programs or faculties in order to provide a metric to ensure comparability between responses and institutions.

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Appendix A

CTE Interview Schedule

Introduction

- Introductory remarks about the project (reiterated from recruitment email)
- Recording procedures
- Allow opportunity for participant to ask any questions they may have
- Complete consent form

Body

Theme: Instructional supports for experiential learning

- How do you conceptualize experiential learning?
- Based on your knowledge, to what extent does the CTE interact with the EDGE program?
 - What is the nature of your involvement in that relationship?
- What do you perceive to be the utility of incorporating experiential learning into postsecondary level courses?
- What supports does the CTE have for instructors looking to implement experiential learning in their classroom?
- What are some challenges to implementing experiential learning in postsecondary classrooms?

Conclusion

- Does the participant have any documents they would be able to provide me for textual analysis? (instructional aids for EL)
- Does the participant have any questions for me?

EDGE Administration Interview Schedule

Introduction

- Introductory remarks about the project (reiterated from recruitment email)
- Recording procedures
- Allow opportunity for participant to ask any questions they may have
- Complete consent form

Body

Theme 1: Administration/program development

- Can you describe the professional role that you play in the program?
 - How did you become involved in the EDGE program?
- How did the EDGE program come to be? (i.e. conceptualization, proposing the program)
 - What were the factors that influenced its development?

- Are experiential learning courses the only way for students to achieve EDGE distinction?
- How do you conceptualize experiential learning?
- How are courses selected for experiential learning?
 - Did they have courses in mind when they were creating the program?
 - How would instructors who want to have their courses approved by EDGE do so?
- What degree of oversight does the EDGE program have over courses which have been approved for the program?

Theme 2: Experiential learning as a pedagogical tool

- What are the benefits with regard to student learning, for those who participate in experiential learning?
- What forms of experiential learning are available under the EDGE program?
- What supports exist to help instructors implement experiential learning as a pedagogical tool?

Theme 3: Assessment of student learning outcomes

- In what ways is student learning assessed under experiential learning that may be different from traditional classroom delivery systems?
 - What discretion do instructors have with regard to assessment of experiential learning?
- What role does the EDGE department play in assessment of student learning?
- What assessment strategies are in place for assessing the utility of the EDGE program as it continues to grow? (i.e. how are they assessing their progress?)

Conclusion

- Does the participant have any documents they would be able to provide me for textual analysis? (policy or program data i.e. promotional material, program proposal to the senate, program mandate)
- Does the participant have any questions for me?

EDGE Faculty Interview Schedule

Introduction

- Introductory remarks about the project (reiterated from recruitment email)
- Recording procedures
- Allow opportunity for participant to ask any questions they may have
- Complete consent form

Body

Theme 1: Involvement with EDGE

- How long have you been teaching at the University of Waterloo?
- How did you become involved with the EDGE program?

- Make connection between the length of time they have been teaching, and when they became interested/involved in experiential learning
- How do you conceptualize experiential learning?
 - Was experiential learning something that was incorporated into your courses prior to becoming involved in the EDGE program?
- In what ways does your course differ from non-experiential courses?
 - Who is the third party member involved in your course?
 - How did you establish this partnership?
 - What role do they play?
- What utility do you feel experiential learning has with regard to student learning?
- What are some of the challenges, if any, that you have faced with implementing experiential learning in your course(s)?

Theme 2: Assessment strategies for experiential learning

- What learning outcomes do you have for your course?
 - To what extent are they aligned with the experiential component of the course?
- How are students in your course assessed with regard to experiential learning?
- Have you utilized any on campus resources to develop your assessment strategies?

Theme 3: Course alignment with EDGE

- Now that your course has been approved as an EDGE program course, what is your relationship with the EDGE program administration?
 - Do you have any ongoing relations with the department?
 - What sort of oversight does EDGE have over your course?

Conclusion

- Does the participant have any documents they would be able to provide me for textual analysis? (course outlines, assignment outlines specific to EL)
- Does the participant have any questions for me?

Appendix B

CTE Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Emerson and I am a Master of Arts student working under the supervision of Dr. Aurini in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you because I am conducting a study that investigates approaches to assessment in experiential learning programs. I am currently seeking individuals who are involved in the Centre for Teaching Excellence, and may support experiential learning in one way or another.

Participation in this study involves taking part in an interview, which is anticipated to last between 30-60 minutes at a time and place of mutual convenience. During this interview, I will ask a series of open-ended questions regarding experiential learning for you to respond to. Broadly, the interview will be focused on the thematic area of instructional supports for experiential learning. If you consent, this interview will be audio recorded digitally for transcription purposes.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (*ethics proposal #*).

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at elacroix@uwaterloo.ca, with some times you have available. As indicated above, the interview has the potential to last up to one hour in length, so please take that into consideration when planning your availability. Upon receiving your reply, I will respond with a confirmation email, containing a detailed information letter and consent form which further outlines the project.

Should you have any questions, I would be happy to address them before any commitment to an interview is made.

Thank you for your consideration,

Emerson LaCroix

EDGE Administrative Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Emerson and I am a Master of Arts student working under the supervision of Dr. Aurini in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you because I am conducting a study that investigates approaches to assessment in experiential learning programs. I am currently seeking individuals who are involved in the EDGE program at the administrative level as participants in this study.

Participation in this study involves taking part in an interview, which is anticipated to last between 30-60 minutes at a time and place of mutual convenience. During this interview, I will ask a series of open-ended questions regarding experiential learning for you to respond to. Broadly, the interview will be focused on the thematic areas of EDGE administration/program development, experiential learning as a pedagogical tool, and assessment of student learning outcomes. If you consent, this interview will be audio recorded digitally for transcription purposes.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (*ethics proposal #*).

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at elacroix@uwaterloo.ca, with some times you have available. As indicated above, the interview has the potential to last up to one hour in length, so please take that into consideration when planning your availability. Upon receiving your reply, I will respond with a confirmation email, containing a detailed information letter and consent form which further outlines the project.

Should you have any questions, I would be happy to address them before any commitment to an interview is made.

Thank you for your consideration,

Emerson LaCroix

Faculty Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Emerson and I am a Master of Arts student working under the supervision of Dr. Aurini in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you because I am conducting a study that investigates approaches to assessment in experiential learning programs. I am currently seeking individuals who are involved in the EDGE program at the faculty level as participants in this study.

Participation in this study involves taking part in an interview, which is anticipated to last between 30-60 minutes at a time and place of mutual convenience. During this interview, I will ask a series of open-ended questions regarding experiential learning for you to respond to. Broadly, the interview will be focused on the thematic areas of assessment strategies for experiential learning, course alignment with EDGE expectations, and how you came to be involved in the EDGE program. If you consent, this interview will be audio recorded digitally for transcription purposes.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (*ethics proposal #*).

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at elacroix@uwaterloo.ca, with some times you have available. As indicated above, the interview has the potential to last up to one hour in length, so please take that into consideration when planning your availability. Upon receiving your reply, I will respond with a confirmation email, containing a detailed information letter and consent form which further outlines the project.

Should you have any questions, I would be happy to address them before any commitment to an interview is made.

Thank you for your consideration,

Emerson LaCroix

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

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

Title: A Qualitative Analysis of Experiential Learning at the University of Waterloo

I have had the opportunity to read the information provided by Emerson LaCroix, under the supervision of Dr. Janice Aurini, Department of Sociology and Legal Studies, University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask questions related to the study and have received satisfactory answers to my questions.

I have been informed that my participation in this study is voluntary, and I may elect to withdraw my consent by informing the researcher up until April 2019.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (ORE#23248). If you have questions for the Committee contact the Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or ore-ceo@uwaterloo.ca.

For all other questions, please contact Emerson LaCroix (elacroix@uwaterloo.ca), or Janice Aurini (jaurini@uwaterloo.ca).

- I consent to my interview being digitally audio-recorded.
- I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any paper, publication, or conference presentation resulting from this research (e.g. a pseudonym will be used in place of your real name).
- I agree to have my quotations directly attributed to my real name in any paper, publication, or conference presentation resulting from this research.
- I would like the opportunity to review and approve my quotations before they are used in papers and publications.
- I would like to receive a copy of the research findings once the project is completed.
 - Surface mail (please provide mailing address)

 - Email (please provide email address)

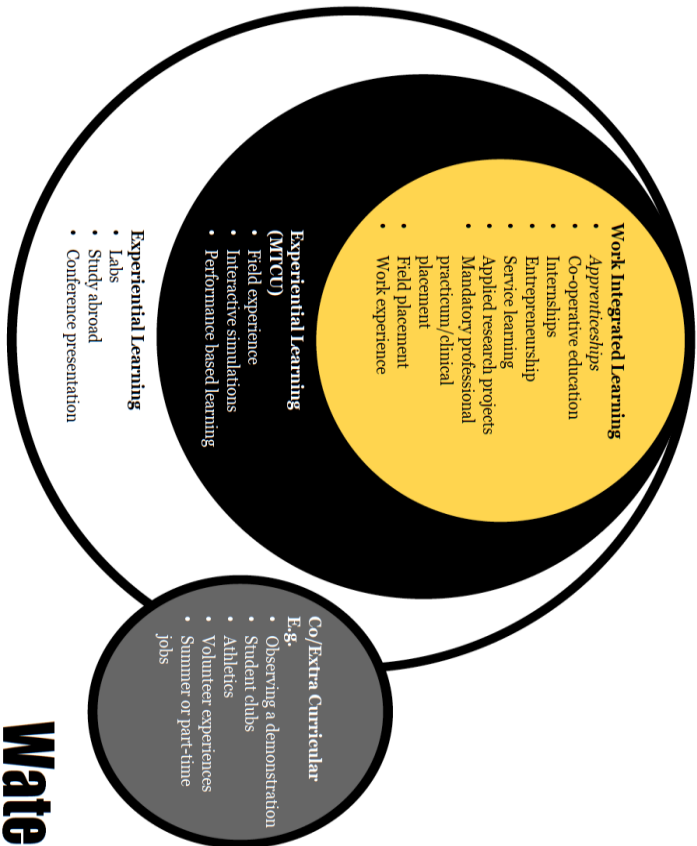
I hereby agree to participate in the study.

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Experience: THE INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE



Waterloo ExL